

WSO SymphRonica rocks

Pianist Ron Davis fuses classical and jazz

BY TED SHAW, THE WINDSOR STAR JANUARY 30, 2012



In a sense, the two concerts by Windsor Symphony and Ron Davis at Chrysler Theatre Saturday and Sunday were tune-ups for their recording session Sunday night.

The featured works at all three were taken from the Davis set of compositions titled SymphRonica.

The classically trained Davis fused orchestral music to jazz in works that quote such composers as Bach, Prokofiev and Stravinsky.

He also borrowed from gospel, traditional Jewish folk songs and Quebec fiddle music, to name a few. The composition Pawpwalk, meanwhile, has a Horace Silver-like groove.

The orchestrations of melodic material are reminiscent of the symphonic early recordings of Chuck Mangione and the orchestra sessions Miles Davis did with Gil Evans.

The concert featured many of the works that will make it on to the CD. There was a beautiful slow gospel composition, Allelujah, and a stunning ballad written for his wife, singer Daniela Nardi, titled Danza Daniela.

Nardi then joined him onstage to sing an Italian pop song.

Davis adapted a Bach melody from the St. Matthew Passion, Mache dich, mein Herze, rein, into a mesmerizing orchestral piece that called on flutist Jean-François Rompré, oboist Graham Mackenzie and the bass player in his trio, Mike Downes, for solos.

Another inventive composition, D'Ror Yikra, employed a traditional Jewish song with quotes from Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring.

John Morris Russell was back on the podium after an absence of more than month, and he seemed invigorated by the occasion. In the samba piece that ended the concert, Thomachonga, Russell left the conductor's stand and invited members of the orchestra to dance.

Another keynote work was Sergei's Shuffle, a boogie-woogie piano piece using themes from Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 7.

The trio, consisting of Davis on piano, Downes on bass and Ted Warren on drums, played two songs on their own - a cover of the 1950s pop hit My Shining Hour, and Davis's adaptation of a popular Polish song, retitled My Mother's Father's Song, which was the title of Davis' most recent CD.

The performance Saturday, unfortunately, was marred by the mushy microphone used by Davis. There were some minor flubs in the orchestra, too, which presumably were cleared up for the

recording session.

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