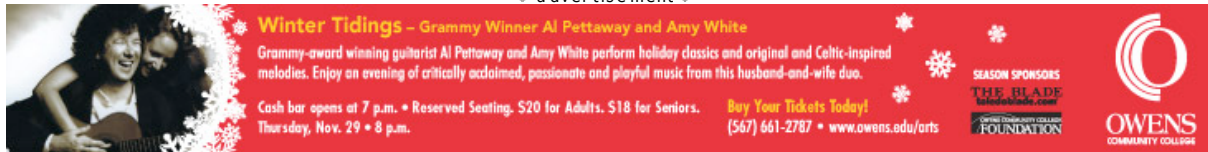


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Symphony satisfies all tastes with Classics

By SALLY VALLONGO
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Whether you liked your music agile and sweet or complex and explosive, there was something for each taste on the Toledo Symphony's Classics III concert in the Toledo Museum of Art Peristyle last night.

Pulling the compelling mix of Mozart and Prokofiev together with conviction and lan was guest Ignat Solzhenitsyn, who doubled as inspired piano soloist and inspiring conductor.

One of Mozart's later works, the Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major, known as "Elvira Madigan" for its use in the eponymous film, is chamber music on steroids - really a minimalist score (for Mozart) that casts the piano line as much in the accompanying role as it is a solo instrument.

Playing on the symphony's Steinway, Solzhenitzyn established a clean, unaffected, yet very sensitive approach. His direction to the orchestra matched perfectly, so that transitions between tutti and solo passages were finessed.

Maintaining lively tempos and eschewing much in the way of rubato, the conductor forestalled any of the sentimentalism engendered by old mental tapes of lovers running in slo-mo through green fields.

Nonetheless, Solzhenitsyn didn't stint on bringing out the lovely melodies in each movement.

And his brief cadenzas - his own, inspired by Mozart, he said - were just exploratory enough to remind the audience that we're in the 21st Century.

The highlight of the concert came in the second half: Prokofiev's extraordinary fifth symphony in B-Flat Major, a marvel of coherent, complicated, and colorful composition as only this early 20th century Russian master could conjure.

Already well known for his many programmatic works, by the time the composer reached maturity during World War II, he had an enormous palette of musical signatures - angular transitions between melodies, a genius for overlaying rich sonorities with sparkling textures, and a freewheeling approach to complex rhythms.

Saturated with melodies that tumble and intertwine from the quiet opening moments to the swooping finale, Prokofiev's masterpiece has its own musical story line - one of uncertainty, tumult, and triumph.

Under Solzhenitsyn's baton, the symphony poured its musicality into every note, playing with confidence, vigor, and great clarity.

The string sections offered the full range of effect, from delicate pizzicatos to keening lines, maintaining solid and balanced foils for the winds, brass, and percussion.

Presenting in honor of symphony supporters Frederic and Mary Wolfe, this concert offered a most fitting tribute.

The concert will repeat at 8 tonight in the Peristyle. Tickets are \$22-\$47 at the door.

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