

January 11, 2010
Online

Vancouver Symphony Orchestra at the Orpheum Theatre, Jan 9, 2010

By Mike Herle

(additional performance Monday, January 11)

Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor
Mozart, Symphony No. 41 in C Major, “Jupiter”
Wagner, Lohengrin: Prelude

The “Jupiter” symphony was stellar, but it was the Rachmaninoff that really took off. The VSO soared under guest conductor Andreas Delfs. Pianist extraordinaire, and Lilya Zilberstein played with passion and poise. A thunderous ovation with hoots and hollers followed her performance as Zilberstein left the stage, came back, left, and came back.

“Tell me, does anybody really need music like this?” Tolstoy once asked Rachmaninoff. Well, over 100 years after the world premiere of *Piano Concerto No. 3* in New York City the answer is a resounding “yes”. Rachmaninoff talked of music “going to the heart... music which goes directly to your heart without passing through your brain.” The response of the near-capacity crowd at the Orpheum was heartfelt.

There was less response, however, for Wagner’s more cerebral *Lohengrin: Prelude* which began the concert. It’s a beautiful, sublime, spacious piece, a symbolic depiction of angels from heaven bearing the Holy Grail, but it seemed some sleepy audience members were imagining other things. I’m no Amazing Kreskin, but I believe some may have been thinking, “When is this going to end?”.

The concert ended with Mozart’s Jupiter symphony. It was an exciting performance: certainly Delfs was enthused. At times, the guest conductor’s podium acted as a trampoline. The VSO played *No. 41* with a real sense of fun—sprightly and rightly. If the response was somewhat subdued, it didn’t dampen the mood. Mozart goes to the heart.

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