

REVIEW

Lake Macquarie Philharmonic Orchestra - November 3 2019

Warners Bay Performing Arts Centre

A Romantic Afternoon at the Ballet

The ballets of Tchaikowsky, Delibes and Adam are staples of the classical ballet style. The ballet itself is wonderful but the music has a life of its own as presented for our enjoyment on Sunday November 3rd by Lake Macquarie Philharmonic Orchestra at Lake Macquarie Performing Arts Centre.

The concert began with Tchaikowsky's *'Romeo and Juliet Overture'*, a non-ballet overture fantasy. This symphonic poem, a piece depicting scenes from the Shakespeare story, includes the magnificent love theme. It was wonderful to hear the entire piece where the love theme has its original intent and authentic meaning rather than the short versions used in movie scores or advertisements.

Delibes' *'Valse'* and *'Csárdás'* are two dance movements from the ballet *'Coppelia'*. The valse theme is familiar and lyrical while the csárdás is a Hungarian folk dance moving from a brooding start to ever-increasing speed and frenzy. Last before interval was the suite from the Tchaikowsky *'Swan Lake'* ballet. Oboe soloist Rachel Tolmie played the opening solo with expression and beautiful tone while the fourth movement featured wonderful solo playing from concertmaster Olena Zaporozhets, harp player Kate Moloney and cellist Michal Wieczorek.

Prokofiev's *'Montagues and Capulets'* began the second half. Beginning with fearsome sounds to describe the Prince giving his order, causing my 6 year old companion to jump in surprise, the music moves on to the pulsating rhythm of the *'Dance of the Knights'*, one of the most 'macho' ballet sections that this reviewer has heard. Prokofiev's dissonances and unusual uses of the celeste and the tenor saxophone were unexpected changes of tone colour.

The *'Prelude and Mazurka'* from Delibes' *'Coppelia'* and the *'Polacca'* from Adam's ballet *'Giselle'* evoked European folk dancing before the program returned to Tchaikowsky for the *'Nutcracker Suite'*. In three sections - Overture miniature, Danse caractéristiques, Valse des Fleurs - the different sections of the orchestra each had a time to shine. Tchaikowsky's use of instrumental sections and combinations makes this well-loved work a joy. Each change from March to Sugar Plum Fairy to the Russian, Arabian, Chinese and Reed-Flutes dances immediately creates the new mood. The final Waltz of the Flowers is a magical Viennese-style sweeping dance that carried the end of the program to an exciting conclusion.

Conductor Christopher Bearman had command of the orchestra with the players attentive to his baton. This once-a-year orchestra has grown in stature during Christopher Bearman's time as each section becomes more polished and the ensemble playing tightens. It was a delight to hear a real harp.

The seemingly tireless Mercia Buck has once again presented an afternoon where the region's orchestral musicians showed their skills in playing a challenging and entertaining program. The majority of these musicians are young and developing their craft, giving hope that there is a solid future for orchestral playing in the Hunter.

Dr Jennifer Barnes

Tuesday November 5th, 2019