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## Reviews

**Thunderous Applause and a Much-Deserved Standing Ovation for the Fox Valley Symphony and Dmitri Novgorodsky!**

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**November 5, 2007**

Review: Fox Valley Symphony in tune with Debussy's masterwork  
By James Chaudoir  
For The Post-Crescent

Ears turned in 1894 when the opening strains of Debussy's orchestral masterwork "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" were first heard in the musical world.

Ears turned again on Saturday night as the Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra opened its second subscription concert with the very same piece that helped vault the craft of musical composition into a new era.

The prelude is a musical depiction of Stephane Marilame's poem of the same title and opens with a hauntingly beautiful flute solo, played expertly by principal flutist Linda Nielsen Korducki. This tune repeats throughout the composition and is passed from one instrument to another creating multiple solos within the orchestral texture.

Maestro Brian Groner's interpretation was true to Debussy's score as he ingeniously worked the orchestra through the gossamer textures of this fluid and impressionistic composition.

The first half of the program continued with first suite from Sibelius' incidental music for Shakespeare's "The Tempest." In all, 10 brief movements, or vignettes, were featured as well as a narration telling the story of Sibelius' and Shakespeare's work.

The piece was narrated by John Koker, dean of the College of Letters and Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and amateur actor, who would periodically go into character and recite from the script of the play complete with the occasional theatrical antic. Though the movements short to the extent of being viewed as miniatures, the true nature of Sibelius' writing came through, even that of his most mature works.

The "treat" of the evening was Dmitri Novgorodsky's stunning performance of Rachmaninoff's tour de force, Piano Concerto No. 3 in d minor. From the crisp opening bars of the concerto to its dramatic conclusion, the audience listened intently to Novgorodsky's mastery of the piano while working in consort with Groner's skillful leadership of the orchestra.

The first movement was filled both with lyrical and sweeping themes that lent themselves to virtuosic treatment in both the solo and orchestral parts. Novgorodsky's hands moved effortlessly over the keyboard from one challenging passage to the next. It was not only his technical skill that enlivened his musicality, but also his gentle handling of the more sensitive passages in the music, both of which were called upon the concerto.

The grand cadenza in the first movement unquestionably featured Novgorodsky at his absolute best. His attention to every detail and nuance was, to put it mildly, breath-taking.

The second movement opened with broad expansive melodic material setting up the piano entry. It was a movement of varied personalities in which the piano was constantly to the fore, playing an extended solo with orchestral accompaniment.

Again, we were taken with Novgorodsky's skill and subtle awareness of Rachmaninoff's score as he glided from one thematic gesture to the next. The brilliant finale, featuring one of the more exciting codas in all of music, put everyone to the test. Novgorodsky showed no let-up from having already mastered two demanding movements. At times his hands flew over the keys in a blur, yet not a single articulation or nuance was missed.

Upon its completion, the audience burst into thunderous applause with a much-deserved standing ovation. After several curtain calls, Novgorodsky offered a wisp of a piece by Scriabin to bring us back down-to-earth. How fortunate we are to have such an accomplished talent in our own community.

*James Chaudoir is a professor of music composition at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.*

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