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April 28, 2005

Ozgen displays spectacular classical guitar at Distinguished Artists concert

Phyllis Rosenblum: Classical Beat

Mesut Ozgen displayed his dazzling classical guitar playing Saturday evening in John Orlando's Cabrillo College Distinguished Artists Concert and Lecture Series.

The program at Resurrection Church of Aptos featured folk-inspired music from several countries. Video displays projected behind the performer, were, for me, a distraction whose relation to the performance were hard to discern.

Ozgen, an award-winning international performer, has been on the UC Santa Cruz faculty since 1998. For seven years, before making the guitar his career, he was a practicing physician.

Crystalline notes glistened in "Variations on an Anatolian Folk Song" by Carlo Domeniconi. Here, sensitive phrasing delineated various treatments of the haunting tune "Uzun ince bir yoldayim" (I am on a Long and Narrow Road) from Ozgen's own Turkish heritage. (You can hear a bit of this piece on www.mesutozgen.com/en/root/.)

Two Latin-flavored works — the Peruvian "Misionera," by Fernando Bustamonte, and the Argentine "Sortija" by Pablo Ortiz — bounced with lively rhythms and rich harmonies. Ozgen's own "Anatolian Fantasy" drifted elegantly through various contrasting moods. "Tango Cruz" was a charming gem Ozgen wrote for a friend's birthday.

Works by Christopher Pratorius, Robert Beaser and Benjamin Verdery rounded out the program. Ozgen rewarded the enthusiastic audience response with an encore: Francisco Tarrega's lilting "Recuerdos de la Alhambra."

The Distinguished Artists' next concert June 25 features award-winning young pianists from the "Gold Country Piano Institute." This elite piano school is directed by Pawel Skrzypek, who has presented several immensely popular all-Chopin concerts at Cabrillo College.



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Nailing it

Classical guitarists worry about their fingernails. They don't use plastic picks, as pop guitarists do. I once sat in on a classical guitar master class, and I was amazed at the amount of time spent discussing fingernails.

While the left hand, nails must be short, so they don't interfere with pressing the strings down on the frets; the right-hand nails need to be long enough to pluck the strings as smooth as possible. Classical guitarists carry special nail files, buffers and supplies of fine-grade sandpaper which they sometimes even use on stage during a concert. Should a nail break, an emergency replacement can be made by gluing on a segment of a cut-up Ping-Pong ball.

Advertisement



Learning to play

I felt like the Lone Ranger riding off after a rescue as I drove away from Santa Cruz Gardens Elementary School last Friday. I'd just helped a fifth grader coax his first-ever sound from a flute after weeks of trying. He was as pleased as I was (possibly even more so) and rewarded me with gracious thanks.

His music teacher, Sharon Carson, had announced one night at our Cabrillo Band rehearsal that she'd welcome volunteer help from a flutist. Carson teaches the school's music classes through a Packard grant — and with support from the Home and School Club — the beginning band of 20 or so impressively enthusiastic young players.

I remembered my beginning instrument class in seventh grade. We flute players would troop into the coat and lunch closet to practice separately from the loud reeds and brasses.

I was lucky to also be taking private lessons, so I always had a few tips to share. I definitely recommend private lessons whenever possible. They start beginners off with correct technique and can help avoid major frustrations.

Roman adventure

Evan Coulter, a fifth grader at Santa Cruz Children's School, has been accepted into the Rome Music Festival's Children's Chorus for their production of Humperdinck's opera "Hansel and Gretel" this summer.

The proceeds from a concert of chamber music at 3 p.m. Sunday at the Cabrillo College Forum will help send him to Rome.

Contact Phyllis Rosenblum at arozena@pacbell.net.

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