

Santa Barbara Symphony and Ensemble Theatre Company A Family Feud & Midsummer Night Dreams

FROM ITS ICY OPENING CHORD, Prokofiev's music to the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* perfectly describes the deadly confrontation between the play's Capulet and Montague families that will ultimately engulf its two lovers, while Felix Mendelssohn's incidental music to the bard's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sparkles with puckish mirth and merriment. Composers, choreographers, visual artists, poets, even prizefighters have been inspired by William Shakespeare's magical

DANIEL KEPL use of the English
MUSIC INTERVIEW language for 300
years and counting.
The Santa Barbara

Symphony, in collaboration with actors from Ensemble Theatre Company, celebrated the playwright's genius with a program titled *Shakespeare Set To Music* last weekend at the Granada Theatre. It was a feast of bard-inspired music that included a *Suite* by Sir William Walton from his film score for *As You Like It*; conductor Nir Kabaretti's personal selection of seven scenes from Prokofiev's monumental ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*, Op. 64; and from a teenage Felix Mendelssohn, the immortal melodies from his *Incidental Music to A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 21 and 61 that have become universally recognized as a musical signature for the play ever since. The homage in sound and word delighted Saturday night's audience.

Conductor Nir Kabaretti opened the program with William Walton's 1936 film score to *As You Like It*. It's four sections, *Prelude*, *Moonlight*, *The Fountain*, and *Wedding Procession* were orchestrated in the composer's distinctive color palette. Wind, brass, and percussion batteries executed the score's stirring martial tunes with vigor and panache, while the strings, often in chamber music mode (string quartet) obliged with an array of handsome romantic mood shifts.

In stunning contrast, Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* ballet score, composed for the Kirov Theater in Leningrad in the same year as Walton's film score, is muscular and catastrophic as suits the tragic story. Maestro Kabaretti, conducting from memory, selected seven scenes from the monumental three Act ballet: *Montagues and Capulets*; *Scene*; *Morning Dance*; *Juliet, the Young Girl*; *Masks*; *Romeo and Juliet*; and *Death of Tybalt*. Prokofiev's mastery at orchestration, including solo moments for several principals sprinkled throughout



Connor Kelly-Eiding as Puck performs in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

the music, reminded listeners the Santa Barbara Symphony is a first-rate ensemble.

Actors from Ensemble Theatre Company joined the orchestra for visual fun and frolic on stage during a quasi-staged performance of Mendelssohn's iconic *Incidental Music to A Midsummer Night's Dream* which occupied the second half of the program. Staged discreetly by Ensemble's Executive Artistic Director Jonathan Fox to suit the concert milieu, Puck (Connor Kelly-Eiding) popped up in the percussion section and later lingered on Kabaretti's podium while narrating the story of Shakespeare's hapless lovers Lysander (Ross Hellwig) and Hermia (Katharine Leonard), Demetrius (Charles Pasternak) and Helena (Rebekah Trip). A simple but magical lighting design and perfect audio quality allowed the bard's several spoken snippets by Ensemble Theatre's five outstanding actors to be enjoyed fully, while the physical interactions between the characters at proscenium's edge in front of the orchestra, clarified for the audience a necessarily compact recounting of the play's convoluted romantic dilemmas.

This latest collaboration between two of Santa Barbara's cherished professional organizations was an unqualified success.

Daniel Kepl has been writing music, theatre, and dance reviews for Santa Barbara publications since he was a teenager. His professional expertise is as an orchestra conductor.

Photos by David Bazemore



The Santa Barbara Symphony

Around Town

Chumash Donate Charity Golf Classic Funds to Local Schools

THE CHUMASH CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC, which was held earlier this year at Alisal River Course, raised \$120,000 to be shared among four local schools: College School District in Santa Ynez, Los Olivos School District, Solvang School District, and Santa Ynez Valley Charter School.

Students at Santa Ynez Elementary received a total of 80 Chromebooks; Solvang School District was presented with more than \$31,000 in hardware and tech services including a mobile Chromebook cart, 40 Chromebooks to be used in classrooms, and 20 Dell Laptops specifically for the school's teachers; the Los Olivos School Board received a cart of 40 Chromebooks, a cart of 20 Apple iPads, and one MacBook Pro; and Santa Ynez Charter school was presented with a \$24,000 technology grant towards

hiring a level-one technology services staffer for the school.

"All four of these schools have different needs, and we felt it was important to look at each school individually and give them the boost they needed, rather than giving all the schools the same gift," said Vincent Armenta, Tribal Chairman of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians. "We hope these make a real difference for these students as they prepare for their state testing."

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