Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Dudamel Masters Rachmaninoff at the Hollywood Bowl

R. Daniel Foster · Wednesday, July 18th, 2018

Conductor Gustavo Dudamel delivered the second of more than a half-dozen Hollywood Bowl concerts on July 12, commanding a superb Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2. Uzbekistani pianist Behzod Abduraimov joined Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic; he was a last-minute substitute for an ill Khatia Buniatishvili.

No. 2 largely solidified Sergei Rachmaninoff's standing. It's a heroic piece, composed for a dauntless task: it led the composer out of a nearly three-year depression triggered by a sloppily-prepared performance of his First Symphony in 1897. The 1901 concerto is an expansive showpiece, its brooding opening movement developed into an aching adagio, concluding with a pyrotechnical allegro.

A hushed audience

The response from Thursday night's packed Hollywood Bowl audience was rapt silence. I've never heard an audience at the outdoor venue so utterly hushed. There was the requisite helicopter fly-over as well as a car alarm (why do they always happen during an adagio?), but nary a tipped wine bottle tinkled – or most anything else.

The Hollywood Bowl / Los Angeles Philharmonic

The connectivity between Abduraimov, the conductor and the orchestra was seamless during numerous give-and-take thematic passages. The pianist's deep-felt lyricism was poetic. In its entirety, the piece never spilled its own banks; Dudamel mastered the reins at every turn.

Abduraimov's encore: "La Campanella" Étude No. 3 by Franz Liszt. More than brisk, the etude requires an athletic superpower: two octaves are jumped within a sixteenth note's split second. Trills are played on the upper register, among other impossible strings of notes. It's a virtuoso showpiece that can't be made to look or sound easy; Abduraimov made it sound miraculous.

Mussorgsky's whimsey

Post intermission: Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (Ravel's orchestration), a suite of ten pieces inspired by an exhibit of watercolors and drawings by the composer's friend Viktor Hartmann. Each piece evokes the essence, and moreover a kind of whimsy that matches various of Harmann's works. The recurring "Promenade" is a stand-in for the listener who strolls through the

art gallery as the work is viewed.

The 1874 composition, somewhat of a smorgasbord of delight even with the ponderous pieces (“Chicks in Their Shells” is a showoff for woodwinds that double for tittering poultry). The night’s standouts included: Thomas Hooten, trumpet; Patrick Posey, saxophone; and Whitney Crocket, bassoon.

_____

The Hollywood Bowl features classical music on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

The Hollywood Bowl’s ticket and package offerings.

Photographs courtesy of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

[alert type=alert-white]Please consider making a tax-deductible donation now so we can keep publishing strong creative voices.[/alert]

This entry was posted on Wednesday, July 18th, 2018 at 7:35 pm and is filed under Music, Fiction, Visual Art
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.