

Entertainment

First Ebb & Flow Arts Festival triumphs by stretching boundaries toward new horizons

CONCERT REVIEW

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The first Ebb & Flow Arts Festival was a wonderful success. The three-day event featured world-class musicians, exciting musical works, visual arts, poetry, and even puppetry. And, oh yes, everything was free.

The most often heard comment during the weekend went something like, "Can you imagine, here we are on little Maui in the middle of the Pacific and we're treated to this fabulous experience?"

The festival began on Thursday at Pat Masumoto's new Gallery Ha in Wailuku. Pianists Frances Ku, Anne Durham, Nora Hunter, Cody Gillette, Mark Graven, Diana Dahl and Robert Pollock each took a shift at the keyboard for Eric Satie's "Vexations," a short piece that is played 840 times. The musicians began at 10 a.m. and completed the cycle at 10:15 p.m.

People chatted, looked at the art, enjoyed refreshments in the little garden at the back while Satie's haunting notes permeated the conversation, served as accompaniment to the paintings, and played a duet with the trickling waterfall in the garden's pool. The music never insisted, but insinuated its ever-presence.

Friday night's concert at Makawao Union Church featuring Honolulu Symphony concertmaster Ignace Jang and Turkish harpist Sirin Pancaroglu was a triumph. Beginning with four pieces by Debussy, the artists held the audience rapt throughout, even though, as Jang said, some of the works were challenging to many people's musical palate.

The combination of violin and harp was captivating and the visual image of the musicians and their shadows playing against the color harp behind them added to the experience.

The entire program deserves accolades, but a definite highlight was Jee Young Kim's "Longing Under the Moon," with the harp taking on the persona of the yearning woman and the violin the cool and distant moon.

Pancaroglu opened the second half of the program with a solo piece, "Blue Moon White, Yellow Night Wall" by Hasan Ucar. Dissonance, percussive striking of the harp's frame, and the twanging resonance of the bass strings showed that in the hands of an accomplished and adventurous artist, the instrument can do much more than sound sweet and ethereal.

"We're not asking you to like this piece," Jang said, introducing Ricardo Lorenz's "Jaromina Luna." He went on to note how today's audiences have the benefit of historical perspective in the arts and can appreciate change. Harsh, strident and percussive, then moving into lyricism, the Lorenz work gave Jang the opportunity for some electrifying cadenzas.

The audience loved the final work, Astor Piazzolla's "Histoire du Tango," a three-movement tribute to the sensuous Latin dance with a spectacular ending that had everyone rising en masse to applaud.

The encore? A Chopin nocturne to send everyone peacefully home.

The buzz was on and most of the people who attended that concert were eager to hear what the next night had in store.

After a slate of Saturday afternoon artistic activities at Waipuna Chapel in Kula, artist Richard Nelson gave a presentation on his mentor, the colorist and painter Josef Albers. In fact, this first festival was dedicated to "Josef Albers and his influence."

"Throughout his seminal work, 'Interaction of Color,' Albers made numerous references to music. He and others in the Bauhaus School in Germany, including Kandinsky and Schoenberg, explored connections and common spiritual ground within the

arts. Ebb & Flow Arts follows Albers' lead in producing events that combine music with other art forms," the program notes explain.

Nelson's "informance" on Albers' color principles, concepts that were brought to life through digital animation later that evening, opened a whole new way of experiencing art. In fact, the entire festival was dedicated to widening experiences, to stretching boundaries, to going a little beyond the comfort zone and reveling in the newness.

The final concert marked the debut of the Ebb & Flow Ensemble, featuring Jang, Honolulu Symphony principal cellist Greg Dubay, and Ebb & Flow Arts founder, Robert Pollock. All world-class musicians, the trio presented an exciting range of sounds, beginning with four short pieces by Anton Webern.

In introducing the Webern, Pollock told the audience he likes to begin concerts with unexpected music, something with a bit of a challenge. The effect is like a tasty appetizer, something to wake up the musical palate and create a hunger for the rest of the concert.

The next course was the premiere of Pollock's Trio No. 4, a complex, textured work that crackled with excitement. Hearing a new work and knowing it's the first time to be played in public tends to make the listener feel part of the creative process.

"Dimensions," a collaborative work-in-progress by Pollock and Nelson, married music and digital animation in an exploration of point, line, plane and variations such as music is note, phrase, theme and variations.

Works by Piazzolla and Ravel capped the evening, building to a spectacular finale and a thoroughly energized audience. People couldn't leave; they wanted to hang around after the performance and talk about what they had experienced.



Ebb & Flow Arts pianist Ignace Jang (right) joined Turkish harpist Sirin Pancaroglu (left) for Friday's concert at Makawao Union Church which encompassed traditional works as well as innovative new pieces.

You can't listen to new music and be lulled. You can be moved, surprised, and even jarred, but you can't turn off your brain. New music demands attention and thanks to Ebb & Flow Arts, it's

getting it. Robert Pollock and Ebb & Flow Arts are presenting an artistic challenge: Maui audiences are meeting it with creased enthusiasm.