

September 18, 2023

Lyric Theatre

“Concerto”

Written by Alan Olejniczak

Music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Musical Supervisor Maestro Alexander Mickelthwate

Directed by Michael Baron

World Premier!

“Concerto,” an intensely emotional drama, combines the best of the arts that OKC has to offer. With superlative performances by Matthew Alvin Brown (Tchaikovsky), Kris Schinske (von Meck) and Sheridan McMichael (Kotel) and musical excellence of Joad Pedro Pena Dutra on the piano and Samuel Gilles on violin, “Concerto,” as an artistic collaboration between Lyric’s Michael Baron and the OKC Phil’s Maestro Alexander Michelthwate, showcases Oklahoma City arts in a world premier.

“Concerto” is based on over 1200 letters written between Tchaikovsky and von Meck, his very wealthy patroness. The two never met, yet developed a friendship lasting over 13 years. Among the lighter moments are the two sharing their opinions, often contradictory, of Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Brahms and Mendelssohn. Tchaikovsky’s troubled relationship with his protégé Kotel, who worked for von Meck, is included in the narrative, creating adult situations on stage. Woven within this powerful story about the creation of art are musical excerpts from some of the most beloved classics and of course Tchaikovsky. “Concerto” is about Tchaikovsky, his struggles with his art, finances and loves.

Schinske’s von Meck is very subtle with only slight facial expressions or slight changes of posture to express emotions. Thus, her tumultuously, emotional firing of Kotel for being caught with one of her maids is powerfully felt. Brown’s Tchaikovsky is all emotion, though never over played. He is either pulling his hair, waving his hands scowling, smiling and all of the above, contrasting nicely with Schinske’s understated performance. McSheridan’s Kotel is slimy, untrustworthy, ambitious and it works. His use of body language is nicely done.

Bravo to the two musicians Dutra and Gilles for stellar performances of so many classical excerpts.

The magnificent set by Uldarico Sarmiento consist of two Russian rooms separated by the piano and violin stand, allowing the musicians to be on stage throughout the production, yet not detracting from the flow of the narrative. Look for the details added to denote wealth.

Jeffrey Meek’s costumes, especially von Meck’s are a delight.

“Concerto’s” author Olejniczak worked closely with Lyric staff and the Maestro in the development of this world premier. It is a part of Lyric’s New Works Initiative, began in 2014, whose purpose is to develop and produce new works.

“Concerto” will play at Lyric’s Plaza Theater through October 1. One will be delighted with the music and mesmerized by the story. “Concerto” is a must see production.