

The Maple Leaf Tenors (Romanza)

Community Concerts Season Ends with a Flourish

The Kelowna Community Concert Association's 2005-2006 season ended Tuesday evening to the thunderous roar of the capacity crowd at the Kelowna Community Theatre. The group creating this sensation was Romanza, formerly known as the Maple Leaf Tenors.

Originally capitalizing on the success of the Three Tenors, the Maple Leafs have finally doffed that moniker and come into their own. Anyone who is a fan of Il Divo will probably like Romanza.

Romanza is highly entertaining. Some on-stage clowning along with a repertoire of popular classic tunes grabs and holds the attention of a diverse audience. These tenors all have good voices that blend well and show impressive vocal technique.

Accompanying the vocalists was an instrumental trio as gifted as the tenors themselves: pianist Karen Lee-Morlang, violinist Yuel Yawney, and bassist Adam Jones. Lee-Morlang played with sensitivity and precision, well complemented by Yawney, whose sweet-sounding violin was virtually free of extraneous noises. It is remarkable how a couple of stringed instruments can make the background sound so rich and full.

The singers are Frederik Robert, Ken Lavigne, and Phillip Grant. Robert's voice has the easiest top tones; Lavigne's is the most dramatic, and Grant's possesses the most penetrating sound.

And speaking of sound, the only drawback I found with this concert was its almost painful loudness. Luckily, the volume controls were adjusted during intermission, and the second half of the program was quite tolerable.

Most of the songs were in Italian, with English coming in a distant second. The tenor singing the one German selection (*Dein ist mein ganzes Herz*) praised the singable nature and pleasing sound of the German tongue, only to ruin the effect by mispronouncing several words.

The program was a model of balance: for example, each section contained 8 selections, and each tenor had a solo in each section. Then too, the concert started and ended in the same vein, opening with Andrea Bocelli's hit *Nella Fantasia* and closing with Josh Groban's *The Prayer*.

With this spectacular conclusion to another sold-out season, one must wonder how the Kelowna Community Concert Association does it. Subscription prices are phenomenally low, and the quality of the concerts is consistently superior. Certainly Yvonne Topf can boast a dedicated Executive and a hardworking corps of Volunteers. Bravo KCCA!