

The Golden Violin

Golden Violin's Voyage Reaches Kelowna

A legendary fiddle with a sweet sound and a golden hue stopped at the Kelowna Community Theatre Wednesday evening. It was the featured item of the Kelowna Community Concert Association's penultimate concert of the current season.

Showcasing this rare instrument were Calvin Dyck, its present owner, and Betty Suderman, accompanist. Both are excellent musicians from the Lower Mainland.

I did take note of Ms. Suderman's opening disclaimer that some of the information being presented could not be independently verified and also that the subtitle of the program was A Legendary [not historical] and Musical Journey. So the ratio of fiction to fact remains unknown, but I've seen enough operas to know how to suspend disbelief and allow myself to be swayed by the sights and the sounds of the performance. Swayed I was.

The Golden Violin multimedia presentation is cleverly conceived and beautifully played. Imagine: 199 years ago, a Dutch violin maker named Johan Kuypers builds an exceptional instrument, which is eventually bought by the famous violinist Joseph Joachim.

After Joachim's death in 1907, the fiddle is acquired by a Polish Jew named Rosner. As Hitler and his Nazis take over Germany, Rosner has the foresight to send some of his more precious possessions to New York City. A good thing, too, because the Germans do invade Poland and capture Rosner.

Rosner is rescued by Oskar Schindler (remember Schindler's List?) and eventually makes his way to New York, where he is reunited with his Golden Violin. In 1955, October 22 to be precise, Rosner lends the Golden Violin to Fritz Kreisler for a concert at Carnegie Hall. Now two world famous violinists have played and admired this fabulous fiddle.

A musical instrument dealer in southern California purchases the Golden Violin from Rosner's estate and finally sells it to violinist Calvin Dyck. Dyck brings the violin to Kelowna and shows off its remarkable capabilities.

The concert opened with a Mozart Rondo and then proceeded to the three-composer "FAE" violin sonata. The three composers were Albert Dietrich, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms, in that order. Suderman related that these three musicians decided to collaborate on the composition of a sonata for Joseph Joachim, whose personal motto was *Frei aber Einsam*, or F-A-E. It is claimed that Joachim sight-read the sonata, ostensibly using his Golden Violin.

The story of the Golden Violin proved to be a good rack on which to hang the popular classical melodies of this inspired concert.

After the concert, Dyck and Suderman were on hand to sign CDs in the lobby. It should be mentioned that they donate the proceeds of such sales to Supportive Care Services, a Mennonite organization that provides programs and support for people coping with disabilities.