

Volya

The Kelowna Community Concert Association ended the season on a high note last Saturday with Volya, a Ukrainian Dance troupe from Edmonton playing to the usual capacity crowd.

This was an evening of unparalleled excitement as the dancers whirled, twirled and leaped to traditional music of the Ukraine. It was spectacle of sight and sound starting with their colorful authentic costumes making a kaleidoscopic effect that was dazzling at times. When coupled with the wonderful music, the effect was marvellous.

The program started with a slow, graceful dance as a welcome, but it quickly became vigorous with the start of the fancy, intricate foot work that would be a huge part of the evening. The ladies swirled their skirts and carried out various foot patterns while the men were more athletic with leaps of various kinds. Seeing them work together was amazing.

There were several different dances, each with their own choreography, going from energetic and acrobatic to slower more gentle steps. Each one was most effective with almost perfectly synchronized movements. The minor variations of how far a leg was raised, or a turn was executed made it all the more enjoyable.

A particularly compelling dance started with a ballet like dance from one of the ladies in a flowing costume followed by whirling white cloths under a black light. It was almost eerie to see them move up and down and around with no sign of the "whirlers". The first half ended with a Christmas dance, starting with the music to the bell carol from the Ukraine, going to the customary energetic dances and the appearance of a "devil" to frighten the ladies. It was here that we were treated to solo turns by various dancers as they displayed their considerable skill and flexibility.

After intermission the dancing in general became even more energetic as the performers continued to show their special skills. It is hard to describe all the various acrobatics and footwork that was carried out, but it was typical of traditional Ukraine. I had to wonder how the human body could carry out such manoeuvres!

The evening ended with a traditional Hopak, the National Dance of the Ukraine. I quote from the program: "Prepare yourself for Volya's legendary passion, superior solos and graceful finesse that builds into the climax of an unforgettable performance". It was all that and more, a superb end to an outstanding evening which was fully appreciated by the patrons.

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Marvin Dickau is an Organist, Pianist and Conductor who has an A.Mus. from the University of Alberta. He has conducted choirs and small orchestras, given solo piano and organ recitals and accompanied many singers and instrumentalists in Kelowna and Calgary.