

MANITOBA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA SAYS CELLO TO KELOWNA

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It was Manitoba in the house at **Kelowna Community Theatre** on the final Thursday night of September.

Thanks to an invitation from the **Kelowna Community Concert Association**, the **Manitoba Chamber Orchestra (MCO)** made a tour stopover in the Okanagan to perform a delightful mix of contemporary and classic concertos. Adding silky tone and technical prowess to the program was guest cellist **Ariel Barnes**, a Vancouver native who dazzled the packed house with smooth solos under the baton expertise of Music Director **Anne Manson**.

The evening's modern first piece, written by freelance composer **Jeffrey Ryan**, was called Earthshine. Earthshine is a dull glow which lights up the unlit part of the moon because the sun's light reflects off the earth's surface and back onto the moon. Metaphorically, earthshine is a reflection of ourselves that brings light into darkness. Ryan got his deep-seated inspiration from a German poem I found the music to be like a quiet, soft rain orchestrated in



slow-motion. After the show, one of the musicians explained it this way – “it had lots of sounds and colors. The music tended to lose focus, and then regain focus to different sound structures.” Okanagan Symphony Orchestra Music Director Rosemary Thomson and Composer Jeffrey Ryan.



Up next was a Cello Concerto in C Major by **Haydn**. Barnes made his first appearance at stage front and handled his upright fiddle with aplomb. Helping me describe Barnes' performance, at intermission, was **Okanagan Symphony Orchestra Music Director Rosemary Thomson**. “Barnes took a holistic view of this piece,” said Thomson. “It was such fun watching him link with the audience and orchestra. He has extraordinary technique and can do anything with phrasing, contrast, and cadence.”

After intermission came a Barnes-led rendition of The Iron Man, a revised concerto written by **Michael Oesterle**. Each movement represented industrial progress as seen through ironworking. Near the end of the piece, it seemed like Barnes was toying with his instrument with very light cartoon-like plucks. At one point the audience giggled when he finished with a smile. It was that kind of jovial night because the performances were through-the-roof entertaining.



Ariel Barnes (all black) mingling after the show

The final concerto was Symphony No. 29 from **Mozart**. This lively toe-tapper sent everyone home in an upbeat mood. Post show in the KCT lobby, I asked Maestra **Manson** (who lives in London) how the evening went. "It was challenging because the acoustics in the building were quite dry and had very little resonance," she said. "The musicians could actually hear each other. We're not used to that. Overall, the audience was very positive about the performance and that's something we always like to hear."

Big Finish – You're next, Vancouver. Twenty-four hours after Manitoba musicians took the KCT stage comes the **Vancouver Symphony Orchestra**. The VSO, led by Maestro Bramwell Tovey, will be the Friday night special guest artists of the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra.