

The Slee Sinfonietta comes to play

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NEWS CONTRIBUTING REVIEWER

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The Slee Sinfonietta is one of those groups with a membership that can be called upon to fill just about any size orchestral program. Tuesday night's offering of standards and newer material, under the direction of Matthias Pintscher, gave proof of that.

Every piece in the lineup told a story at some point in their "lives," either by illustrating an action or a scene. There was an American spring (Aaron Copland's suite from the ballet "Appalachian Spring") and an Italian winter (the fourth of Antonio Vivaldi's "Four Seasons") plus some movie music from John Corigliano's score for the "Red Violin" and a modern framework for an ancient ode to love, Pintscher's vocal setting of a section drawn from the biblical "Song of Solomon."

Starting off the evening was Copland's suite in his arrangement for 13 instruments—a piano, three wind instruments and nine members of the string family. Pintscher led his forces in a relatively lean sounding performance even when considering the number of parts in the score. It allowed for a certain textural clarity, but it wasn't necessarily the most interesting offering of the evening despite the way that the heart of the piece, the Shaker tune "Simple Gifts", came through like a welcome old friend.

Corigliano's suite from "Red Violin" was a lush feast for strings and, occasionally, percussion. Violinist Tim Fain handled the solo parts with considerable skill and elan, especially in the "Gypsy Cadenza" portion of the piece. Pintscher, as a conductor, made a good case for hearing the work more often in concert halls, but its home is really in

the cinema as incidental music.

Fain was also the featured performer in the Sinfonietta's take on Vivaldi's "Winter." While he has chops galore, the rendition was just OK in the first two movements and didn't really get going until the final section where the quick pacing played more to Fain's skill set as a fluid player in rapid passages.

The concluding work was Pintscher's own "songs from Solomon's garden," a piece written in 2009 but given its world premiere earlier this year. According to Pintscher, the Hebrew texts are difficult to translate on a word by word basis since many concepts are compressed within a single unit of speech making them "islands of iconographic meaning" saying that "the words are kind of radiating within themselves."

Evan Hughes' richly hued baritone-bass was a joy to hear and use as an audio anchor in a challenging score. Pintscher the conductor gave what one could safely assume was a good account of the piece by Pintscher the composer, and the piece itself is worth hearing by anyone willing to stretch their ears.

Concert Review

Slee Sinfonietta

With violinist Tim Fain. Tuesday evening in Slee Hall, University at Buffalo North Campus, Amherst.