

REVIEW

Perfect bond closes series

By COLLEEN JOHNSTON
Record staff

Conductor Martin Fischer-Dieskau is just the sort of superb musician you want to have in charge of an orchestra as responsive to suggestion as the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.

That's because he's an unusually sensitive accompanist. Although leading the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony for the first time, Fischer-Dieskau's poise and solid musical pedigree ensured that the final concert of the KWS Masterpiece series was not only enjoyable, but cram-jammed with integrity.

Fischer-Dieskau gave the 70 per cent full house at the Centre in the Square more than their money's worth on Friday, in a program which made artistic sense throughout.

A challenging roster of works, including such disparate selections as Canadian composer Kelly Marie Murphy's soundscape titled *From the drum comes a thundering beat . . .*, Felix Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1 in G Minor, Opus 25, and Antonin Dvorak's Ninth Symphony, in C Minor, Opus 95, was given lavish attention from Fischer-Dieskau's baton.

With Vancouver-based pianist Jon Kimura Parker, Fischer-Dieskau instantly established the sort of bonding that Mendelssohn's composition demands. Every nuance of Parker's impeccable style was respected, and this reverence was passed on to the individually and collectively disciplined KWS personnel. It's been some time since the KWS has had the leadership and communication between conductor and soloist that was ever-present on Friday. And never before has a pianist played a Billy Joel encore with the kind of *naïvete* as Parker

sion and a fresh interpretation of style meshed with Parker's technical mastery. Parker chose some risky tempos and phrasings at times, yet his interpretive choices shed new light on this familiar and beloved, and (oddly enough these days) neglected masterpiece. Fischer-Dieskau's canny, unflagging grasp of Parker's intentions, the score itself and the special capabilities of the KWS combined into a listening experience of depth and weight.

There were moments in Mendelssohn's work when Parker flew through arpeggios swiftly and cleanly enough to steal a listener's very breath.

As for the Murphy piece, well, everyone played his/her best. Murphy can be praised for orchestral know-how, but the mix of Thomas Kay's well-phrased bookend flute solos, Javanese gamelan hints, quotes from Benjamin Britten's *Serenade for Tenor and all*, and shades (in bassoon terms) from Hitchcock's TV series bemoaning the death of marionettes, added up to nothing substantial enough to be memorable.

Murphy needs to discard her adulation of the past in order to write about her own personal experiences, in her own voice.

Nevertheless, to his credit, Fischer-Dieskau supported a Canadian composer with respect.

Fischer-Dieskau is in the running for KWS permanent conductor. His background and gifts would be most welcome in this community.

Finally, as anyone who was there will attest, Fischer-Dieskau connected positively with the KWS in an intelligent, lush, romantic reading of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*.

Fischer-Dieskau, from the old world, tackled the score which composer Dvorak imagined the so-called new world embodied. This was a memorable concert, with standing ovations and much appreciative applause from the audience.

Grand Finale, the closing event of the KWS Masterpiece Series, was repeated on Saturday at the Centre in the Square to a nearly full house.



Conductor Martin Fischer-Dieskau