

CONCERT REPORT

Name: Steven Frank
Course: Music 14A, Beginning Classical Guitar
Date: Saturday, October 4, 2008

Event: Jerome Mouffe guitar concert at Le Petit Trianon Theatre, San Jose, California.

General Reaction: The artist, Jerome Mouffe, is a young and very personable musician. The Le Petit Trianon Theatre is a stately old structure, nicely appointed inside and provides lively acoustics so that even the softer portions of a guitar piece can be heard well throughout the auditorium. Mr. Mouffe took the stage at first in a classical fashion, speaking not a word and taking his seat at the middle of the stage. Closing his eyes and relaxing his arms at his sides for a moment, his hands then rose to the instrument and immediately began playing – brilliantly. From the first notes it was obvious that this was a virtuoso, and for a beginner as myself, the challenge was to reconcile the music that was being produced with the impossible movements of both his hands.

Mr. Mouffe's personality came through as the concert progressed. He spoke to the audience between pieces, giving small items of explanation about himself and the works he was about to play. The concert was marred only by an annoying non-rhythmic clicking sound that seemed to begin with the first piece and reverberated around the theater. Ultimately it was discovered that an audience member had brought a medical device with him into the concert hall and was apparently oblivious to the annoyance. The unfortunate individual was finally asked to leave the performance after the conclusion of the third piece of the evening. We felt sorry for the man, but were greatly relieved, as I'm sure was the performer, to be able to enjoy the rest of the concert without the maddening distraction.

As a newcomer to classical guitar music, I continue to be fascinated with the "gear" and the instruments, themselves. The artist's guitar appeared to be a beautiful instrument, but it also had an interesting piece attached to it. On the bottom side of the guitar that would normally rest on the artist's left leg, an extension was attached that held the instrument in the proper position, at a 45 degree angle, without the need to constantly hold the neck with the left hand. This allowed Mr. Mouffe to drop his left arm to his side, which he did several times, without having to reposition the instrument or hang on with the right forearm. I don't know if it enhanced the musicality of the instrument, but I envy the convenience.

Program: Jerome Mouffe is a classical musician, classically trained in his native Belgium as well as in Austria and other European conservatories. The music began with *Reverie – Nocturne* and *Introduction et Caprice* by Giulio Regondi, *Fantasia, op. 19* by Luigi Legnani, and the *Mazurka Apasionata* by Nitsuga Mangore. His skill as a musician was clear throughout as the guitar performed these pieces as a dutiful servant to the performer's artistry. But it wasn't until the sixth piece of the evening, the *Asturias – Leyenda* by Isaac Albeniz, that the instrument actually seemed to come alive. With the dramatic staccato flourishes of the flamenco music, his guitar seemed to remember what it had been created for. That music, to me, represents the original purpose to which the classical guitar was born. The intricate and difficult classical music that had previously illustrated the artist's skills was at once replaced by the emotional voice of the instrument itself, only incidentally accompanied by Mr. Mouffe's flying fingers. It was like listening to a learned speaker talking in various languages throughout the evening, then hearing his words for the first time in his native tongue. The subtle and not so subtle tones and inflexions of the flamenco were finally the true sound of a beautiful voice expressing itself in its most natural way.

What learned: That I will never live long enough to have a fraction of the skill Jerome Mouffe has. Any skill that I acquire at all shall be earned in tiny increments through very long hours of practice. Virtuosity is gained as much from tedium as from a genetic predisposition sometimes referred to as talent. Hours of practice bring the necessary muscle-memory required for the physical ability to perform chords and to strike the strings properly. Talent, I think, is the quality of music one is ultimately able to create after one has acquired that underlying muscle-memory. May I live so long.