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offers bravura playing

By Paul Hyde • Arts Writer • Published:
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A **rock concert** atmosphere pervaded the Peace Center Tuesday night, with the audience whistling, whooping and clapping vociferously — and demanding three encores from the performers.

There was no rock band onstage, however, but rather the classical string ensemble Interpreti Veneziani.

The enthusiasm was understandable. The nine-member ensemble offered virtuosic showpieces by Vivaldi, Paganini and others, all dispatched with devil-may-care abandon.

It was a tremendously entertaining performance.

The energetic Venice-based group boasted a great stage presence as well. Dressed all in black, the musicians moved expressively with the music and sprang up immediately after each piece was completed for a quick bow, delivered with almost military precision.

The concert opened with a very brisk and uniquely aggressive performance of Vivaldi's ever-popular "Four Seasons." The ensemble featured a different violinist from among its ranks for each of the four concertos, a fine way of showing off its collective talent.

This account of the "Four Seasons" certainly emphasized the dynamic contrasts and brought out all the drama Vivaldi has to offer. There were

fleeting intonation problems and some melodic detail was lost amid the furious fiddling.

On the whole, however, this was a zesty, satisfying rendition of this Baroque favorite. There were many fine moments, such as the “Winter” concerto's middle section, which depicts the pleasure of warming up next to a crackling fire — a fetching prospect as the cold days near. The songlike melody evoking that scene was played with sweet serenity by violinist Guglielmo De Stasio.

The second half featured dazzling solos by two members of the ensemble, cellist Davide Amadio and violinist Nicola Granillo.

Granillo dashed off the pyrotechnics of Sarasate's “Introduzione e Tarantella” with flair and aplomb.

But it was fair to say that Amadio stole the show with his commanding performance of Niccolò Paganini's “Variazioni di bravura,” full of frenzied running passages and vast leaps about the fingerboard.

Amadio was a delight to watch, too, his face the picture of tranquil transcendence the one minute and playful exhaustion the next.

It was a riveting performance.

A harsher critic might say there was too much razzle-dazzle on Interpreti Veneziani's program and not enough profundity.

We'll point out that the audience loved the concert and demanded those three encores — and leave it at that.