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Wednesday, October 15, 2008

M I A F: Interpreti Veneziani Baroque Ensemble

Festival Diary #4: Sunday and Tuesday

Interpreti Veneziani Baroque Ensemble, Program 2 (Arcangelo Corelli, Antonio Vivaldi, Giovanni Paisiello and Felix Mendelssohn). BMW Edge.

The Interpreti Veneziani Baroque Ensemble provided some delicious moments of lightness on Tuesday. I always feel a bit of a fraud writing about music; however enthusiastic an audience, I have little technical understanding and some appalling gaps in my musical knowledge. But I know good performers when I see them.

This was a beautiful concert, perfectly framed by the glass amphitheatre of the BMW Edge, where the twilight sky gradually darkened behind the ensemble. They played a selection of baroque concertos from Antonio Vivaldi and Arcangelo Corelli and a later piece by Giovanni Paisiello with verve and exuberance. Paolo Cognolato's piano solo in the latter work was a highlight in a performance that reached well beyond the virtuosic.

The concert finished with a magnificent performance of Felix Mendelssohn's Concerto in D Minor for violin and strings, with a passionate solo by Guiliano Fontanella. After the intricate formality of the court music, Mendelssohn's Romantic expressiveness took glorious flight. (Then came four encores - the only name I caught there was Vivaldi, but one involved two soloists plucking their violins like banjos).

Aside from being formidable musicians, the ensemble is irresistible to watch. Each performer plays with a vitality and intensity that is infused by what I can only think of as sparkle, a contagious joy in the music that is expressed in their entire bodies and in the suppleness and ease with which they play together. This was music as absolute pleasure, a feast for the ear and eye.

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