

CONCERT REVIEW

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Greenberg's fiddling key to Ferintosh's repertoire

By Stephen Pedersen / Arts Reporter CONCERT REVIEW

David Greenberg is surely the most unique fiddle player to ply his bow in the land of the fiddle. When he digs into a classic strathspey, his energy almost blows you out of the hall. There is great joy in this, but it is a savage joy. Thursday night in the Lilian Piercey Concert Hall on the St. Cecilia Series, Greenberg showed the locals something of what he has been up to this past year. And that something is really something.

Specifically it is Ferintosh, a new somewhat Celtic band, with Abby Newton playing soulful cello and Kim Robertson making the harp sound like it is coming from somewhere deep inside your own heart.

The "somewhat" in the Celtic, covers Ferintosh's occasional meandering through Baroque Scottish repertoire - a repertoire, by the way, that is more Scottish than Baroque - certainly a repertoire in which gapped scales give an odd cast to the customary period melodic style.

For the rest, there are airs and marches, strathspeys and reels and the occasional jig. Their beauty is in their strangeness. These are genuine antique melodies, absolutely choice, exquisite in their originality. Simon Fraser is well represented, but also a large number of tunes of unknown origin. They are real finds.

Apart from his extraordinarily fine playing, Greenberg with his wife, Kate Dunlay, is a musical archaeologist. But there is nothing dry about their scholarship. It is transfigured by Greenberg's musical insight into relics.

His musical partners are true collaborators. Abby Newton contributes a warmth with a pulse in it, the body's own inner heat, and the precision of her playing, the way she fits in and around and solos when appropriate, are all the habits of an exceptional chamber musician.

The slow rhythms of the ocean are in Robertson's harp playing, gentle swells and surges of mood and emotion.

Both Newton and Greenberg play a lot of the time on the edge of the fingerboard, a good three inches away from the bridge, a technique that shadows their notes with a shimmering, mystical penumbra.

Finally, for this show and Ferintosh's Celtic Colours concerts Oct. 11 (New Waterford), Oct. 13 (Louisburg) and Oct. 16 (Whitney Pier) they featured dancer Sabra MacGillivray, the glory of the world, whose subtle choreography, flawless execution and breathtaking lightness - her feet tap and kick and point but the centre of her body is still and her arms float in arabesques above - outline the finest kind of highland dancing and step-dancing you will ever see.

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