

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

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Articles prior to December 5, 2018

Shelby County Arts Fest 2009 ? Reviews

Written by David on October, 13 2009

The following review does not express the opinion of the Strand Theatre.

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Music, its art and evolution, took center stage at the Strand Theatre, during Saturday?s downtown Shelby County Arts Fest 2009.

Even for a non-musician such as myself, the day?s five concerts were an exciting, pleasant, and provocative excursion which left one craving much more, in a myriad of ways. Curiously, each performance alternately highlighted and then teased you with the promising cultural possibilities available by, for, and within Shelbyville and Shelby County.

In a single day, on a single stage, one could enjoy music spanning the centuries: from Beethoven?s era to the Beatles, patrons were offered an enticing artistic smorgasbord of songs that fused musical themes, styles and genres while crossing generations. The range of performers and the diversity of the crowds in attendance were just one of the semi-shocking aspects of Saturdays? musical explorations.

The morning opened with the vocal harmonies of the ?Blue River Community Choir,? a local group of aficionados formed in 2001. ?Many of us have fond memories of the Strand, so it is always a pleasure to perform there,? said choir-member Carolyn Stadler.

This choral medley of love-inspired tune was followed by the instrumental sounds of the ?Shelby Community Band,? another local ensemble of talent, formed and performing since 1973. The band performed under the baton of guest conductor Charles Rose from Tipton, Indiana. On this day the band also featured a wonderful solo by euphonium player Ed Morin.

From this bass-toned performance the stage shifted to the more folksy, lyrical melodies of the ?Pitts Kitchen Dulcimer Band,? whose rhythmic work echoed and ricocheted throughout the theater.

This 9-piece ensemble conjured up several Araucanian vistas through its haunting, lilting style of play and showcased a quite outstanding feature of the Strand, its acoustic capabilities. While listening to one this band?s Celtic tunes I could almost see the swinging skirts of girls dancing across saw-dust covered floors and smell peat burning on the hearths of some long-lost Irish pub.

As an aside, the uplifting tempo of this musical romp inspired one very young jump, thrash and twirl about in an ecstatic form of childhood dance.

The next song, an evocative Germanic schottische, was equally sensory and evocative as both the rhythms of the lap ?dulcimers and the soft, smooth ripples of the hammer- dulcimers echoed, then reverberated in splendorous majesty off the theater walls. The sensation was akin to sitting amidst string symphony surrounded by an acoustic stereo that echoed with smooth melodies.

If the ?Pitts Kitchen Dulcimer Band,? evoked a pastoral symphony of sorts, then the following act brought one to the physical stage. More than any other ensemble of the day, ?Slaughterhouse Five Woodwind Quartet,? made one wish that the Strand was a full-blown concert-hall that could seat both a symphony and the crowd to enjoy it.

Fortunately, Slaughterhouse Five?s performance was superb music, played by especially competent musicians in an intimate, aesthetically pleasing environment that seems especially attuned to the subtle nuances of such music. It was a sweet set and if I were a more religious dude, I would say that the quintet summoned a small piece of heaven down to the stage on Saturday afternoon.

As the dark of the night settled on Arts Fest, the Strand Theatre shifted gears and centuries from the virtuoso performances of various classical forms of music to the more modern masters of our contemporary age: an acoustic interpretation of the legendary geniuses of Rock-N-Roll, the Beatles.

An eager audience arrived before the doors opened to listen to and enjoy: the "Beatles Acoustic," performed by Tim Spradlin and the Heart and Soul Band. Essentially, this was a celebratory, nostalgic and historic tour of the lads from Liverpool's hit-filled careers.

The band's first, 12-song set, opened as a kind of narrative journey through the Fab- Four's early musical styles and influences. Think of the Beatles translated into a cabaret musical and set in a small dinner-theater. One local musician remarked that it was an entertaining "Las Vegas style," rendition. Spradlin was at his best singing the emotional and soft melodies of songs such as "Imagine," and his theatrically-inspired version of "Twist and Shout."

Another local musician in the audience, said that he was particularly impressed by drummer Michael Atwood's, study and mimicry of Ringo Starr's percussion style.

It takes a brave band to translate the Beatles' eclectic bag of genius songs and an audience's collective memories, musical and personal, about these English legends of Rock. One thing, however, remains the same across the years: the ability of this music to move people, regardless of their generational differences. What Beatles concert or retrospective would or could be complete without teens moved to dance, twist and swoon to this music and Saturday night's show was no exception. Repeatedly, throughout the night teen-age girls danced with their mothers, fathers, boyfriends or just by themselves.

On stage the band themselves, rather seemed to enjoy this spontaneous outburst of youth moved to lyric and sensory appreciation.

Images on this post:

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