

Featured Columnists

Frank Wiens' Piano Recital at Cabrillo

By Richard Lynde

While the weather on Sunday afternoon of March 6 was cool and damp, the atmosphere inside the Cabrillo Recital Hall was warm, but hardly dry thanks to the golden touch of seasoned American pianist Frank Wiens. Via the Distinguished Artists Concert and Lecture Series, he presented a most substantial and delightful program of Spanish-themed music, whether written by native Iberians or inspired by this country's traditions and atmosphere. The concert was dedicated to the memory of late musical philanthropist Bud Kretschmer, who surely would have enjoyed the performance.

Historically, the numbers ranged from the mid 18th century Antonio Soler, very like a Spanish Scarlatti via a couple of short, trilly sonatas, to the mid 20th century Joaquin Rodrigo, composer of the world's favorite guitar work "Concierto de

Aranjuez", some themes from which found their way into "The Shade of the Tower Bermeja".

In between were better known offerings such as "Evocation" and Triana" by Isaac Albeniz and the exquisitely plaintive Grandados piece "The maiden and the Nightingale," also from the early 20th century.

The affable and relaxed pianist Frank Wiens stood and addressed the large



Pianist Frank Wien

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audience with a fine, brief commentary on each work along with absolute accuracy and control. His playing was always unforced and devoid of mannerisms.

Manuel de Falla was well represented in his "Pieces Espanolas" with a northern "Aragonsa, a Colonial Cubana," a landscape journey in "Montanesa (Paysage)" and a fast, jolly flamenco "Andaluz" evoking the South.

Many foreign composers have been inspired by Spain and have tried to capture its essence in their music. Among them we heard Debussy's vivid impression from his Preludes, "La Puerta del Vino," even though he never visited Spain, but only got a postcard from de Falla.

The most technically difficult pieces also were by foreigners as in the rousing "Variations on a Theme from Bizet's Opera Carmen" by Vladimir Horowitz, always a showy favorite. But our real show stopper was Wiens' fiery, brilliant rendition of the great Hungarian Franz Liszt's "Rhapsodie Espagnol," a fiendishly contrived tribute to that country. In his brilliant rendition, Wiens effortlessly tossed off the scintillating work in a spellbinding way, for a well-deserved and loud standing ovation.

The one encore was a delicate short work by the obscure Spanish 20th century composer Federico Mompou, which fell like a soft benediction at the end of the afternoon. ■