

Armas (Art) Maiste and Friends

MES Fundraising Concert - Montreal

Sunday, March 15, 2015

On Sunday afternoon, March 15, 2015 Armas Maiste (by his own admission), played his last public piano recital featuring the music of his favorite classical composer, Frederick Chopin. The two pieces he performed were the *Valse Brillante* (Opus 34, N° 1) and the *Ballade* (Opus 38, N° 2). In his opening remarks, it was clear that his heart was more into the music that was to take up the latter part of the program - jazz - music that to him was now more comfortable under his fingers and allowed for greater freedom of interpretation and improvisation.

He was joined by two former students, Eric Lagacé on Bass and Aldo Mazza on Drums. Both are internationally recognized musicians in their own right and perform regularly as classical and jazz musicians. The music that this trio put together after just one rehearsal, enthralled the audience with some exceptional playing in the intimate confines of St. John's Estonian Lutheran Church. The acoustics suited the ambience and the sound was well balanced, with the music and musicianship coming across as totally comprehensible.

The performers clearly enjoyed playing together and rose to the occasion with several exquisite solos. The highlight for this writer was the final piece - 3 excerpts from the *Canadiana Suite* by Oscar Peterson. Difficult to play by any standard of performance, this music resonated most appreciatively with the audience, who rose to give a standing ovation.

Flowers were presented to each performer and a reception followed in the hall downstairs. There was even talk of a repeat performance by the trio in the fall. Let's hope that the musicians will find the time to come together again, this time to delight an even larger audience.

Armas (Art) Maiste is well known in Montreal music circles. From 1958-1983 he was the resident orchestral pianist for the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and continued playing on their recordings until 1986. He was also a regular performer with Les Grandes Ballets Canadiennes, the Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec, CBC orchestras, as well as the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa.

From the beginning, however, his passion has been jazz and Maiste has performed with many notable artists internationally, as well as appearing at the Bracknell, North Sea and the Montreux jazz festivals. He helped start the jazz program at McGill University and taught there from 1974-83, after which he took a position at Humber College in Toronto. But his heart, musically, has always been and remains in Montreal.

Charles Rand