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Bigger was better

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Regina Symphony Orchestra, with Martin Leung & the South Sask. Youth Orchestra

Saturday

Conexus Arts Centre

Martin Leung is known best for his performances of music from video games, videos of which have had great success on the Internet.

But on Saturday night he showed Regina that he is also an amazing classical musician.

Leung was a guest artist for the Regina Symphony Orchestra's "Internet Connection" concert, and the 24-year-old wowed the audience with his performance of Franz Liszt's "Concerto for Piano No. 1."

A great performer to watch, Leung's delivery of the work, which is technically very difficult, was wonderful.

He said in advance of the concert that the concerto highlights both the soloist and the orchestra, and it was clear during the show how balanced he was with the RSO.

The many sounds complemented each other beautifully, and delighted sighs could be heard, thanks to the great acoustics of the Conexus Arts Centre, coming up from throughout the audience as he performed.

Leung, who started studying classic music at age four, has the background to back up his playing of Liszt, having won numerous competitions for performing challenging works by the 19th-century composer.

The audience was on its feet for a standing ovation as soon as Leung finished the concerto, and gave him a second one before the night was over.

He gave an encore of the Super Mario Bros. medley, for which he was famous, his amazing showmanship on full display, infusing his performance with humour that elicited laughter from the audience.

But Leung's two pieces weren't the only factors that made "Internet Connection" a great show full of 19th-century works.

The night opened with the South Saskatchewan Youth Orchestra joining the RSO to perform Tchaikovsky's "Marche

Slave."

It was fantastic to see such a large group on stage, and the sound produced with all the additional performers was rich and full in the enjoyable work.

After the intermission, the RSO performed Richard Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra," a 33-minute masterpiece that maestro Victor Sawa said required the largest orchestra the RSO has put together in 103 years.

That meant getting together a bigger budget, he said, noting that the performance of the difficult piece has been long in the works.

The 33 minutes seemed to flash by as the RSO delighted the audience with the many sounds and textures of the powerful and beautiful composition.

The audience ended the night on its feet applauding the performance.

In the end, "Internet Connection," part of the Mosaic Masterworks series, was a fun night full of great music the audience seemed to truly enjoy.

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