

Hot night at the Gambrel Barn

Published - Jul 23rd, 2008

By Gail Martin

Hot Fusion lives up to its billing

It is unlikely that there was anywhere in Elora that exuded more energy than the Gambrel Barn on Saturday night.

The evening was called Hot Fusion, and hot it was — giving the audience everything from the fevered violin of Vasyl Popadiuk to the rich, powerful voice of Justin Hines. Amanda Martinez, Canada's rising star in the world of Latin jazz, rounded out the performance with her mellow, hypnotic performance.

It was a night to remember, for many reasons.

A deluge of rain that hit Elora around 7 p.m. had volunteers and staff hustling to get the barn ready for the performance.

Rainwater leaked in from a side door, and had to be “squeegeed” out by staff, in efforts to keep the water away from the electronic equipment needed for the show.

Patrons were remarkably patient, given the circumstances, and Elora Festival staff were valiant in their efforts to fill theatre's axiom: the show must go on.

Are we ever glad it did.

Hot Fusion was split into four parts — in which each performer had a chance to showcase their style and talents. At the end, it all came together, as they “fused” the individual talents together as one.

The opening performance by Popadiuk, who has played for such notables as Mikhail Gorbachev, set the tone for the evening.

Through his energetic tackling of his violin, Popadiuk showed his mastery of the instrument, which he began playing at the tender age of six.

The audience was mesmerized by his style, described as gypsy violin, in which Popadiuk

gave the impression that he could make any sound he wanted with his violin — and every sound he did was one you wanted to hear.

Justin Hines is a name that everyone will soon be hearing, because there is no way such an incredible talent will be overlooked.

Hines, a former Ontario Community Newspaper Junior Citizen, has a voice that reminds the audience of James Taylor, but is entirely his own.

His lyrics, however, are his strength, showing an incredible depth and poetry that is not often found today.

Hines, who is confined to a wheelchair because of a rare genetic condition called Larsen Syndrome also proved something else — you don't need two legs to dance.

Hines grooving his way across the stage at the Gambrel Barn is something all will remember for a long time. There is no doubt that music is part of his soul, and that he has the ability to share that joy with those who are willing to listen.

As for Martinez, she also showed that she knows how to move — in spite of being six month's pregnant.

Her Latin-influenced jazz was energetic and hopeful — and audience members caught her energy, in spite of the fact that most of her songs were in Spanish. No translator was needed.

The energy of the show kept building throughout, and several standing ovations were handed out long before the final “fusion” took place.

It was somewhat disappointing, then, that the so-called fusion was less a mixing of styles and more an opportunity for the performers to be given bit roles in each other's songs. While much of the energy was still there, Martinez, Popadiuk and Hines seemed to be taking turns at showcasing their talents, rather than bringing them together into one whole. Still, in spite of this, Hot Fusion lived up to its billing — at least half of it.

The night at the Gambrel Barn was indeed hot — and we aren't talking about the weather. The Elora Festival continues until Aug. 3. For information about upcoming performances, visit www.elorafestival.com, or call 519-846-0331 or 1-888-747-7550.