

Ed Gurowitz's Blog

ED GUROWITZ'S COLUMNS AND COMMENTS IN THE NORTH LAKE TAHOE BONANZA, TAHOETICKER.COM, AND ELSEWHERE

POSTED BY ED GUROWITZ AT [5:46 PM](#) on Feb. 16, 2010



What the heck, it's Valentine's day, Mardi Gras is Tuesday, let's put partisan rancor aside for one week and talk about something that's unarguably good.

I had the privilege last week to attend a concert by the TOCCATA Orchestra and Chorus with the violinist Elizabeth Pitcairn. It was the fourth of four concerts held at Squaw, on South Shore, Cal Neva, and the one we attended at Trinity Episcopal Church in Reno. What an evening!

You may recall that Ms Pitcairn was here last Fall when she played the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto – this time she played a short Dvorak piece in the first number of the evening and then the Bruch Concerto for Violin as the *pièce de resistance* of the evening. She followed these with encores that included two duets with Donna Axton on the piano.

I'm not a music critic, I don't play any instrument more complex than an iPod, and as for my singing, forget it, but I do love music and listen to it a lot, and I'm especially fond of music for the violin. I wrote last Fall that I had not had an experience to match Pitcairn playing Mendelssohn since the time, as a graduate student, I sat in the first row to hear Yehudi Menuhin play the Beethoven Violin Concerto with the Rochester Philharmonic. That was about 45 years ago. Now I've had matching experiences twice in six months. The Bruch is a marvelously complex piece of music, the red Stradivarius is a magnificent and historic instrument, and Elizabeth Pitcairn is, in my humble opinion (and when it comes to music, it really is humble) the best young violinist to come along in a very long time. Her playing is in a class with Menuhin, Heifetz, and Stern, she is beautiful and lively and has an amazing rapport with the orchestra and the audience.

And while the focus with any concert like this is on the soloist, I would be remiss if I didn't give props to James and Nancy Rawie and the incredible contribution they've made to our community by organizing and managing TOCCATA (it stands for The Orchestra and Community Choral Artists of the Tahoe Area). In five short years they have brought together an orchestra and chorus that I would put up against any orchestra I've heard in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, and it's all local talent and all volunteers. When my friends in other cities ask me if I don't miss the cultural advantages of living in a city I just laugh quietly – we have the Reno Phil, the Lake Tahoe Music Festival, opera, ballet, plays and most of all we have TOCCATA. We are very fortunate, and don't tell those city folks because if they find out, they'll all move here and we won't be able to get tickets.

TOCCATA's next performance is over Easter Weekend when they'll do the Bach St. Matthew Passion, a perfect accompaniment to the Easter holiday. Here's my advice – go to that performance, join as a supporter of TOCCATA, and take a minute to thank James and Nancy and all the players and singers for making this a world-class place to live, music-wise.