

Pitcairn wows crowd with her performance in Langley



Elizabeth Pitcairn takes a bow with Gloria Ferry-Brennan after a performance at South Whidbey High School auditorium with the Saratoga Chamber Orchestra, which Legh Burns (in background) conducted.
Patricia Duff / The Record

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It was not hard to realize one was in the room with greatness when internationally renowned violinist Elizabeth Pitcairn graced the stage to play her famous 1720 Stradivarius red violin. Pitcairn was the guest soloist for the season finale concert of the Saratoga Chamber Orchestra on Sunday, May 15, and left the ample audience at South Whidbey High School auditorium breathless from the start.

The violinist was resplendent in an emerald green gown during the first half of the concert when she played the “Concerto for Violin in E minor, Op. 64” by Felix Mendelssohn, accompanied by the orchestra and conducted by Legh Burns. The orchestra also treated audiences to a beautiful opening with the “Egmont Overture, Op. 84” by Ludwig van Beethoven.

After a brief intermission, Pitcairn reappeared in a striking red-sequined gown to continue her rousing performance. After the orchestra performed local composer Kit Mills’ lovely homage to Arabia, “Beyond the Desert Sands,” Pitcairn expertly played “Praeludium and Allegro” by composer Fritz Kreisler.

Next up was a big moment for Gloria Ferry-Brennan when the 14-year-old violinist was welcomed onstage to play a duo with Pitcairn of Antonio Vivaldi’s “Concerto in A minor, RV 522.” Gloria had no problem matching the elegant sound of Pitcairn, and looked equally as lovely as her older counterpart in a fuschia and tangerine silk gown she designed in collaboration with local artist Lynn Mizono. The audience was ecstatic following their performance, giving the pair a standing ovation with several curtain calls.

Burns wrapped up the evening by inviting Pitcairn to play a final composition, Pablo Sarasate’s “Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs), Op. 20,” which the violinist did with aplomb.

For an encore, Pitcairn wowed the audience further with a startling performance of the challenging “Moto Perpetuo” by Nicolo Paganini. The piece, she said, was unusual for its use of 3,120 notes and for which a SCO supporter paid \$1 per note to benefit the orchestra.

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