

Santa Barbara Symphony

Symphony Embraces Jazz Infusion For Transformative Program

Review by **Daniel Kepl** / VOICE

EMBRACING MUSICAL DIVERSITY, Nir Kabaretti, Music and Artistic Director of the Santa Barbara Symphony, assembles his concert programs like a filmmaker, bringing disparate musical images together in spectacular sonic convergence around a single, profound trope. Kabaretti's magical tour for the Symphony's concert last weekend at the Granada Theatre pirouetted on the notion of transformation – sometimes obvious, often intangible.

Jazz saxophonist and internationally renowned jazz composer, Ted Nash, and the Josh Nelson Trio joined the symphony for the world premiere of Nash's *Transformation for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra*. From earlier iterations, *Transformation* has now settled nicely into a suite in four sections, including a new *Prelude*, inspired by Scriabin's *Prelude, Op. 11, No. 1 for Piano*; re-workings for full orchestra and jazz quartet of *Dali* from Nash's *Portrait in Seven Shades*, composed for the Jazz

at Lincoln Center Orchestra some years back, and *Dear Dad*, kept from the earlier version of *Transformation* and re-orchestrated, with a video letter from his son. The last section, *Wolfgang's Samba*, inspired by Mozart's *Clarinet Quintet*, was also freshly composed for this world premiere.

Guest artists, including Santa Barbara Symphony principal pianist Natasha Kislenco, as well as jazz saxophonist Ted Nash, and the Josh Nelson Trio, gave Saturday night's audience excellent wow value, with solid performances of Ernst von Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Song, Op. 25 (1914)*, Richard Strauss' tone poem *Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24 (1888-89)*, Maurice Ravel's *Boléro (1928)*, and the world premiere of saxophonist/composer Ted Nash's *Transformation for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra*.

Opening Saturday's concert with Ernst von Dohnányi's virtuoso transformation of the simple nursery song *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* into an imaginative, no mind-boggling

series of variations for piano and orchestra, pianist Natasha Kislenco was in her element, playing the work from memory and with gusto. Dohnányi's brilliant orchestrations, his cheeky sense of humor, and take-no-prisoners pianistic bravado, made for good fun and colorful music-making. Kislenco's clarity of articulation kept her role as cheerful protagonist consistently above the orchestral fray around her – virtuoso technique making for malleable musical magic. Kabaretti and the orchestra danced their part with jolly finesse. Sectional and ensemble cohesion and energy were appropriately de rigueur for this professional orchestra, but the *Finale fugato* took the piece over the moon. A wonderful performance all round.

Timbre the essence of clarified butter, technique as swift and light as butterfly wings (enjoy the mixed metaphor), Ted Nash is as advertised, one of the great jazz saxophonists of the 21st century. His solo passages on soprano sax (*Prelude*) were delicate in color and patrician in improvisational mastery. Ditto, his alto sax riffs (*Dali*). The Josh Nelson Trio – Josh Nelson piano, Luca Alemanno bass, Dan Schnelle drums – were a perfect ensemble match and foil for Nash's jazz aesthetic. Each member of the trio offered solo moments that matched Nash's in style and delicacy; all were equals in sophisticated jazz artistry. Maestro Kabaretti and the orchestra played Nash's orchestrations with the panache of experienced studio artists, which many of them are.

After intermission, two works to show off

the orchestra itself as soloist, Richard Strauss' powerful tone poem *Death and Transfiguration* and Maurice Ravel's eponymous masterpiece of steady construction and heady chaos, *Boléro*. Kabaretti allowed the Strauss to speak expressively on its own account, without overindulging himself or the music – no easy discipline with such an emotionally charged and transcendental work of sonic art. It takes a seasoned ensemble of professional musicians to navigate Strauss's orchestral description of death and beyond. The Santa Barbara Symphony acquitted itself, as audiences have come to expect, with finesse, energy, and tight ensemble discipline. First-class playing from all sections.

Ravel's *Boléro* can easily become a bloody bore if not paced with steely precision and careful sound layering. It's an extremely tricky work, particularly because of its deceptive simplicity. Wildly popular, it doesn't help that most everybody in an audience knows the tune and will quickly discern the slightest lull in carefully notched intensity. Pacing – not too slow, not too fast, never erratic – is the secret and curse of the work. Kabaretti and colleagues know the piece, understand the potential problems, and gave Saturday's audience a thrilling performance.

Daniel Kepl has been writing music, theatre, and dance reviews for Santa Barbara publications since he was a teenager. His professional expertise is as an orchestra conductor.

For more reviews by Daniel Kepl visit: www.performingartsreview.net

APRIL

Call for Entries:

Earth Dance

Submissions are now open for VOICE Gallery's April 2023 exhibition: *Earth Dance*

To participate: email up to three entries to artcall@voicesb.art by March 27th.

Include: Image, artist, title, material, dimensions, price

Entry fee for accepted admissions: \$40 1st piece; \$35 2nd, & \$30 3rd piece. All pieces must be wired or pedestal ready. Sales: 70% to artist / 30% to gallery.

Art Drop Off: Accepted art must be dropped off between 10am and 2pm April 2nd.

Exhibition Dates: April 3rd to 30th, 2023

Reception: 1st Thursday reception will take place April 6th from 5 to 8pm.

Juried and curated by **Kerry Methner, PhD**



Knight Real Estate Group Of Village Properties Welcomes Team Member Gabriel Grandcolas

Santa Barbara native Gabe Grandcolas has joined Knight Real Estate Group of Village Properties, ready to give buyers and sellers the advice and support they need as they manage the complex decisions and life transitions related to residential real estate. Grandcolas, a graduate of the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business (Cum Laude) and Santa Barbara High School, is especially well-positioned for the task thanks to his personal relationship to the region, his analytical ability, and his approachable demeanor.

Kelly Knight, founder of Knight Real Estate Group, said Grandcolas' integrity and client-centric approach impressed her immediately. "Gabe will go to any length to ensure a client has what they need," Knight said. "He really listens, and his attention to detail to ensure the best possible outcome no matter the circumstances make our clients feel instantly comfortable."

"It's a thrill to be able to work in the community I love," Grandcolas said. "Through my time working with Kelly, I have learned firsthand how impactful agents are in the buying and selling process. Kelly's dynamic clientele and sophisticated professional approach resonated with my interests and style. We both quickly recognized that we make a great team."

Prior to joining Knight Real Estate Group in 2022, Grandcolas assisted Knight - a former business and real estate attorney who spent years practicing at a top area law firm - learning best practices of the real estate profession and earning trust among her clients. His creative problem-solving approach, tenacity and positive attitude make him equally adept at working with first time homebuyers or seasoned investors.

With Grandcolas' assistance, Knight Real Estate Group successfully closed over \$100 million in sales transactions during the past two years, and helped over 42 buyers and sellers navigate the area's evolving real estate market. Knight Real Estate Group, founded in 2020, is part of Village Properties, with offices in Montecito, Santa Barbara, and Santa Ynez. The Group was the #1 producer in Village Properties' Santa Barbara office for 2022, and the #3 producer company-wide.

For more info, visit www.KnightRealEstateGroup.com or call 805-895-4406 or visit www.VillageSite.com



Kelly Knight and Gabe Grandcolas