

Guitarist's nimble fingers take Latin tour

By Gwenda Nemerofsky

EDINBURGH-BORN conductor Garry Walker dispelled the traditional Scottish stereotype of dourness by leading the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra through an evening of hot-blooded Latin American music on Tuesday.

With Canadian-trained Israeli guitarist Daniel Bolshoy as guest artist, Walker and the MCO took us on a tour through Brazil, Mexico and Argentina.

As with many organized tours, some sights were more exciting and memorable than others. Our guide was the smooth-talking Andrew Craig, host of CBC Radio Two's *In Performance*. The concert was recorded for broadcast on no fewer than four CBC shows.

Craig and Bolshoy introduced the *Concierto del Sur* by Manuel Ponce, a composer who wrote a great deal of music for the famed Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia. Bolshoy has the wonderful ability to make his guitar sing like a human voice. His pure, rich tone rang through the hall, reaching to the back. He is a very natural player, making the most technical of passages seem simple.

This work includes several cameos

ConcertReview

Manitoba Chamber Orchestra with Daniel Bolshoy

- Jan. 17
- Westminster United Church
- Attendance: 640

★★★1/2 out of five

for woodwinds which were performed flawlessly, providing nice accents. Walker adeptly kept things light and moving fluidly.

One couldn't help but be struck by how the guitar can sound like its own little orchestra in a box, with a variety of sounds and effects. Bolshoy's nimble fingers made quick work of the fleetest of runs and arpeggios. He also demonstrated how softly the instrument could be played as he faded into silence at the end of the Andante.

Astor Piazzolla's *Sinfonietta for Chamber Orchestra* was awarded the prize as best work of the year by a young composer in 1953.

This proved to be the highlight of the night, with its ever-changing emotions and quirky rhythms. Walker intro-

duced it as "a dark, evil piece with curious sonority," and he hit the nail on the head.

The opening movement had a perpetual-motion effect, starting with long, moving notes from the viola section, then bolstered by the bassoon and clarinet. The French horn picked up the plaintive three-noted theme, with appealing punctuation by piano and xylophone.

The second movement was full of drama and conflict, with complex textures, underlining the fact that this was very much a 20th-century composition. The introspective ending led well into the final movement, an agitated, frenetic dance of sorts. Walker rocked side-to-side, emphasizing the catchy rhythms of this piece and reaping good, tight playing from the MCO.

The program concluded with American composer Aaron Jay Kernis' *Concierto de Dance Hits*, featuring a more exposed and romantic guitar in *Slow Dance Ballad*, finely accompanied by Daniel Scholz, viola.

Special mention goes to concertmaster and violinist Karl Stobbe for some truly impassioned, strong solo work here — some of his best playing ever.