

Violinist Virtuosity



Concert Preview

Performer sees music as universal link

BY PATRICK KELLY
Staff Reporter

While languages and customs vary from country to country, the one true constant has always been music, says violinist Christian Tetzlaff.

"Many basic aspects are the same," he said. "Whatever differences there are, music allows me to communicate with different musicians from different countries."

The German virtuoso brings his musical ambassadorship to the Lied Center for Performing Arts Sunday as the featured soloist in Mendelssohn's "Violin Concerto."

Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Deutsches-Symphonie Orchester Berlin will accompany the violinist.

The Lied Center is one of only eight venues Tetzlaff and the orchestra will perform in on the American tour.

At age 31, Tetzlaff has achieved considerable success and notoriety for interpreting works of great technical difficulty.

Born in Hamburg, Germany, his interest in music began when he took up the violin and piano at age 6, eventually opting for the former. At age 14, he made his professional debut performing Beethoven's "Violin Concerto" with his youth orchestra. That same year, he began studies that would eventually take him to the Cincinnati College-Conservatory.

In 1988, Tetzlaff embarked on an international career placing him with orchestras from all over Europe and the United States.

Throughout his professional journeys, Tetzlaff has been at the helm. While classical musicians require a disciplined understanding of the pieces they play, Tetzlaff says he finds no difficulty in making each piece his own.

Unlike other musicians who would move on to conducting and composing, Tetzlaff said he preferred to remain a soloist.

"I feel that I have more room to play the piece the way I want to," he said.

Although Tetzlaff performs worldwide, he tries not to stray far from home. Music has always been an integral part of his family life. However, the role of performing has always been one that Tetzlaff has kept in perspective.

Having begun his career at age 14 — later than most musicians — Tetzlaff learned to prioritize his life early on. He puts his role as a father ahead of his career as an entertainer, he said.

Amazingly, he has found a way to balance his career with an active home life.

He tours no more than two weeks at a time so as not to be away from his three children. When at home, he does not practice, but gives his children his undivided attention.

"My family gives me a great feeling of security," Tetzlaff said. "I have strong emotional ties that keep me at home."

Tetzlaff's passion will live on with his music and his children. Just as he has spread his influence in music, Tetzlaff said he welcomed the chance to share his gift with his children.

"As a musician, I would love to give them the opportunity to learn an instrument. It is the perfect profession."

Tickets for Tetzlaff's 7:30 p.m. Sunday performance are \$42, \$38, \$34 and half-price for students.

GERMAN VIOLINIST Christian Tetzlaff will perform Sunday with the Deutsches-Symphonie Orchester Berlin. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF

Fans ex'toll' diverse band

BY SEAN MCCARTHY
Assignment Reporter

Playing butt-bumping music with a positive message, Atoll will perform tonight at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St.

The group's near-unclassifiable blend of rock, reggae and American Indian music has made Atoll one of the most talked-about bands of the Midwest.

Lead singer and guitarist Cary Morin played in other bands in Montana before moving to Fort Collins, Colo., in the mid-1980s. Getting together in 1991, the A-Toll was a three-piece band, made up of bassist Wes Heilman and drummer Ron Plewacki. The two left the band because touring got too demanding for them.

Morin moved on, changing the band's name to Atoll and hiring new members in late 1996. The new lineup includes percussionist Peter Knudson, drummer Crip Erickson and bassist Craig Fowler. Two other members of Atoll, Benito Concha and rapper Julian B work with the band when they're not touring outside of Fort Collins, Morin said.

Morin said he was happy with the new lineup. Expanding to a four-piece band gave Atoll a bigger sound on the road, Morin said.

"They all caught on to the sound really well, and we've been able to improve on the sound," he said.

Morin paid his dues growing up in Montana before moving to Colorado. His father was in the Air Force, forcing his many moves. On the various bases he lived, Morin was exposed to different cultures from various areas of the world, he said.

"That was really cool," Morin said. "It's good to grow up with a respect for people from different cultures."

In Montana, Morin played with various bluegrass, rock and heavy metal bands. Living in Montana posed a problem when it came to

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CARY MORIN
lead singer and guitarist of Atoll

finding music from different genres, though.

"Montana was very inaccessible when it came to styles of music," Morin said.

Moving to Colorado helped establish a music career for Morin. In Fort Collins, Morin began playing acoustic solo sets at Linden's nightclub. On some of those nights he played with other musicians. It was there that Morin began to realize the allure of a band.

"The power of a band vs. one guy with a guitar" Morin said. "I can make more noise this way."

As a trio, Atoll formed a huge following in Fort Collins. The band was chosen "Best Band" of 1994 by the local newspaper. Morin shrugged off the award's impact on the band.

"When you're touring outside Colorado, you find out that being the best band in Ft. Collins doesn't mean that much from people who don't live there," he said.

Connecting strongly to the band, Morin said his strongest ties came from being a Crow tribe member.

"It's my life," Morin said. "There's no other way for me to write or perform."

Though Morin does address American Indian issues, he prefers not to preach to the audience, he said.

"We write a decent number of love songs, songs about life experiences and songs about tribal autonomy, which is something I advocate," Morin said.

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Morin's strong spirituality helped him through a period of substance abuse in the mid-1980s. He attributed his excessive drinking as a downfall of being in his mid-20s.

"You really have to know your limits, and I lost sight of mine."

Morin decided to give up drinking in 1990. He gave up on his own, without the help of a treatment program.

"I just got to a point that I didn't enjoy (drinking) anymore," he said.

Touring in bars may not be the best place to be when you've stopped drinking, but Morin said it didn't bother him personally. What does is seeing people lose control when they've had too much, he said.

"Different people do different things when they drink too much," Morin said.

Morin said he tried to keep everything that has happened to him in focus, though.

"Drunk or sober, I try to give people the respect they deserve," Morin said.

On stage, Atoll is as unpredictable as its audiences' members. The band prefers to have no set list before hitting the stage.

"We keep rolling along with very vague guidelines," Morin said.

The band will take the stage at the Zoo Bar tonight at 9. Tickets are \$3 and available at the door.