



Pablo Ziegler all in at SummerFest

By James Chute | Sunday, August 19, 2012

Pablo Ziegler isn't someone who goes half way. If you engage the "New Tango" legend for "An Evening with Pablo Ziegler," as SummerFest did Saturday at Sherwood Auditorium, you get "An Evening With Pablo Ziegler."

The 68-year-old pianist and composer played on every piece Saturday, a total of 16 plus an encore. In each instance, whether performing with SummerFest musicians or his own excellent quartet, he energetically lead the charge, at times seeming to fight for every note, just as through much of his early career he fought the tango traditionalists, the jazz traditionalists, even the classical traditionists, some whom still consider works by him and his mentor, Ástor Piazzolla little more than pops fare.



Fortunately, SummerFest music director and violinist Cho-Liang Lin, who offered a lyrical, slightly melancholy account of Piazzolla's "Oblivion," didn't feel that way.

Neither did cellist Carter Brey, who also brought life to "Escualo," "Elegia Sobre Adios Nonino," and especially "Libertango." Or clarinetist Burt Hara, who soared in Ziegler's own "Milonga Del Dios" and "Elegante Canyenguito."

Or pianist John Novacek, who has been tossed into just about every conceivable musical situation over the last week, but seemed to particularly relish this one. He played three high-spirited duets with Ziegler: Piazzolla's "Michelangelo 70," "Buenos Aires Hora Cero," and "Revirado," all arranged for two pianos by Ziegler.

But to get Ziegler's true measure, you have to hear him with his stellar quartet which was featured on the program's second half: Ziegler plus cellist Jisoo Ok, bassist Pedro Giruado, and bandoneón master Héctor Del Curto.

In pieces like the Piazzolla classic, "Fuga y misterio," or Ziegler's own "Once Again... Milonga," Ziegler went far beyond the confines of Tango, or Latin Jazz, or Bossa Nova, or world music, or classical. He brought something from each to a stew that somehow simultaneously edified and electrified as the quartet effortlessly negotiated myriad tempo changes, key changes, mood changes and shifts from complex unison passagework to stretches of inspired improvisation, especially from Ziegler and an inspired Del Curto.

Ziegler, of course, was at the heart of it all. His own piano style owes much to his jazz roots, as his improvisations approached the fleetness and melodic imagination of an Oscar Peterson and the harmonic ingenuity of a Bill Evans. Still, although Ziegler allowed a few moments of reflection, particularly in "Muchancha de Boedo" and a rhapsodic solo in "Baso Cero," he was generally full speed ahead, as in the particularly rhythmic "La Rayuel" where he used his piano largely as a percussion instrument, especially in the beginning.

Whether a single passage, an entire piece, or the entire program, Ziegler is all in.