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Letter to the editor: Symphony show sublime

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Nadina Mackie Jackson | Handout photo

This past Sunday, May 29, I attended the Prince George Symphony Orchestra's last mainstage concert of the season. I enjoyed it so much that I wanted to submit a review to *The Citizen*, in hopes that might inspire others to appreciate the Canadian artists who were featured and attend the symphony in the future.

The entire event was a delight, from Michael Hall's pre-performance chat to the post-show question and answer with some of the musicians. However, the most impactful part, for me, was the presentation of Mathieu Lussier's *Odd Bird Concerto*, which featured bassoonist Nadina Mackie Jackson.

I must admit that it took me a moment to get into the piece. I don't often hear classical music that features the bassoon over strings, for example. It sounded so different from what I usually listen to. However, by the end of the first movement, I couldn't help but be completely captivated.

I could hear a narrative, whether one was intended or not. To me, the chimes and string section painted a solemn, challenging landscape through which the light, flitting, spirit represented by the bassoon was navigating. I could hear – and *feel* – what this little bird was facing. The heart-wrenching use of minor keys in the second movement read as emotionally trying moments where the courage and hope of this brilliant, innocent creature were tested. It pained me, viscerally, hearing the bassoon express something which sounded so painful. The melody felt like grief, sometimes. However, the undeniable glow of hope sang through in the third movement, which sent a wave of relief and goosebumps from my head to toes.

The musical landscape warmed, the gloomy fog from the previous movement dissipated and the scene was filled with rays of light. I could hear the bird flying freely, and they seemed to grow more daring and hopeful as they went. The bassoon so perfectly expressed how resilient and capable this bird now understood itself to be. The strings quickened their pace to match the bird's flight and the chimes now sounded like joy. The piece ended with such a glowing, triumphant and satisfying flourish that the entire theatre leapt to their feet in applause.

I was moved to tears by the beauty of this concerto. The entire time I was listening, I couldn't help but wonder at how it must have felt for Nadina to have received this score, which was composed, specifically, for her. What is it like for another human being to care enough about you to be driven to create something so exquisitely beautiful? To give you something as abstract and heartfelt as *music itself*? I can only wonder.

After a few days of reflection, I imagine it might feel something like how I did on Sunday, sitting in Vanier Hall, listening to the PGSO and hearing this piece for the first time: profoundly grateful, inspired and affected in a way that I cannot adequately express with words. It must be sublime.

Heidi Klepsch

Prince George

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