



Miami Symphony wraps season with music of Spain and the spheres

By Lawrence A. Johnson
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The final program of the Miami Symphony Orchestra's 20th anniversary season reflects the ensemble's past as well as its present, evolving status. Guitarist Angel Romero, a popular guest with the orchestra since its earliest days, returned to play Rodrigo, and conductor Eduardo Marturet led the musicians in Gustav Holst's cosmic showpiece, *The Planets*.

For all its popularity, *The Planets* is rarely performed complete with all seven movements intact (Holst declined to set an Earth movement and Pluto had not yet been discovered). That is partly due to the score's length and complexity and partly due to the logistical requirements of fielding an offstage women's chorus in the final section, *Neptune, The Mystic*.

It's a measure of how far the Miami Symphony has come in recent seasons, that they would even try to tackle *The Planets*, let alone pull off a generally successful performance, as was the case Friday night at Guman Concert Hall.

Granted it was not the most technically polished reading with some of the horns showing signs of battle fatigue near the end, and wind intonation and clean ensemble a sometime thing.

But it was heartening to hear so much of this music performed so well, with many fine solo contributions. Marturet led a powerful rafter-raising rendition of the opening section, *Mars*, which emphasized the malign, mechanistic brutality and explosive violence of this music, with jarring force to the coda's grinding repeated chords.

Yet while Marturet was in synch with the score's fury and spectacle, he was less successful in conveying the gentler half-tones. *Venus* was too tense and four-square, not supplying the necessary contrast of relaxed peace, and the Sorcerer's Apprentice-like style of *Uranus* was more bombastic than piquant.

The mercurial Marturet was well suited to the winged messenger *Mercury*. *Jupiter*, the most English of Holst's settings, received rich string tone in the Elgarian middle section, though the cheerful humor of the outer sections was lost amid too much volume and intensity.

Surprisingly, the most subtle and delicate effect came off quite well, with the Frost School's Women's Chamber Ensemble supplying the requisite ethereal voices in *Neptune* from the outside hallway. Marturet handled the long, slow diminuendo skillfully for the proper haunting otherworldly effect.

As might be expected, the first part of the evening sounded like it received less rehearsal time on account of the intense demands of the Holst.

The evening led off with a souped-up rendition of Rossini's *Overture to The Barber of Seville*, heavier on volume and speed than charm or elegance. And in Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*, the orchestral accompaniment was often more garrulous than refined, Maylin Rette's poised English horn solo in the *Adagio* apart.

No complaints about the estimable musicianship of Angel Romero in



Rodrigo's beloved guitar concerto, the Adagio of which remains the most celebrated evocation of Castilian nocturnal romantic languor.

The Spanish guitarist has performed this work more times than he can likely count over the decades yet Romero's musicianship remains estimable and technically airtight with even fingerwork and articulation throughout. With his guitar discreetly amplified, Romero's idiomatic touch was truly the art that conceals art, performing with an effortless light touch that seemed just right.

Perhaps in the Adagio, Romero's playing was understated to the point of being matter of fact, but the natural fluency and conversational expression he brought to the cadenza made up the balance. The finale was delightful with its children's-games like main theme and Romero managed to make the throwaway coda genuinely witty rather than an abrupt anticlimax.

The program will be repeated 8 p.m. Saturday at the Lincoln Theatre in Miami Beach. 305-275-5666; www.miamisymphony.org

Also, Sunday at 4 p.m. the Miami Symphony will perform at the Biltmore Hotel to mark the end of its 20th season with Angel Romero performing the Rodrigo concerto, and Marturet leading the orchestra with Reynaldo Hahn's Mozart Overture and Ibert's Divertissement.