

ZUILL BAILEY

CELLIST

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ASO guest cellist in command of stage

by Brenda Looper - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Do cellists have groupies? If not, why not?

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra's guest artist Zuill Bailey proved Saturday night to a near - capacity crowd at Robinson Center Music Hall in Little Rock that he has the musical chops deserving of a whole bevy of admirers.

Bailey, dressed all in black, took full command of the stage by his mere presence. In performing Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Cello Concerto from the movie Deception, Bailey coaxed warm, rich tones from his cello, the notes silky smooth and lush.

It was difficult not to be captivated by his exquisite fingering, or amused by the way he leaned forward in anticipation of a solo section.

If there were any doubts about his capabilities after the Korngold piece, Bailey completely obliterated them with his mastery of Cello Concerto No. 2 by Camille Saint-Saens.

The intensely difficult piece was brought to its knees by Bailey's spirited bow work, making it seem almost like child's play.

As Bailey's wavy chocolate brown locks flew during the more intricate and energetic solo sections, an occasional smile would cross his face, and more than a few amused and appreciative chuckles were heard in the audience. The standing ovation received at the end of his second performance was much deserved, though Bailey looked at least a little bemused by the reaction.

Conductor David Itkin and the ASO performed spectacularly throughout the night. Itkin was his exuberant self while conducting "Zampa: Overture" by Ferdinand Herold and seemed to allow his baton to lead him in a spirited dance during the piece's more whimsical sections.

But it was in the ASO's performance of Ludwig van Beethoven's Fifth Symphony that the musicians really excelled. Possibly the most famous piece of classical music (at least the first movement, anyway), it can instantly separate a superior orchestra from a less talented one.

From those famous four beginning notes of the first movement to the last dramatic strains of the fourth, the piece was gorgeous in its intensity and restraint.

Bailey will perform again with the symphony at 3pm. today at Robinson Center.

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