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A stellar experience

Rita Kohn, *Nuvo*, Indy's Alternative Voice

Classical Music/Dance

ISO Classical Series

Hilbert Circle Theatre

Oct. 8, 9

Maestro Mario Venzago's expressive participation in Franz Schreker's *Kammersinfonie* set the mood for this embracing program showcasing Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra players in varying ensembles, three instrumental soloists and Dance Kaleidoscope in premiere works by David Hochoy.



Conductor Mario Venzago. File Photo, IU Publicity.

Opening with muted ethereal sounds, Schreker expands his "chamber symphony" to strings, winds, brass, percussion, skirting cacophony by stretching expectant textures to draw us beyond usual horizons. It's every player for him/herself, yet within a community of caring. Perhaps as much a social as a sonic statement, there's a tense undercurrent of existentialism striving toward harmonist sensibility. Rendering this huge sound by just a few players is a compositional sleight of hand that intrigues. Is it being cast into constellations, set out to sea or perched on a bicycle--la Tour de France? ISO players engaged munificently with this kinesthetically provocative work.

Following an intermission buzzing with conversation about Schreker, harpist Emmanuel Ceysson developed Debussy's subtleties seamlessly with ISO players, as Hochoy's movement sculpted Kenoth Shane Patton and Liberty Harris into infinite mystery. Their breath-holding evocation of *Danse sacré* owned the space.

With an insert of Michael K. Runyan's arrangement of *Clair de lune* featuring his alluring harmonica playing, Rebecca Jones, Jessica Johnson Howard, Jaclyn Virgin and Jillian Godwin became a shimmering quartet of elasticity, suggesting infinity. *Danse profane* engendered speed, strength, intrigue of pairings when H. Bradley Cope and Aaron Selissen invaded the women's space. Once again harpist Ceysson counterpointed Hochoy's choreography to build tension between music and movement.

Reconfiguring with 11 ISO players for Stravinsky's *Ragtime*, Maestro Venzago evoked excitement along with showcasing soloist virtuosity. Followed by Darius Milhaud's gorgeous *Scaramouche* with alto saxophonist Otis Murphy, whose playing personifies the work's richness of musical conversation and conversion, it seemed the evening had simply exploded beyond belief. And then came the sterling *La Création du monde*. Hochoy, together with inspired lighting and costumes, expanded the imagination to bring forward a whole new concept of how to make a musical composition our own legacy. He introduced an immediacy to the original African creation myths through a modern urban setting. A man is searching for intimacy in an antithetical setting, a woman is nursing her wounded self-image. They have to learn openness to attain the seemingly unattainable. Creation takes on a new dynamic, metaphorically and as a programmatic goal for the ISO.