

The Music of Fleetwood Mac

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LONDON—You Know They're Good When ...

... They open with a huge hole in the audio feed and still sound as if they know what they're doing. That happened. It didn't exactly enhance what would have been a splendid performance of 'Rhiannon' but it was informative. By virtue of numbers the orchestra came through more clearly than most of the players from Jeans 'n Classics did. The arrangements for the wind and brass instruments shone through and they were a pleasure to listen to even though the problem with the audio was causing grief. The drums came through and they sounded great. The bass didn't penetrate as clearly but what was heard made it obvious the rhythm section was good.

When the audio feed came to life half way through the second number in the set the startled performers laughed it off, finished their rendition of 'Little Lies' with a flourish and went on to conjure up some truly heart rending performances. The mix of the sound was excellent. The orchestra played beautifully under the baton of Conductor Mitch Tyler. Peter Brennan's arrangements captured the essence of Fleetwood

Mac's music without imitating it. His work on the guitar was very tasty. The keyboard player (whose name I can't remember) delivered work that combined creativity with understatement. The rhythm section was great. The bass player (another name I can't locate without some help) threaded his riffs through the music neatly. Drummer Paul DeLong's playing was a model of precision, patience and punctuality. He went slightly ahead to mark musical changes and stayed spot on the beat the rest of the time. That, as much as anything else is an essential part of why this group captured the essence of Fleetwood's music so well. Regardless of who was up front Fleetwood Mac always had one of the great rhythm sections of the business.

The singers were fabulous. Kathryn Rose combines a beautiful voice with a strong stage presence. Her singing was clear with a hint of wistfulness in it. She also has a dry wit and self-effacing manner which served her well. Neil Donell's multi-octave range allowed him to sing ballads or rockers with apparent ease. And he's a character. His comic delivery is excellent and he thinks quickly on his feet. Rique Franks is a charismatic performer. Her voice had the duskiest hues of the three and she sang with a sense of poetic lyricism that was a joy to listen to. Their individual contributions were strong. All of them made the songs their own. When they sang harmony parts together their three voices merged into an entity that was sublimely beautiful. The three way harmonies they sang on 'Landslide' literally gave me goosebumps. That was just one of several highlights.

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The fates weren't always kind though. Halfway through Rique Franks stunning rendition of 'Sara' the audio feed cut out. It took several minutes to fix the problem. The way these performers dealt with it spoke volumes about them. They joked about it. They talked to their audience. When the problem was fixed they graciously asked if everyone wanted to hear the song again. When the answer was "yes" they took it up from the beginning. It had to be because that outage brought their momentum to a grinding halt. To the credit of everyone on the stage most of the flow was back in place before the song was completed.

This show presented an excellent illustration of the fact that classical and pop music aren't that far apart. The arrangements the orchestra played complimented the material beautifully. The fills they played during many of the instrumental segments from the music were gorgeous. Many of the wind and string parts that underscored the work of the singers were ravishing. Conductor Mitch Tyler kept their playing subtle and restrained. Everything they did was in harmony with the original spirit of the material.

It was an exemplary tribute to the work of an iconic band.

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