

Valley Scene Magazine

String Theory's Sept. 15th Ford Theatre Performance: A Unique Experience No One Can Harp On
By Andrea Frazer

Upon entering the beautiful outdoor Ford Theatre on September 15, one only need glance at the performing artists standing like frozen statues in the café water fountains to sense that the upcoming String Theory performance would be far from traditional. String Theory's ensemble, founded by instrument designer/builder and composer, Luke Rothschild, choreographer/director, Holly Rothschild and cellist/composer, Joseph Harvey, has been spellbinding audiences with its modern blend of movement, instrumentals, vocal and video presentations.

Oh, and a giant harp.

Extended across the entire 1,275 seat arena, the 200 foot harp served as a visual anchor for the night's musical numbers that were as varied as the notes plucked on its strings. Mostly played by the lithe and pig-tailed Holly Rothchild, who resembled a barefoot water nymph making music under a starlit sky, the harp's sounds blended seamlessly with cello, Theremin, violin, saxophone, bass, guitar, saw, accordion, tablas, flute and more. During one number, Rothchild picked up what appeared to be a homemade megaphone to blast out muffled ground crew instructions for a Major Tom/Karma Police blend that, while bizarre, oddly worked.

For the more traditional minded, some of the show's performance pieces would not sit as well as the previously mentioned iconic song mash. Take the three main dancers who, despite being incredibly flexible, talented and vocally astute, seemed overly haunted in both their jerky gestures and wide eyed stares. Such dramatic gesticulating made sense given the costumes they wore including, but not limited to: bright red dresses with trains seemingly extended from the top of the mountain backdrop to the bottom of the stage, cones over arms that punched into the star filled sky like hundred foot pointed Dixie cups, a crab inspired outfit that gave one the impression of a female Spongebob who was only happy when she found her Harp muse, and more.

And yet, while such visuals might prove confusing for the more traditional audience member, the show's standing ovation proved that Los Angeles adored this one-of-a-kind visual/musical production. Each artist was clearly a master at his or her craft, leaving audience members rushing home to their computers to check on their credentials.

They weren't disappointed. String Theory's website, www.stringtheoryproductions.com, proudly boasts of performers' degrees and experience as extensive as the harp Rothschild played. As in almost any ensemble show, some noteworthy performances stood out.

One included sultry voiced musician David Poe. To quote Rolling Stone Magazine, "David Poe gives the singer-songwriter genre a much-needed jolt." Poe seemed equally comfortable singing solo as he was with performance artists dueling in helmets in the background. Another highlight included an operatic solo by violinist Julie Pusch. If her skills on the bow weren't enough to lull the audience into rapt attention, her exquisite voice – displayed quite unexpectedly after a funky rock number – was mesmerizing.

String Theory delighted the audience with a special performance by students in the Education Through Music program which serves disadvantaged youth in the LA area. Having sold out earlier this year at the Eli & Broad Stage in Santa Monica, String Theory continues to play at events around the USA and abroad including the Grammys, Walt Disney Concert Hall, TED conference and World Festival of Sacred Music. These gifted musicians are also busy scoring films and Luke Rothschild was recently named a Sundance Fellow. He is a composer, musician and visual artist whose work spans an amazing stylistic spectrum and whose enthusiasm is contagious.

In science, string theory has emerged as the most promising candidate for a microscopic theory of gravity. More promising than this, it aims to provide a unified and consistent description of the fundamental structure of our universe. September 15th's concert proved the musical version of this: a harp that anchored the Ford Theatre in gravity while consistently providing various elements to make up one unique experience. Not bad for a Thursday evening.

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