

Program a three-dimensional gem

BY JANELLE GELFAND
The Cincinnati Enquirer

Sometimes the best kind of concert is one that impresses you when you least expect it.

That's what happened at Friday night's Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra program led by Jesus Lopez-Cobos in Music Hall: a stunning world premiere by Gunther Schuller, a knock'em-dead performance by pianist Christopher O'Riley, and a riveting *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

Schuller's *The Past is in the Present* was commissioned by the CSO for its centennial, which comes in the 1994-95 season. It was a fitting honor; the composer's many Cincinnati ties go back to 1943, when at 17, he was CSO's principal French hornist.

Dedicated to his late wife, the work dispels any thoughts that modern music is unemotional. Besides being well-crafted, it is deeply personal and tender.

The first movement had a pul-

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sating, sustained quality, with interesting combinations of orchestral colors. Much of this peaceful quality carried over into the other three movements; the second was performed with fleeting moments of warm color in the strings.

The percussion section summoned up hair-raising effects in the climax of the third movement's "Dies Irae," a chant for the dead. Orchestral waves of sound washed up and ebbed away with delicate, glimmering bells, tolling the final movement's conclusion.

The composer was present for a warm response from the audience of 2,384.

Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, which hasn't been performed here in more than a decade, was given a brilliant account by American pianist O'Riley. Composed when Rachmaninoff was a teen-ager and revised much later, the work is not as well known as

his other concertos.

Although there were erratic rhythms (causing unevenness in the orchestra), O'Riley dashed off the bravura passages with fleet fingers and impressive technique, matching orchestral sonority decibel for decibel.

He wisely sought beauty in the simplicity of the second movement, playing with a lovely, resonant tone. Although the finale is a showpiece with plenty of flash, O'Riley didn't walk on the wild side. Instead he emphasized clarity—and the unevenness disappeared.

After intermission, Lopez-Cobos led a vivid, well-conceived reading of Richard Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. It was a spacious approach, which aimed for the seductive rather than the dramatic. Despite some intonation collisions in the winds, the work had lustrous sonorities in the strings and wonderful scope.

The program repeats at 8 p.m. today. 381-3300.

Age hasn't slowed intensity of Rush

BY J.D. BRUEWER
Enquirer Contributor

There was a Rush at Riverfront Coliseum on Friday night. The three-piece band from Toronto played before a sellout crowd of 10,746 in support of their 19th album, *Counterparts*.

Opening act Primus tried to warm up the crowd with a 40-minute set. This trio performed a mix of funky, Southern-style, speed metal in a set that included their most recognizable songs, "Jerry was a Race Car Driver" and "My Name is Mud." For the most part, Primus' performance was loud and plodding. Primus fans enjoyed the set while Rush fans endured it.

The main event began with a video of a giant nut and bolt like the ones on the cover of *Counterparts* uniting in space above the Earth to the sound of "Fanfare for the Common Man" before Rush launched into "On the Run."

For a band that's been together for 20 years, Rush sounded incredibly fresh and sharp. The band performed the songs almost exactly as they sound on the albums. The only concession to the band's

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age was a small TelePrompTer located on the floor in front of lead singer and bassist Geddy Lee, which displayed song lyrics. Given the band's long history of complex lyrics, such a monitor is forgivable. Besides, Lee never really seemed to look at it.

If he was reading the lyrics, Lee should be doing books on tape. He sang with as much emotion as his high-pitched voice could allow.

Both Lee and guitarist Alex Lifeson performed with intensity, which was visible on their faces. They rocked back and forth to the music, occasionally stepping to the edge of the stage and playing to the crowd. Lee punctuated the strong notes with jumps in the air. Drummer Neil Peart had two drum sets, one in front of him and one in back. He sat on a podium that rotated when he changed sets, allowing him to always look forward.

The band performed a fairly even mix of songs from throughout its career. They mixed classics such as "Limelight" with lesser

known songs such as "Double Agent." When performing the less popular music, the crowd's attention was maintained by a variety of visual stimulation. This ranged from giant inflatable rabbits, to short video clips, to fire and explosions. Rush didn't need to provide the pyrotechnics for "Limelight." The crowd gave the butane salute as lighters dotted the coliseum like stars.

The show was what one would expect. But if you missed it, don't worry; Rush has not lost its edge in 20 years and will probably still have it next time around.

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