

Go Guide Saturday

ASO features night of contrast

Dreamlike movie suite opens evening.

Energetic 'Rite of Spring' played at rock-concert volume.

By **James L. Paulk**
For the AJC

Thursday night's Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concert was titled "The Rite of Spring," as it featured Stravinsky's iconic masterpiece. But the first half of the program included a suite assembled in 2008 from the score for the movie "Youth Without Youth" by composer Oswaldo Golijov, one of the most celebrated composers on the planet and a longtime partner of the ASO.

The movie, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, flopped at the box office. Perhaps Golijov wrote the suite as a way of finding an audience for the score, given the movie's failure. Whatever the motivation, it is a revealing and rather extreme look at how differently a film score can function when it loses its flick. "Youth Without Youth" is a surreal, dreamlike time-travel movie. The movie creates the emotions, and Golijov's score simply serves to **ASO review** continued on D2 enhance and channel them.

In the suite, robbed of context, the score becomes abstract and open. The dreams it enhances

are your own. You are far more aware of the score than in the movie, naturally, so you can focus on the eclectic sounds. Golijov's influences range from his native Argentina to Jewish and Eastern sounds. This score used only strings, percussion and exotic instruments, including the kamancheh, or Persian spike

fiddle. Some of the processed sounds were handled by a man with a laptop computer. The ASO under Robert Spano has developed an affinity for new works, and this was an engaged, sensitive performance.

Those who came to the concert hoping for a lean, nuanced "Rite of Spring" with opportunities to explore the interiors of each episode, probably went away disappointed. We got, instead, a savage, dense approach, often at rock-concert volume. Spano seemed determined to bring home the primal energy of the piece: the raw sensuality and the blend of extreme

dissonance and noise that made it so shocking at its premiere and that continues to shock even today.

From the opening bassoon cries to the percussion outbursts, screaming woodwinds and piercing brass that combine to make this one of the most intense (and technically difficult) pieces in the repertoire, Spano took the audience on quite a ride. Written as a ballet score, the work conjures the Russian spring, when masses of ice break like thunder in a sudden thaw, and the sacrifice of a virgin, who dances herself to death to satisfy the gods.

Atlanta, which likes things big and loud, took it well. People were leaping up and shouting as the last note echoed in the hall. Golijov's gentle, dreamlike suite and "The Rite of Spring" have little in common except that each was written as part of something else.

Each succeeded on its own terms, and the combination is an example of the kind of programming that has made the ASO a good place to hang out lately.

Concert review "The Rite of Spring"

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. 8 tonight. \$20-\$75. Symphony Hall, 1280 Peachtree St. N.E., Atlanta. 404-733-5000, www.atlantasympphony.org.

