

# The cosmic hippo has taken off

by Sherri Lynn

Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, with special opening guest Adrian Legg, provided an evening of music not soon to be forgotten last week at The Metz Niteclub.

What do Bela Fleck, Howard Levy, brothers Victor Wooten and Roy "Future Man" Wooten have in common? A recent Grammy nomination for best contemporary jazz album, spectacular stage theatrics and more musical talent than one band deserves. It's easy to see why Bonnie Raitt chose this band to tour with her.

Each member shone as brightly as the next. They took turns showing off their individual abilities, yet performed as a solid unit.

Future Man, "a refugee from the year 2050," arrived with his drumitar to show how drums are played in the future. He provided backbeat for the band, and brought drums to the frontline. Future Man's instrument of choice, the sort-of-guitar-like drumitar was played by pressing buttons on the body as well as the neck of the instrument.

Bassist Victor Wooten brought the audience to its feet during his rendition of "Chopsticks," and "The Nutcracker Suite." He proceeded to play like a madman, hula-hooped the bass around his neck and landed it in perfect position to play the next note.

Howard Levy, "the man with two brains," appropriately named due to his ability to play two instruments simultaneously, danced all over the keyboard and elicited a full range of chromatic scales on his harmonica. Levy often held the spotlight during his intense harmonic solos.

Bela Fleck, the band's leader, alternated back and forth between his banjo and the electric guitar. Mostly, he paid attention to his banjo and demonstrated what innovation is. Fleck, who served as an unassuming leader, exploited the band's talent, and took an occasional solo for himself.

Jazz, funk, rock, classical, reggae, bluegrass and even rap elements were detectable but the prominent style was

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all their own. "Sinister Minister," a light-hearted, love-your-neighbor song, rapped

by bassist Wooten, rounded out the show. A standing ovation brought them back to play "Flight of the Cosmic Hippo" from their release of the same name. As this was played, the audience was instructed to snap and "Oooh" and "Ahhh," and to sound like "a hippo running off the runway at the airport."

Adrian Legg, a guitarist's guitarist, astounded the audience with his brilliant solos. Legg's music is not easily categorized.

Legg played a spectrum of songs, a waltz, romantic melodies and then broke into "Coging's Glory," a rambunctious foot tapping tune. He humorously stated, "It would be nice to do more romance but violence is required." Legg finished with "Chicken Licken's Last Rite," a fast picking upbeat arrangement from his *Guitar for Mortals* album.

Legg hails from London, but said "he feels at home playing in the United States," and pointed out "the guitar is an American loved instrument."

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The promotional campaign of this movie is also questionable. Upon entering the theater, each viewer is handed a fig newton-like thing called a "Pig Newton" (Hey kids-how about some more pork products?) and upon exit, each viewer is given a slick pig poster. This brings up two important questions: Who financed this Titanic endeavor and were shots fired from the grassy knoll? Couldn't the makers of the film have spared the promotional junk and poured those extra frogskins into making a watchable movie?

Being strapped down and forced to listen to Melanie Griffith read *War and Peace* wouldn't be half as bad as having to view this film. *The Dark Backward* is not for the "squeamish"—or the unlobotomized for that matter—and should send the elderly running for the exits.

# Soviet Philharmonic shows flares of passion at Ham Hall

by William Holt

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The Soviet Philharmonic Orchestra, directed by Gennady Rozhdestvensky, performed at Artemus Ham Hall last week playing Prokofiev's "Symphony No. 2," his excerpts from "Romeo and Juliet" and Shostakovich's "Symphony No. 10."

The Soviet Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 1981. It performs at many Russian festivals, including the Russian Winter Festival, the Moscow Autumn Festival and the All-Union Festival of Soviet Music in Tallinn. It also tours Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Austria and sometimes here.

It is currently attempting to record all of the major orchestral works in the Russian repertoire such as Bruckner and Stravinsky, including the works of good 'ole Prokofiev and Shostakovich.

After the show, for a \$3 cover charge, the audience can go to the Judy Bayley Theatre and speak with the Soviet musicians via translators.

Prokofiev is well known in this country for his film scores

in the first half of the century. His music has been used in war-type films and in documentaries about deprivation.

His style is described by one critic as a mixture of Shonberg, Ornsteins, Satie, Medtner, Schumann, Scriabin and Stravinsky.

Prokofiev describes his own style as containing five characteristics: 1) having the influence of Baroque and Classical forms, 2) the desire to innovate new harmonies into his expressive music, 3) strong rhythms, 4) elements of lyricism, 5) and having the jesting and mocking characteristics so typical of his symphonies, concertos and stage works, which is really saying the same thing twice in one sentence.

He said of his own "Symphony No. 2," "Neither I nor the audience understood anything in it... It was too thickly woven... [with] too many layers of counterpoint which degenerated into mere figuration. The majority were horrified by my

symphony. Even though I have some ardent admirers, the others are now grieving over my downfall."

If this is the case, then I wonder why the orchestra played it. I couldn't have described his symphony better myself. A woman rows ahead of me took naps during the quiet parts, waking when the music exploded with activity, acting as her alarm clock. The lady next to me couldn't stop squirming in her seat and left early.

"Romeo and Juliet" was extraordinarily balanced with several even coats of innovative melodies, rhythms and textures. This could very well be his best work.

Shostakovich's "Symphony No. 10" was described by his followers as "an optimistic tragedy."

This symphony, somewhat like Prokofiev's, seemed transitionally congested and lacked an identifiable musical direction. It did have a wild array of passion and many moments of atmospheric pondering achieved by a dynamic variety of chord changes.

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Duda, a member of the IFC. "We then usually talk to the president of the school or an administrator and tell them the storyline because most don't want to be associated with something negative."

Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio, about 30 miles northwest of Cincinnati, got involved as a possible film site for *Little Man Tate* through the Cincinnati Film Commission, which persuaded director Jodie Foster to film the movie primarily in Cincinnati and surrounding areas.

The same setup worked for Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, where pieces of *Fried Green Tomatoes* and the Academy Award-winning *Driving Miss Daisy* were filmed.

Wynens credits the appeal of the school to its "picturesque" campus, filled with a mix of century-old buildings and Southern Victorian homes and parlors.

Woody Allen's crews filmed in some classrooms, professors' offices and used some exterior shots of Barnard College campus buildings for his film.

A similar setup was used at Miami for *Little Man Tate*. Foster spent the summer of 1990, shooting in the school's ice arena and some campus buildings as well as the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity house.

They wanted a school that looked like an East Coast school," said Holly Wissing, director of Miami's news bureau. "We have some traditional, Georgian architecture. Jodie Foster and others looked around and were very impressed."

Not only do the films bring visibility and sometimes profit to the school, they also give students a chance to get involved.

About 50 to 100 students worked as extras on the Woody Allen film. Many students served as extras in *Little Man Tate* as well, and Wynens says Agnes Scott students frequently get involved in some of the projects there.

Erika Staton, a junior studying dietetics at Miami, landed a rare speaking part in *Little Man Tate* after auditioning with 2,000 others.

"I didn't think I had a chance," Staton said.

Staton had to join the actors' union for her line, but made about \$500 for her half-day's work. In the movie, Staton asks Adam Hann-Byrd, who played Fred Tate, "Are you lost sweetie?" as the child genius walks through the campus.

Staton, who models in the Cincinnati area, doesn't have any plans to pursue an acting career, but said she enjoyed her exposure to the film industry and said, "It was a great learning experience."

The schools agree, even though what they learned wasn't always convenient and didn't always have a happy ending.

"The unhappy news about *Fried Green Tomatoes* is that the scenes filmed (at Agnes Scott) were edited out," Wynens said. "The same thing happened with *Driving Miss Daisy* because they always film more than they use. That makes us sad because one won an Academy Award and the other one probably will win one."

## Need a job?



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