

New conductor has symphony soaring

By COLLEEN JOHNSTON
RECORD STAFF

Martin Fischer-Dieskau has an extraordinary ability to create sound and image.

Friday, at Raffi Armenian Theatre in Centre in the Square, Fischer-Dieskau accomplished what many Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony followers have wished for some long years — he brought out the very best of a very fine orchestra. Fischer-Dieskau, the symphony's newly appointed Principal Conductor seems, by all available evidence, to be the right person for the task.

Graceful, tall, and impeccably attired, Fischer-Dieskau towered over the stage, commanding the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony players with style. The opening measures of Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D were so elegant and unhurried as to recall the serenity of the legendary

maestros, including von Karajan, Furtwangler, Previn and Stokowski. He chose to arrange the placement of the players in an odd, but fully effective manner. As the oboes, clarinets, bassoon, and horns revealed their contributions to the appropriate wind sound of the period, the resulting dignity and clarity of phrase ushered in the perfect setting for soloist Stephen Sitariski's first brilliantly executed statements.

Sitariski and Fischer-Dieskau, along with the orchestra, made a terrific team. Sitariski has technique and expression and the beautiful sound to match Fischer-Dieskau's vast range of musical intentions.

How much more exquisite can this piece be, with Sitariski, in the second movement, balancing elaborated, figured, embroidered phrases with the nobility and tact Beethoven intended? And there was such visceral bounce

in the final Allegro to promote the nearly full house to stand and clap at length.

Sitariski is a fabulous performer. One of the best. But let's not neglect to mention that the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony players are all excellent, and totally responsive to a top-drawer conductor like Fischer-Dieskau.

They performed Peter Hatch's elemental *Reveiller* with sensitive intelligence. Hatch makes it out that he wrote this piece inspired by visits to a rustic cottage. Somehow there are darker forces involved in this 2001 composition. But it's that troubling undertone, which surfaces in the middle, that lends Hatch's work its depth. And deep it is.

Ultimately, Hatch's sense of shape, and Fischer-Dieskau's reverent reading, turned this performance into a triumph of orchestral writing. Hatch has a broad palette of orchestral ex-

pressions, and writes extremely well for the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony personnel he has come to know over the past years.

Years ago, Raffi Armenian dreamed of turning his expertly designed hall into a venue for performances of Richard Wagner's operas. Redemption through true love, he used to say. Well, it was fitting that Fischer-Dieskau conducted a selection of excerpts from Wagner's Ring cycle, including the rousing Ride of the Valkyries. The players worked hard and produced thrilling sounds, and smiled as they received thunderous applause. Everyone, no doubt, is eagerly anticipating the upcoming fall concert, in which Fischer-Dieskau will lead the orchestra and various local choirs in a performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

This magnificent concert repeated at Centre in the Square on Saturday.



MATHEW MCCARTHY, RECORD STAFF

Martin Fischer-Dieskau conducts the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony at the Centre in the Square Friday evening.