

The Journal

Musical tales, stirringly told



Molly Hennig (right) places her hands on the strings of the piano to dampen the music while Peter Michael von der Nahmer (left) plays during the Musical Tales Concerto Sunday afternoon in The Grand Center for Arts and Culture.

NEW ULM — A taste of what is to come was on display Sunday afternoon at The Grand as part of the First Sunday Concerts series.

The Grand presented Musical Tales Concerto, an oral presentation of “*Wind and the Sweet German Boy*” interspersed with songs that reflected back onto the story.

“I really liked it. I felt myself getting lost in my own program, in his (Peter Michael von der Nahmer’s) program,” singer Molly Hennig said. *“It really was a really good means for suspension of disbelief.”*

The concerto is a model of what resident composer von der Nahmer will be presenting Saturday, Aug. 26, as the culmination of his stay in New Ulm.

The story, written by von der Nahmer’s friend Marianna Mott Newirth, follows a young boy as he loses his innocence and starts questioning the world.

The beginning describes the boy playing with the wind, which is personified as an older sister to the boy.

Eventually he stops, after the boy’s father drops him from his lap and the boy begins to question why the world works the way it does.

As the boy becomes a teen and then a man, he struggles with monsters that lie inside his head. All the while the wind keeps trying to play with the boy.

The boy-turned-man eventually gets married and begins to lead a good life, while still feeling empty inside.

That is until the wind, angry with being ignored and worried about the man’s angst with the world, chases him down as a storm.

The wind and the man face each other eye to eye for the first time since he was a boy in a confrontation that leaves the man feeling complete.

The songs placed throughout the story create greater context for the narrative, allowing for deeper meaning to flourish, in Newirth’s words.

Each song is placed to fit with the emotional path of the plot. Happy songs at the beginning and songs with greater complexity and more taboo subjects arise as the conflict progresses.

The exploration of depression in the song “*Night After Night*” was an important aspect of the show for singer Nita Gilbert.

It was good that the show explored taboo topics and looked at “*what is going on in peoples’ heads and what their fears are, and being able to make that more transparent,*” she said.

The show Aug. 26 will feature the same story with some of the same songs plus all new numbers.

The culmination will be expanded to include more multimedia performances, including dancing and onscreen performances, von der Nahmer said.

Connor Cummiskey can be emailed at ccummiskey@nujournal.com.

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