

Ziegler, O'Riley thrill crowd with piano concert

By SHARIE PYKE

For The Outpost

After a 20-year hiatus, Two to Tango played the Alberta Bair again.

"How many dancers were there?" a friend asked me. "None," I replied. Which explains in part why the virtuoso piano duo didn't have the full house they deserved. The performance had little to do with swooping, passionate, heel-clicking couples.

Instead, two grand pianos embraced each other on an otherwise empty stage. Then, two virtuoso pianists, Pablo Ziegler and Christopher O'Riley, walked out, bowed and took their seats, launching into Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla's "Michelangelo 70." Trust me. This was no tango.

That first duet was edgy, challenging, and at times bordering on dissonant and disrhythmic, with small melodies floating through. Seemingly psychically connected, Ziegler and O'Riley communicated across the length of their grand pianos, uniting two very complicated lines of music. I was both entranced and amazed at their virtuosity.

Both gentlemen played solos as well.

I especially liked Mr. Ziegler performing his own composition, "Milonga en el Viento," or "Dancing in the Wind." (The milonga is another version of the tango.) The notes were wistful and nostalgic, that kind of sighing, looking back, when you know you can never go back. The music did occasionally move and sway, underpinning the story.

In contrast, Mr. O'Riley played another Ziegler composition, "La Rayuela," which he translated as "hopscotch." The notes did hop, skip and jump. It was one of those deceptively simple pieces that had me smiling while I held my breath. O'Riley was so comfortable with his music that he even glanced out at the audience from time to time, asking us to join in the fun.

The best way to describe the program? Neoclassical. No wait, maybe jazz. But some works had that Latin passion.



PABLO ZIEGLER

REVIEW

And there were two fugues, so move over, Herr Bach? The finale, "Libertango," by Piazzolla, was indeed recognizable as a

dance tango. The audience loved the program and gave the pianists a standing ovation. Bravo! Bien hecho!

I'm truly grateful I was part of the audience. And please, gentlemen. Don't wait another 20 years before you return.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

End oil, gas tax break

In Montana, we believe in fairness and a level playing field. But right now, oil and gas companies extracting Montana resources are not paying their fair share. From 2008 to 2014, these companies received a tax break of more than \$126 million, costing local communities and the state critical revenue to meet infrastructure, social service, and public safety needs.

In 1999, the Legislature created a huge tax break for oil and gas companies. It lowers the taxation of oil and gas production to almost nothing during the most profitable period of extraction – the first 12 to 18 months. At the time, proponents of the tax break claimed that it would encourage development. Studies show, however, that oil companies do not base their decisions on state taxes. Quite simply, these out-of-state corporations operate where there is oil, period. We know now that this tax policy has cost Montana hundreds of millions in lost revenue, but the costs have been especially high to the communities who feel the strain on their public services and infrastructure.

Let's compare. In North Dakota, during times when oil prices are high, a typical Bakken well producer is taxed at an average rate of 10.6 percent. However, Montana taxes these companies at less

than 1 percent during the first 12 to 18 months.

The money Montana hands over to oil and gas companies as a tax break should instead be invested in our communities, on maintaining critical public services like education, water systems, housing, and roads. Increasing population in oil- and gas-impacted counties has overwhelmed local police, firefighters, domestic violence shelters, and child abuse officials.

We can fix this. I am proposing Senate Bill 374 to ensure oil companies pay their fair share. The bill will place a "trigger" on the tax holiday. When oil prices are high, the state and communities are ensured a revenue stream. North Dakota, experiencing a similar oil boom, has had a similar tax structure in place for several years.

My bill will also ensure that the majority of this revenue goes to where it is needed most – the communities in Eastern Montana. A fund will be set up to address the ongoing infrastructure, safety, and social service needs of the communities hit the hardest by the production.

The oil and gas tax holiday is costing Montana millions in revenue for public services and infrastructure. It's time to fix it and put those dollars to better use.

Sen. Christine Kaufmann
D-Helena.

'Assault': Twists, turns

(Continued from Page 1)

be poisoned on her doorstep – by drinking tea from her shop. Even worse, one of Pepper's best employees is sent to jail for the crime. Convinced that the young woman is innocent, Pepper starts her own investigation into the murder.

Although the aforementioned murder occurs in the novel's first few chapters, the case unfolds slowly, which gives the audience a chance to become immersed in the novel's depictions of the many people and places that Pepper encounters.

While I've never been to Seattle, I felt like I had after reading this novel. This is due in large part to Budewitz's descriptions. One of my favorites can be found at the start of Chapter 26:

"Wednesday morning didn't exactly dawn. It slunk in, wet and soggy, reeking of diesel fumes and that faint ocean smell of salt water, decayed fish, seaweed, and seagull poop."

This kind of evocative description is found throughout the novel as Budewitz describes the various smells, tastes and sounds found within Pike Place Market (a real community within the city). This district is a small haven within the larger community where everyone knows everybody else and greets one and all with a

smile. Budewitz's descriptions make this place come alive – and make me wish that I could visit Pike's Place Market sometime.

Of course, no place is perfect, and Budewitz doesn't turn a blind eye to the faults of Pike Place. In fact, she often takes the time to reflect on the problem of homelessness that affects the market. These discussions are thoughtful without being preachy and without distracting from the mystery that is the central thrust of the novel.

Speaking of which, the mystery itself is quite good with enough twists and turns to keep you guessing to the end. If you're a fan of the genre, this is a solid pick.

In fact it's so solid that I can't find much to criticize. I do have some minor quibbles. For example, the random spice-related fun facts at the beginning of each chapter seem out of place as do the 12 pages of recipes at the end of the book. Also, a romantic subplot doesn't add much to a novel that already feels a bit too long.

Overall though, this book is a solid entry to the mystery genre thanks to Budewitz's great descriptions, evocative setting and engaging mystery.

'Killer': Too much yoga

(Continued from Page 1)

"Murder Strikes a Pose," left off, Webber's newest novel follows Kate Davidson, the owner of a yoga studio who is invited to teach yoga classes at the Elysian Springs resort. However, Kate's dream vacation turns into a nightmare when one of the resort's obnoxious guests is found dead and all the evidence points to Kate.

While Kate works to prove herself innocent, she must decide if she's ready to take the next step with her longtime boyfriend – a dilemma shared by her best friend, Rene.

There's undoubtedly a lot of charm and humor in this novel – seen most prominently through the numerous one-liners and puns (At one point, an obnoxious dog is referred to as a "terrierist").

Even when the novel's overarching mystery starts to lag a bit, the characters are so likable and relatable that you'll want to keep reading. Webber obviously cares about her characters and this comes through here. The book's biggest strengths are the character-based scenes where we are able to learn more about the heroine and the people she encounters.

Of course, some characters are more memorable than others. My particular favorite was "Dale Evans, Goat Rustler and Attorney-at-Law." This folksy defense attorney is a clever character who isn't utilized nearly enough here. I would love to see more of him in Webber's future "Downward Dog Mysteries" or even his own spinoff series. After all, who wouldn't want to read a series of novels about an elderly goat farmer/attorney?

For all of the fun the book provides, it still has a few problems. Most notable among these is that the story's central mystery is drawn out for way too long. I had figured out "whodunit" about 100 pages before Kate did.

Another problem is that numerous sections feature lengthy depictions of people doing yoga. Webber obviously has a passion for yoga, but for readers like me who are not as interested in this practice, these sections drag on for too long and divert attention from the central plot.

Despite all of this, "A Killer Retreat" still makes for a lighthearted escapist read. If you're looking for a fun getaway for a couple of days, you should definitely consider traveling with Kate to Elysian Springs.

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