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# WSO's fun-filled family concert cure for January deep-freeze blues

By Gwenda Nemerofsky

WHAT do you do with your kids on a Sunday afternoon when it's -30C outside with a windchill of -43C? One terrific option is to head down to the Centennial Concert Hall for a specially programmed kids' concert and a host of musical activities.

The hall was abuzz with activity before the concert even began. Music for Young Children, in partnership with the WSO, had organized a variety of stations at which youngsters could get hands-on experience with various instruments. Wandering around, you could hear squawks from first tries at the alto sax, crashing cymbals and a string quartet that sped up or slowed down at the whims and directions of mini-maestros.

Manny Tuba, the mascot of the family programs, greeted kids with white-gloved high fives and knelt down to be within reach for numerous hugs. He was sharply dressed in a tux, with red laces in his gigantic shoes, and his bell gleamed brassily as he made his way through the crowds.

The concert itself was wonderful. The multi-talented Peter Duschenes of Ottawa-based Platypus Theatre bounced onto

## ConcertReview

### Charlotte and the Music-Maker

- WSO Sundays with the Family
- Centennial Concert Hall, Jan. 20
- Attendance: 1,135

★★★★★ out of five

the stage in front of conductor Rei Hotoda and the WSO to tell the story of *Charlotte and the Music-Maker*.

Lanky and athletic, he added his own energetic physicality to the performance as he recounted the day Charlotte was born, and how rather than crying like most babies, she sang a boppy little tune.

In an hour, we heard how Charlotte, age seven, was drawn to music and danced and sang all over the house, to the chagrin of her parents and grandmother.

The entire story was told in comical rhyming narrative, written by Duschenes himself, and was a sort of combination of Robert Munsch and Dr. Seuss. Musical examples were interspersed throughout, giving kids an opportunity to hear various musical styles, from Handel's *Water Music* to the spunky *Tico Tico*.

Charlotte met the Music-Maker when she ran away from home, fed up with always being told to take her music to another room. Out alone on a wintry night, she happened upon a tunnel in the snow, which led her to the Music-Maker's abode.

Duschenes played the role of the Music Maker with disarming spirit and humour, introducing Charlotte to "the brilliant brass, sumptuous strings" and "wonderful woodwinds."

He explained what the instruments were made of, and we heard how each sounded as WSO members played solo and in sections. We even heard the clarinet, oboe and bassoon play only their reeds, at which Charlotte (also played by Duschenes) exclaimed that they sounded like "sick chickens."

The kids responded throughout with laughter — and it was clear they were learning while having fun.

The afternoon finished with everyone singing *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* and going home feeling amused and satisfied. This has got to be the best way to combat cabin fever you'll ever find.

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