

# reviewvancouver: PLAY! A Video Game Symphony

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In a truly unique event, PLAY! A Video Game Symphony featured award-winning music from a catalogue of blockbuster video game titles. The segment on Super Mario Bros. was a good way to start out the evening, and had the audience roaring their approval. Other popular segments of the night included Kingdom of Hearts, HALO suite, Sonic the Hedgehog, and Castlevania. The grand finale was the music from World of Warcraft. The audience demanded an encore, and were treated to One-Winged Angel from Final Fantasy VII. The PLAY! Concert series was created in 2004 by Jason Michael Paul and has entertained sold-out audiences around the world. The concerts from 2006-2010 were conducted by Andy Roth, with Andy Brick taking over in 2010.

On large screens above the orchestra were high-definition digital montages of game sequences accompanying the scores, interspersed with video close-ups of featured performers. One of the parts I found most entertaining was watching the Legend of Zelda graphics progressing through their different game instalments. It is stunning to see how video game graphics (and their soundtracks) have progressed over the years.

Music Director and Principal Conductor Andy Brick, who set a historic milestone conducting the Czech National Symphony Orchestra in the world's first symphonic game music concert at the Gewandhaus, Leipzig, Germany, threw formality out the window when he invited the young audience to "Let us know when you hear or see something you like." He sure got what he asked for. When audience members would yell comments or shout their approval during his speeches he would just shake his head and ruefully comment, "Oh, those gamers..."

I overheard a season's pass holder remark at intermission: "This is a much rowdier crowd than we usually see in attendance at VSO...I like it!"

In attendance were numerous composers whose pieces were featured in PLAY!, including Jeremy Soule (The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion, Guild Wars, Harry Potter) from Seattle. We were also privy to the World premiere of the score from Civilization V, whose composers were also in attendance, with free soundtracks offered after the show. There were prize giveaways throughout the night, and a meet-and-greet and autograph session after the performance.

This was certainly an entertaining, enthusiastic and educational night that taught me to appreciate a new form of music I had never really considered before. The VSO believes that PLAY! "not only speaks to the fundamental musical spirit of today's youth, it provides an unparalleled opportunity for each and every member of the orchestra to connect to their next generation audience." Judging by the number of mesmerized youth in attendance, they seem to have accomplished their goal. This was my first time attending the symphony, and it will likely be the first of many.

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