

Words Song Of Lilith's weakest link

Music and art shine in tri-media Mooredale show

BY GEOFF CHAPMAN
MUSIC CRITIC

There's another player in the great debate of Creation versus Evolution.

The mythic tale of Lilith precedes Adam and Eve's adventures with snake and apple in the Garden of Eden.

Lilith, reputedly first mate to the good ship Adam, whose later macho posturing drove her away, has become something of a standard bearer for the cause of womanhood. The legend inspired Mooredale Concerts' tri-media production, *A Song Of Lilith*, in Holy Trinity Church Wednesday.

It combines a dramatic narrative poem by Vancouver poet Joy Kogawa (renowned for *Obasan*), black-and-white graphite and acrylic paint artwork projections with ancient and erotic themes by Vancouver-based Lilian Broca, and stirring music composed by Toronto's Larysa Kuzmenko and played by a string quartet and English horn — in this context its other name, oboe d'amore, is more appropriate.

Kogawa's words, divided into seven segments, are read by veteran actor Barbara Gordon and it is the text that fails, at least in the evangelical aspects.

Its message is a motherhood issue both literally and metaphorically, as well as being historically mostly correct and now wholly politically correct. The verse is often voluptuous, but the fable of independent Lilith's trials and tribulations,

her rejection of temptations offered by male demons and her eventual adoption of love as the self-empowering element that restores her freedom, is far too polemical.

A didactic tract that addresses only past and present repressions, it fares even worse artistically when it rails against contemporary nastiness rather than cosmic injustice.

To leap from Adam's selfishness to the plight of bag ladies and ecological ravages, the worship of money as God together with bitter satirical shots at the compliant Eves of our world, is a sociological leap backward, and Gordon does not help keep these issues clear by making the story's legendary figures into real, whining people.

This epic tale of the coming out of women could have been told just as effectively with the extremes of emotion represented in the art and music. Kuzmenko's exciting, absorbing and intriguing score made vivid programmatic work of the story components.

It was played impressively and with passion by violinists Erika Raum and Julie Baumgartel, violist Kathleen Kajioka, cellist (and Mooredale chief) Kristine Bogyo and oboist Clare Scholtz, somehow achieving the remarkable effect of delivering more impact than the biting plaints of the poetry.

You have to admire the imaginations that conceived and developed this project, but it's clear that Two's good artistic company here while Three is overcrowded.

But then, as a male responsible for all the world's grief, I could be wrong.