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Concert Review

Symphonies in rock

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David Garrett successful achieves the crossover between classical and popular music

Fans of classical and pop music enjoyed a real treat in one show when violinist David Garrett flew in to Bangkok to perform in a mini showcase at the Siam Pavalai Theatre at Siam Paragon on Sunday.

The German crossover violinist who earned nods from critics and fans all over the world for his latest CD "Rock Symphonies" finally met his Thai fans. Dressed in a simple outfit, Garrett appeared on stage with a guitarist and, without further ado, proceeded to lull the crowd with his violin. As expected, fans got to hear several tunes from his latest album where he "bridges the gap between rock and classical music".

In the showcase with a good mix of classics and rock, tunes like "Smooth Criminal" (Michael Jackson), "Walk This Way" (Aerosmith), "November Rain" (Guns 'N' Roses), "Live And Let Die" (Paul McCartney) and Motown classic "Ain't No Sunshine" were rendered furiously and passionately. Fans were also treated to an enigmatic rendition of Beethoven's Symphony No 5 and a movement from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" where Garrett showed the audience how he earned a place in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's fastest violinist.

The rocker violinist ended the show with "He's A Pirate", a theme from Hollywood blockbuster "Pirates of the Caribbean" and capped off the 45-minute showcase with a promise to come back and play a proper show in Bangkok early next year.

Born in Aachen, Germany to an American mother and German father, Garrett's interest in violin began at the age of four when his older brother received a violin from his father who was an antique stringed-instrument dealer. A year later, the child prodigy had already won a competition, and by seven he was playing Mozart with an orchestra.

At 14, Garrett had already released two albums with Deutsche Grammophon and so far has performed with many of the world's top orchestras, including the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in 2007. In 2009 he released a self-titled album on the Decca label, and a year later, "Rock Symphonies" - his latest crossover CD came out. The varied repertoire includes Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and John Bonham "Kashmir" among many other famous rock tunes and respected classical pieces.

In Bangkok, Garrett's interpretation of both rock and classic proved that he is perceptive and deeply passionate about music. He's neither a rigid classical musician nor an arrogant, wild rocker but a happy medium between the two. And with his love of rock and classical skills, Garrett successfully blurs the line between classical and popular music - an attempt many crossover musicians can't quite achieve.