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MUSIC REVIEW

Chamber Blues Band leaves you speechless

It's a combination of classical, blues music that can't be missed

BY JOHN NEMO
Special to the Pioneer Press

Words are useless. Corky Siegel came in and stole my tongue. He ripped it right out with the kind of blues harmonica that had otherwise dignified people inside the Dakota stomping their feet and letting out whoops of joy Tuesday.

When I tried to speak, Jill Kaeding slid in with her cello, cranking out a version of the 12-bar blues that would make Mozart run for cover. When my mind finally began comprehending the amazing combination of classical music and blues that I was hearing, there was Frank Donaldson, slapping everything from his hands to a washboard and even customers' wine glasses, adding enough zesty percussion to send the whole thing spinning out of control again.

Corky Siegel and the Cham-

ber Blues Band have married Muddy Waters and Mozart. They've blended the blues and classical music, in the process reminding anyone within earshot of a very simple tenet. "Music," Siegel said during Tuesday's 75-minute show, "is a beautiful thing."

Siegel, 58, who began a three-night stand at the Dakota (he plays again tonight and Thursday) before a crowd of more than 150, first became known when he came out of Chicago with the Siegel-Schwall Band, a blues-based outfit that was popular during the 1960s and 1970s. Since then he has written and performed numerous songs with orchestras around the world and had his music choreographed by five different international ballet companies. A friend, Chicago Symphony Orchestra conductor Seigi Ozawa, asked him to jam with some classical

musicians along the way, and in the late 1980s the Chamber Blues Band was born.

On Tuesday, the group featured Richard Halajian on viola, Mark Agnor and Jeff Yang on violin, Kaeding on cello and Donaldson on percussion. What they came up with was some of the most original and enjoyable music I have ever listened to.

Take your typical classical musician and splatter some mud on his shoes.

Next, find yourself a grizzled, old blues man playing a harmonica on the street corner. Clean him up and stuff him into a tuxedo, but not too tightly. Then mix in enough funky percussion to keep everyone's toes tapping, and you have Corky Siegel's Chamber Blues.

Siegel was at the center of everything on Tuesday, energy escaping from every pore in his body as he dazzled the audi-

Who: Corky Siegel**Where:** The Dakota**When:** Today through Thursday**Review:** This astonishing mix of blues and classical music is not to be missed.**Tickets:** Call the Dakota at 651-642-1442

ence with his skills on the harmonica and piano. He ended the performance by racing around the entire room, riffing along on his harmonica as he mingled with his guests.

He even ventured to the front door, waving in potential customers outside the club with one arm while blowing on the harmonica he held in the other.

Do your eyes and ears a favor — go and see this show.

That's all I can say. Corky Siegel stole my tongue, and I don't know when I'll get it back.