

Some of the Best Films in Town Are at FotoFocus' Screenings



Rainer Ganahl's *El Mundo – A Classical Music Concert*

Since they're not playing at a multiplex, or even an indie theater like the Esquire, you might easily overlook some of the best films in town right now. They're in FotoFocus' *Screenings* program, curated by its artistic director Kevin Moore and showing at Lightborne Studio, 212 E. 14th St. in Over-the-Rhine 11 a.m.-8 p.m. today through Sunday.

This is basically a program of shorts presented in a comfortably spacious room (usually a studio) fitted with big sofas. But two hour-long (approximately) films are continuously alternating in a smaller second room, also decked out with sofas. The one I saw on Thursday, Rainer Ganahl's 2013 *El Mundo – A Classical Music Concert*, was a

transfixing achievement both film and music. It's really worth seeking out.

The filmed, staged concert takes place in a Spanish Harlem discount store going out of business – everything is drastically on sale and looks picked-over, as if waiting for a dumpster to clear it out. Previously, the building was a theater and you can see traces of its former-life ornamentation.

The heat must have been turned off for this event. The concertgoers Ganahl has brought to the place are dressed warmly – one woman looks ready to explore the Arctic at intermission.

In the middle of this stuff there is a grand piano. There, during the course of the film, two pianists play – one an accompanist and another a sublime soloist. There is also a young violinist (Rachel Koblyakov) and two operatic singers. The most spectacular presence is the older diva Ok-Cha Lim, wearing the reddest possible formal dress with a red wrap around her shoulders and wrists. She dramatically sings arias from *Madame Butterfly* and *Tosca*.

The film is split-screen, so you watch the performers do their pieces on one side while another camera wanders around the crowd and the store itself, stopping to inspect the goods. It's an intimate enough space you can see the crew moving in and out of the frames. You can't help but think about how, on one hand, capitalism churns out so much disposable stuff while on the other hand art produces timeless beauty. Or, how art can enrich any environment.

For more information, visit www.fotofocusbiennial.org.
