



Christmas with the Trans-Siberian Orchestra

by Randy Miramontez ✓
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The **Trans-Siberian Orchestra** mesmerized the audience Saturday afternoon at **Power Balance Pavilion** in the first of two Christmas shows.

For those of you who may not be familiar with TSO, they are a progressive rock band that incorporates classical, orchestral, symphonic and progressive elements into hard rock and heavy metal. They are famous for their series of rock operas and storytelling.

This was a high-energy show with a combination of lasers, lights, pyrotechnics and video screens all synchronized to TSO’s music.

Dressed in black, the orchestra made their way on stage while chimes were playing. As they were assembling onstage, there were clips of Martin Luther King Jr. from the famous "I Have a Dream" speech, as well as John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and others, with each round of new faces drawing applause and cheers. Once onstage they started playing “Who I Am,” with video screens and lights blazing in perfect unison.

The talented storyteller Phillip Brandon started weaving a tale of an angel coming down to Earth on Christmas Eve. Brandon’s phenomenal voice, reminiscent of the famous James Earl Jones, drew the crowd into the tale as a hush came over the audience. After the introduction, the orchestra started playing “An Angel Came Down,” complete with lights and lasers.

As the orchestra began “First Snow,” it actually started to snow in the arena. OK, not really snow, but the pretend kind of snow. You know the one with tiny bubbles raining down? Couple that with all the video screens filled with snow added to the sensation of real snow. It was quite breathtaking, leaving the audience in complete awe as they listened to an extremely talented line-up of musicians.

A newcomer to TSO, violinist Asha Mevlana was off the charts rocking it with her purple high-tech violin. As she ended a solo routine, the crowd gasped in unison as she snapped her bow in half over her knee, ending the song. This was so much more dramatic than smashing a guitar to smithereens, since it was completely unexpected.

As they wrapped up the story, the orchestra treated the audience to a number of songs, including a mix from one of their albums, “Christmas Canon Rock,” at which point they brought out founder, composer and producer Paul O’Neill.

This was my first exposure to TSO, and I have to say they left me wanting more, even after a two-and-a-half-hour performance.



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