

Preview

Youngstown Symphony and Inbal Segev to present new cello concerto by Avner Dorman this Saturday

by Mike Telin



“What captivates me about Avner Dorman’s cello concerto is that it is so different than anything I have done before,” cellist Inbal Segev enthusiastically remarks over the telephone. “It is definitely on steroids. The first movement really hits you. The last time I played it, people jumped because they were not expecting a classical piece to sound like that. But it does grip you right away.”

On Saturday, September 21 at 8 PM in Youngstown's DeYor Performing Arts Center, [Inbal Segev](#) will give the Ohio premier of Avner

Dorman’s *Cello Concerto* with the Youngstown Symphony under the direction of Randall Craig Fleischer. The concert also includes Glinka’s *Overture to Russian and Ludmilla* and Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 7*.

Composer [Avner Dorman](#) is quickly establishing a presence in Northeast Ohio, having recently been named Music Director of CityMusic Cleveland. He describes his piece as “a concerto for a cello that forgot it was a cello,” and Segev quickly agrees that it is unlike anything that she has done before, adding that “Avner is a great guy and of course his music is great too!”

The story of how the concerto came to be is a real case of like minds being in the same place at the same time. “I commissioned the concerto, but what happened is this,” Segev recalls. “I played the Dvorak concerto, the big war horse of the cello repertoire, for Randall Craig Fleischer. He loved it, but he also told me that he loved new music and asked me if I had ever heard of the composer Avner... and I finished his sentence with 'Dorman'. I was already talking to Avner about a commission and we were looking for orchestras to be part of the project. Randall has three orchestras, so he immediately jumped and said that he was going to do another work with Avner but that work called for a very large orchestra, so this would be the perfect solution because he does love Avner’s music.”

The concerto was premiered last February with the Anchorage Symphony, and since then Inbal has performed the piece on two occasions, with Fleischer and the Hudson Valley Philharmonic and last summer in Bogota, Columbia.

Although she was very fond of the piece from the beginning, now that Segev has lived with it for a while she says that she has learned to like it even more. “The second movement is the hardest for me because there are a lot of broken chords and I’m basically playing alone except for the drone in the cello section. It also requires a lot of control to sustain the sound. Now I see the bigger picture in the movement, whereas before I was concerned about every note. I also know the orchestration a lot better just from hearing it more. I know the tricky spots and what to listen to,” she said, adding that she and the composer have also had a lot of conversations which have helped her to understand the piece even better. “It definitely has grown on me and I’m excited that Randall will be doing it with me now for the third time — so we have been growing with it together as well.”

The concerto is written for amplified cello. Segev points out that this is somewhat out of necessity given that the percussion section plays a prominent role in the piece, but it is important for them not to be overpowering. The orchestration also includes a jazz trio, which she says was not a totally new experience for her. “I’ve played pieces like this before with Absolute Ensemble Kristjan Järvi, so it wasn’t the first time. But I have never played a concerto like this before so it was a new experience. The drums are like a metronome and I depend on them. Of course the same type of thing exists in a classical concerto, but to a lesser extent.”

Although Segev certainly enjoys performing standard classical repertoire, she equally enjoys new music and working with composers and devotes much of her time to newly composed works. Was this a conscious decision? “It’s like writers say when asked ‘How do you choose what to write?’ The book chooses you and it is the same here. Avner is Israeli and I was looking for a Jewish Israeli connection after I recorded a CD called *Nigun* (*Jewish Melodies and traditional pieces*). I had compiled pieces from different Jewish diasporas for that CD and that made me feel like this is something I am very interested in and I wanted to explore more because I am Israeli. So that is what really drove me to Avner.”

Also, she has recently completed a project with Argentine pianist and Grammy-winning composer Fernando Otero, creating a Tango-inspired concerto. “I met Fernando when I was a student at Juilliard and we have had a long friendship. It was fascinating to work with somebody who could change the notes on the spot and you could see and be part of the process. It’s very exciting, and although we have yet to premiere it, it is a very cool project.”

Finally, why did Segev decide to play the cello in the first place? “My mom is a pianist and she had always wanted to play the cello — I call her a closet cellist. So she was delighted that I was interested in the cello. We listened to a lot of music at home and I was drawn to the sound from the beginning. And the distractions back then were minimal. The black and white TV had two channels — I’m dating myself — and the school day was much shorter then it is now so it was very easy to find the time to practice for half an hour every day. We did take the bus a couple of times a week to see my teacher and that was a big trip.”

We ended our conversation talking about being a working parent and why journalists still seem to only ask that question to women? I tell her I have been making sure I ask the same question to men. She laughs and says “Good! All three of my kids play instruments and we do put quite a bit of effort into their music. I take them to the best teachers I can find and we practice every day, almost. Our oldest daughter plays viola and the twins play violin and piano,” she says proudly.

Published on clevelandclassical.com September 17, 2013