

## Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra season finale at Severance Hall (May 5)

by Robert Rollin



Last Saturday evening, May 5, the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra presented its final concert of the season at Severance Hall under conductor Vinay Parameswaran. The evening's highlight was 20th-century Polish

composer Witold Lutosławski's *Concerto for Orchestra*, a massive, three-movement piece that filled the stage with young musicians.

The intense *Intrada, Allegro maestoso* exposed forceful, folksong-like material amid insistent drum ostinatos and a long bass pedal. Cellos and violas take the initial lead, with brass and percussion and later woodwinds joining the ostinato. A French horn solo follows.

A high string unison heralds a powerful cadence, xylophone and bells take up the ostinato, and a full tutti follows. Expressive solos by principal flute, oboe, and clarinet (Krysta-Marie Aulak, Kate Young, and Peter Varga), as well as English hornist Amelia Johnson and concertmaster Julia Schilz, stood out. The energy dissipated into a sustained chord in the strings.

The three-part *Capriccio notturno ed Arioso* featured soft and delicate scherzos flanking a more raucous central section announced by a strident trumpet unison. Snare drum, clarinets, and flutes competes against the sustained sonority of the ensemble, and a sudden staccato chord stifles the motion. The return to soft, rapid material from the first section included a potent solo by principal tuba Nicholas Withey and the quiet brushing of the snare drum. Ensemble was meticulous throughout.

Slow outer sections flank a fast, loud Toccata in the finale. The opening Passacaglia theme began with nearly inaudible basses and harps, and gradually the rest joined in. Johnson's beautiful English horn solo led to cello and violin entrances and increased counterpoint with clarinets and brass.

The playfully forceful Toccata is punctuated by short chords. The harps play against a tremolo background from the strings, full tutti pit section against section, and the Corale theme moves from oboes and clarinets to brass and muted strings. Thereafter, the performance became a virtuosic display as themes and statements of the original ostinato returned.



Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* and Haydn's *Trumpet Concerto*, both beautifully and energetically played, represented the Classical Era. Beethoven's portentous chords sparkled, and the fast section poignantly portrayed the Roman general's anxiety in the face of treacherous enemies. Concerto competition winner Charlie Jones shined, playing with a beautiful tone, especially in the first-movement cadenza. The third-movement timpani rolls were a delight.

Richard Danielpour's *Toward the Splendid City* is a perpetual motion portrayal of the composer's home of New York City after his year-long residency in Seattle. Loud, muted trumpets, intense unisons from the horns, and lots of marimba and vibraphone help distinguish the piece from the Lutosławski, composed 36 years earlier. Given the work's complexities, the orchestra played it with impressive panache.

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