

The Cleveland Orchestra Fridays@7 (May 15)

by Jarrett Hoffman



A good party doesn't sit. It moves — from room to room, topic to topic, different people getting to tell their good joke.

Now imagine a party like that, but in a palace. Think golden handrails, spacious rooms, drinks poured and legs dancing, and good music. Think *Gatsby*.

Or think Severance Hall on Friday night, May 15th. The Cleveland Orchestra's last Fridays@7 concert of the season featured four musical acts in four rooms, including one last party in the gilded Grand Foyer.

After a pre-concert performance by three-time Latin Grammy nominee Jovino Santos Neto in Reinberger Chamber Hall, Franz Welser-Möst led The Cleveland Orchestra through a shortened version of Thursday's and Saturday's program. In Dvořák's "*New World*" *Symphony*, an energetic Welser-Möst pointed and gestured like *Fantasia*'s mousy dreamer, drawing sounds rich and powerful and tiptoe-quiet from The Orchestra.

The musicians themselves were superb. They were fiery, like in the fourth movement, when the trumpets' courageous melody could've recruited the whole room to war. They were beautiful, like English hornist Robert Walters's opening solo to the second movement. And they were incredibly subtle, like later in that movement when clarinetist Franklin Cohen softly shadowed the strings, only for the cellos to take things back a notch even further. When it was over, the youth-filled crowd gave a roaring ovation, having already applauded after the first and second movements.

In Jörg Widmann's single-movement *Violin Concerto*, which opened the concert, you almost didn't notice soloist Christian Tetzlaff having to play continuously throughout the 25-minute work. He and The Orchestra were so deft in handing off the solo line that your ears just followed. Tetzlaff was impressive in his own right with expressive stutters and ferocious playing on the highest notes. His collaborative shriek with the bowed crotales made for a truly stunning ending.



And two groups were still to come. Under purple light in Severance Restaurant, vocalist Vanessa Rubin and pianist Sullivan Fortner treated diners to classic jazz. Fortner was

cheeky in his accompaniment, Rubin lovely with her lilt in one bluesy number. But there was something uncomfortable in their partnership, like each wanted a greater say than the other.

Up in the Grand Foyer, Jovino Santos Neto was back, this time with a septet of friends to rock that pretty room. In Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Surfboard," the group went back and forth bustling and suddenly reflecting. Solos from Santos Neto on piano and Jay Ashby on trombone were brilliant, and percussionist Jamey Haddad's touch of cowbell capped it off. Santos Neto traded piano for tambourine and rap in a rhythmic number that also featured a spicy conga solo.

Dancers gradually filled the floor after dipping their toes in. Two local pros shimmered. A few kids in bowties made a short train. An old man twirled. And like a good party, it all ended gracefully: with one more good tune.

Photos by Jarrett Hoffman

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