

## Cleveland Women's Orchestra with Jinjoo Cho at Severance Hall (April 23)

by Daniel Hathaway



Violinist Jinjoo Cho had barely achieved teenager status when she first appeared as soloist with the Cleveland Women's Orchestra. She's been back several times since that debut, meanwhile walking off with top prizes in the Buenos Aires and Indianapolis competitions. Cho returned to help CWO celebrate its 81st-anniversary concert in Severance Hall on Sunday, April 23, this time with a delightful traversal of Henri Wieniawski's *Violin Concerto No. 2 in d* led by Robert Cronquist.

In a pre-concert [interview](#) with this publication, Jinjoo Cho described Wieniawski as “the Chopin of the violin world,” and characterized his second concerto as a sentimental work that “highlights the

beauty of the instrument and shows what it can do.”

While the piece is well within the capabilities of most talented young players, Cho brought an emotional maturity to the concerto that only a seasoned artist can muster. She put across its virtuosic elements with spirit and style, but incorporated them into a broad, musically sensitive overview of the work.

Cho created expressive dialogues with the orchestra in the slow movement, and made a smooth, graceful transition through the cadenza-like bridge into the finale. Nineteenth-century composers for the violin were obsessed with Gypsy music, and Wieniawski provided the soloist with plenty of room to show off. Here, Jinjoo Cho morphed into the *primas* in a gypsy band. That role includes acting as the leader as well as the soloist, and Cho clearly urged the rest of the ensemble onward to the end of the piece. She received a long, warm ovation.

The all-female ensemble (except for the two guys who bolstered the trombone and bass sections) began the afternoon with a performance of Modest Mussorgsky's *A Night on Bald Mountain* that caught the sinister mood of the legendary witches' sabbath on Mount Triglav at Midsummer.

The brief "Intermezzo" from Zoltán Kodály's *Háry János*, a *verbunkos* or recruiting dance meant to lure young men into the Austrian army, made a spirited curtain-raiser for the Wieniawski concerto.

The concert ended with Antonín Dvořák's *Symphony No. 8 in G*, a guaranteed crowd-pleaser full of beautiful melodies and amiable sentiments, but one that poses a number of challenges for an avocational orchestra.

Things got off to a very promising start with beautiful, sonorous playing from the cello section, but some of what followed was marred by irregular balances and imprecise intonation and ensemble playing. Along the way, we heard lovely wind solos that won individual players bows, but there were also moments of orchestral chaos. The famous trilling horns at the beginning of the finale were engulfed by the rest of the ensemble.

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