

Mark Kosower at Kent/Blossom Music Festival (July 12)

by Samantha Spaccasi



Kent/Blossom Music Festival upheld its reputation of presenting world-class musicians in Northeast Ohio on July 12. For the third faculty concert in the series, cellist Mark Kosower and pianist Jee-Won Oh performed a wonderful evening of works by Russian composers.

From the first note of Stravinsky's *Suite Italienne*, Kosower, principal cello of The Cleveland Orchestra, produced an unparalleled rich and colorful tone. He performed with passion, shaping certain passages to emphasize emotion and showing a deep connection to the music. It was

thrilling to watch Kosower's lively interpretation, playing the last lines with vivacious fervor. Oh did nick a few notes in the first two movements, but resolved this during the rest of the piece, playing brightly and with clarity.

Karen Khachaturian's *Sonata* marked a dramatic shift in moods, beginning with Kosower's alternation of menacing, evil sounds with more sonorous, bouncing ones. The cellist displayed his technical prowess, performing the difficult passages with ease. Oh played with an appropriate softness, sounding eerily distant from the melody. Both musicians emphasized the pauses, letting the magnitude of the work sink in. In the last movement, the two artists played the rollicking melody dynamically and with a sense of urgency.

The highlight of the program was Rachmaninoff's *Sonata in G*, characterized by Kosower's tender, dreamy playing with burbling passages from Oh. The two swirled a nuanced palette of sound together, with every repeated phrase sounding fresh. They played with a remarkable depth — Oh's sweet, gentle playing matching Kosower's plaintive wistfulness. Throughout the work, Kosower never played with flash, but with an electric style that let the beauty of the music shine.

Staying true to the Russian theme, an encore of Tchaikovsky's *Nocturne*, Op. 19 topped off the excellent performance.

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