

## Cleveland Orchestra musicians play on CVNP Conservancy Series (July 17)

by Alice Koeninger



The Happy Days Lodge welcomed musicians from The Cleveland Orchestra with special guest Eric Wong into its wide-beamed hall on Tuesday, July 17, at 7:00 pm. Hosted by the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the concert was a lovely and relaxed program full of color and brightness.

Violinist Isabel Trautwein and cellist Tanya Ell-Woolfrey began the concert with a discussion of the techniques used by Ravel in his *Duo*. “I don’t normally like to start a concert with words,” Trautwein said, but she went on to speak about Ravel’s use of minimalism, focusing on the “two ideas” he used throughout the composition: major and minor chord modulation within five notes, and building a melody on sevenths. Trautwein and Ell-Woolfrey demonstrated these ideas with snippets of their parts.

In the Allegro, the cello wove in and out of the violin’s lines as they split octaves and then dissolved into slight dissonances (those aforementioned sevenths). The *Très vif* started with quick alternating pizzicatos and bowing on the cello. The movement was eccentric and dark, punctuated by loud chords, and textured by a buzzing cello tremolo while the violin played a folk-like melody over top.

It was clear that Ravel was trying to buck tradition when he wrote this piece. Baldly using dissonant sevenths, he also blended many modern styles into this bizarre work. With its pastoral undertones, the slow third movement had a very different mood from the prior two, bittersweet and searching, as if trying to grasp something unknown.

In the last movement, Vif, avec entrain, the energy returned to the level of the first two, this time with palpable restraint. The dissonances were almost scratchy, and all the melodies heard before were deconstructed and scrambled together. Trautwein and Ell-Wooley executed this piece with great skill and understanding.

After a brief intermission, composer Chris Auerbach-Brown, who had given a short introduction before the concert, returned to the mic to preface the next piece: the “Ciaconne” from his *Constellation #1* for solo violin, in scordatura-tuning. After hearing Trautwein play, he had approached her offering to write a piece for her, and she agreed, suggesting the lower tuning. After a demonstration of this tuning with the help of fellow violinist Miho Hashizume, Trautwein played this edgy, textured, melodic piece with sweet intelligence.

Violist Eric Wong, clarinetist Robert Woolfrey, Trautwein, Ell-Woolfrey, and Hashizume ended the program with a lovely rendition of Brahms’ *Clarinet Quintet*. In the thick texture, Woolfrey blended easily with his colleagues, but took the lead at moments in the Allegro with a sweet, cool melody. He showed off his large range throughout the *Quintet*, sometimes playing in a lower register, sometimes as high as a violin, but always with full, clear tones. In the Andantino, he played the fast, downwards flourishes beautifully.

Sometimes the balances were askew, perhaps because of the acoustics or the seating. Still, the tempo changes and dynamics were executed perfectly, and the abrupt rest in the Con moto was succinct. The Brahms provided a sweet, sugary end to the evening, complemented by the free cookies and lemonade served afterwards.

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