

Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra with violinist Julia Schilz (May 10)

by Daniel Hathaway



The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra closed its 33rd season at Severance Hall on Friday evening, May 10 with impressive performances of music by Bartók, Bruch, and Shostakovich under the leadership of Vinay Parameswaran, and with the help of a whole village of teachers and coaches

who have molded these young musicians into an accomplished ensemble.

COYO is about to embark on its third international tour from June 10-20, and their confident reading of Bartók's *Dance Suite* — one of the works they'll play in Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary — showed that they're well-prepared. The fine bassoon, English horn, oboe, tuba, and trombone solos that opened the piece, well-tuned unison passages, and easy handling of incisive rhythms demonstrated high levels of individual and ensemble musicianship. The six continuous movements pose some tricky details of coordination, but Parameswaran's young charges were at the tip of his baton throughout.

Violinist Julia Schilz, 16, was co-winner of this season's concerto competition, giving her the opportunity to stand in front of her colleagues in Max Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*. Poised and self-assured, she shaped her recitatives skillfully and drew a handsome tone from her instrument. In the final movement, when Bruch cut her free from Scottish folk tunes, she tossed off virtuosic gestures that remind us that Joachim

and Sarasate were friends of Bruch who often played his music. Throughout, Schilz enjoyed the fine collaboration of harpist Anastasia Seckers, who was advantageously seated between the viola and cellos.



Schilz won a big ovation and three enormous bouquets of flowers for her performance. She obviously basked in the moment, but returned after intermission to modestly take a place in the back of the violin section.

An energetic performance of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony ended the concert with a powerful statement of Soviet-era ambiguity. Here, Parameswaran drew robust tone from the string sections and encouraged the brass to crown climaxes with untrammelled brilliance.

In the finale, the conductor stirred up a frantic *accelerando*, challenging his musicians to jump aboard a speeding train. It was risky and thrilling, but nearly everybody got up to speed. At the end, pounding, double-handed timpani strokes brought the symphony home in ambivalent triumph.

At one point during the evening, Vinay Parameswaran thanked parents, teachers, and coaches for their roles in making COYO prosper. He then asked all the graduating seniors in the Orchestra to stand, a great number. Turnovers in youth orchestras are a

fact of life, but this ensemble has important recruiting work ahead to replace all that institutional memory.

But for now, bon voyage, and best wishes for a fabulous tour. Clevelanders will have one more opportunity to hear the current Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra: on June 7 at 8:00 pm, they'll play a sendoff concert in Severance Hall. It's free, but tickets are required. Click here to reserve [online](#).

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