

**ChamberFest Cleveland —
Together Again (June 16)**

by Mike Telin



On Wednesday, June 16 at 7:00 at The Grove Amphitheatre, ChamberFest's theme of the evening was *Luscious Soundscapes* and included music by Richard Strauss and Amy Beach.

However, it was pianist Shai Wosner's imaginative interweaving of sonatas by Italian Baroque composer Domenico

Scarlatti with sonatas by American composer Frederick Rzewski that got things off to a fascinating start.

Wosner's three pairings were Scarlatti's *Sonata in d* K. 141 with Rzewski's *Nanosonata No. 36* ("To a Young Man"), Scarlatti's *Sonata in d* K. 9 with Rzewski's *Nanosonata No. 38* ("To a Great Guy"), and Scarlatti's *Sonata in c* K. 230 with Rzewski's *Nanosonata No. 12*.

During an interview with this publication, the pianist said "The Nanosonatas are almost like a stream of consciousness, but I hear that in the Scarlattis as well." Throughout, Wosner played with crisp, clean articulations, tight trills (in the Scarlattis) and solid, rhythmic drive. He also had a wizardly way of making Rzewski's music evolve out of Scarlatti's.

The centerpiece of the program was Richard Strauss' *Violin Sonata in E-flat*, brilliantly played by violinist Diana Cohen and pianist Roman Rabinovich.

The composer's singular violin sonata, the work is transitional in the young composer's oeuvre — he was moving away from classical chamber music toward symphonic tone

poems. In the opening *Allegro ma non troppo* — fast but not too fast — Cohen and Rabinovich took Strauss at his word.



During the long opening piano motif, no phrase was rushed, allowing the passionate violin lines to come through. Dramatic outbursts were full-bodied while lyrical moments were intimate. The beautiful *Andante cantabile* became a heartfelt song without words, its middle section crying out with love.

Beginning with a slow introduction in the piano, the *Finale* explodes into a series of long, episodic lines. An extended coda brought the work to an exciting conclusion. Cohen and Rabinovich gave an arresting performance that achieved symphonic proportions while not neglecting the movement's introspective passages.

As the sun went down and the temperature began to slowly drop, Cohen joined colleagues Alexi Kenney (violin), Dimitri Murrath (viola), Oliver Herbert (cello), and Shai Wosner (piano) for a journey through Amy Beach's *Piano Quintet*.

A prime example of the grandness of American Romanticism, in the hands of less seasoned players, the work can feel like too much of a good thing. Luckily that was not the case with this ensemble. The opening movement was defined by long, luscious unison lines in the strings. The soft opening of the *Adagio espressivo* gradually became heart-wrenching as it blossomed into symphonic proportions.

By the middle of the long third movement the temperature was cold, but somehow the ensemble found a way to play with bravado, summoning ever richer, more robust sounds with each phrase — always beautiful, never blemished.

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