

Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra: musical magic from start to finish (Feb. 20)

by Mike Telin



Over the years, audiences have had the privilege of hearing many outstanding performances by winners of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra's annual concerto competition. But on Sunday, February 20, the sizable crowd at Severance Music Center witnessed nothing short of musical magic during Dasara Beta's brilliant performance of Alexander Arutiunian's *Trumpet Concerto*.

Playing with an unblemished, focused sound, the Rocky River High School senior embodied the concerto's musical intricacies, beautifully capturing the soul of the Armenian folk-inspired melodies. His instinctive sense of meter

served him well during the work's numerous complex rhythmic and technical passages. The slower, muted section was thoroughly romantic and the long cadenza totally thrilling.

Under the watchful eye of Vinay Parameswaran, Beta's COYO colleagues were splendid musical partners which resulted in a true tour-de-force. Following the final notes, the immediate, long embrace between conductor and soloist combined with foot-stomping and shouts from the orchestra said it all. Without a doubt, Mr. Beta has a fine musical career ahead of him.

The bulk of the program was given to the Suites 1 and 2 from Manuel de Falla's *El sombrero de tres picos* ("Three-Cornered Hat"). The suites provide many opportunities

for individual players and sections to shine, and Parameswaran's astute pacing of each dance allowed the depth of talent from within his orchestra to be brought to the fore.

In No. 1, Alex Wu's bright trumpet fanfare during the opening "Introduction: Afternoon" started the performance off in fine fashion. "The Dance of the Miller's Wife" (Fandango) was full of energy. Playing with a dark, woody sound, bassoonist Luis Torres tossed off his cadenza with flair, while the percussion section was at the top of their game, creating beautiful symphonic sounds.

While No. 2 calls for larger orchestral forces, Parameswaran kept tempos and dynamics under control as he drew a colorful sound palette from his players. Following the serene "Neighbor's Dance" (Seguidilla) the horns triumphantly announced the "Miller's Dance" (Farruca), where Matthew Dawson's English horn solo was full of character. During the "Final Dance" (Jota), Parameswaran pulled out all the stops, bringing the work to a vibrant, symphonic conclusion.

The concert opened with Jennifer Higdon's evocative *blue cathedral*, a tribute to the composer's younger brother, Andrew Blue, following his death in 1998. A work that is at times playful and at times haunting, the music never fails to enter into your soul. The soft finger-bells in the concluding moments did as Higdon intended, transporting listeners to a place of beauty. Flutist Olivia Fritz, clarinetist Owen Ganor, and concertmaster Moshi Tang deserve shout-outs for their fine, sensitive solo contributions.

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