

## Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra's spring concert features solo trombone, 'New World' symphony (May 10)



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Manning|Cleveland Classical

*This article was originally  
published on [Cleveland.com](https://www.clevelandclassical.com)*

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Like clockwork, spring has sprung, and so too has the traditional Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra spring concert — a celebratory affair that marks the final, bittersweet performance for the high school seniors in the

group.

This annual concert always features the ensemble's most recent Concerto Competition winner, an honor bestowed this year on trombonist Grace Berendt. With so much wonderful string and piano literature, wind and brass instruments often face an uphill battle during these types of competitions, making Berendt's opportunity feel particularly exciting.

On Sunday, May 10, the Aurora High School senior came to the front of the Mandel Concert Hall stage to perform Ferdinand David's Trombone Concertino under the direction of James Feddeck.

The Concertino is Ferdinand David's best-known work. It has remained popular into the 21st century, and it's easy to hear why. Published in 1837, it's a prime example of Romanticism, with lush melodies and an easy to follow structure. Feddeck provided a steady, precise hand from the podium, creating a supportive bridge between orchestra and soloist.

The piece was a lovely vehicle for showing off Berendt's beautiful, rich tone and her ease in navigating the several octaves of her instrument. If she understandably looked a little nervous at the beginning, her playing hardly showed it, and her comfort onstage only grew over the 15-minute piece.

In the third movement, she returned to the opening material even more settled for an exciting finale. Her reward included a burst of applause from Feddeck and her colleagues, along with a truly enormous bouquet of flowers.

The cornerstone piece came after intermission with Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World." A staple for both professional and youth orchestras, it makes a great fit for a group like COYO, who can show off their strengths and perform it at a high level.

Feddeck kept his tempos moderate, without pushing, and the orchestra produced a healthy group sound. In the second movement, Emily Petrella graced the famous English horn solo with a lovely vibrato, and the flutes and oboes achieved a particularly nice blend.

The orchestra at times did seem to push and pull within Feddeck's tempo in the slower movements, though the third movement scherzo set the steadiest rhythm. And the powerful chords during the finale arrived with a crisp precision, ringing in the hall during the brief silences that followed.

The afternoon began with two brief musical postcards, George Walker's "Icarus in Orbit" and Aaron Copland's "Letter from Home." The Walker was the most pointed, contemporary work on the program, its dramatic unison strings interspersed with a cascade of metallic percussion. The Copland then took us back down to earth with a more pastoral, homely feel, featuring attractive solos from clarinetist Willa Kenny and trumpeter Owen Rinaldo.

"I hope you know this will always be your musical home," Feddeck told the musicians in his remarks before the final piece. He also announced to the crowd that all COYO concert tickets will be made free next year, in celebration of the group's 40th anniversary.

"I want to make Severance Music Center a place for young people," he says. So tell all your friends, and invite the whole school — "I want to fill all these seats."

Photo by Roger Mastroianni

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*Published on ClevelandClassical.com May 14, 2026*

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