

Northwest Reverb

Northwest Reverb - Reflections by James Bash and others about classical music in the Pacific Northwest and beyond

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Young artists excel in Vancouver Symphony concert

Three very talented teenagers dazzled a nearly full SkyView Concert Hall on Saturday afternoon (April 24) as soloists with the Vancouver Symphony. As gold medal winners of the orchestra's annual young artist competition, Ashley Teng, Symphony Koss, and Trevor Natiuk aptly demonstrated that they belonged in the spotlight, delivering outstanding performances of music by Carl Nielsen, Pablo de Sarasate, and Sergei Rachmaninoff. The program also included a couple of works by Edvard Grieg and Ottorino Respighi that the orchestra, under music director Salvador Brotons, played with style and polish.

Flutist Ashley Teng, a 16-year-old sophomore at Camas High School, played the first movement of Nielsen's Flute Concerto with panache. Teng deftly negotiated the many wandering passages and excelled with her fortes. She could always be heard and presented a beautiful tone – even over the orchestra's crescendos. Her collaborative exchanges with the clarinet, flute, timpani, bass trombone, and other members of the orchestra were done expertly. Teng's cadenzas floated and soared effortlessly, and she rounded off the final phrase of the piece with the orchestra perfectly.

Sarasate's "Carmen Fantasy" received a superb performance from Symphony Koss, a 16-year-old sophomore at Columbia River High School. Koss showed some eye-popping technique especially in the last movement where her fingers were flying at their fastest. Throughout the piece, she was fearless with the stratospheric high notes, nailing each instance cleanly, and when she finished the famous Toreador song the audience burst into applause.

Pianist Trevor Natiuk didn't hold anything back in his performance of the first movement of Rachmaninov's First Piano Concerto, conquering its fiery entrance, melodic lines, and splashy chords with ease. It was an impressive debut for the 17-year-old, who is a junior at the Columbia Adventist Academy. The quick filigree of notes, the languid phrases, the knuckle-busting build-up of crescendos – Natiuk made it all look easy, and his resounding cascade of sound in the final measures brought the audience to its feet with cheers and bravos.

The orchestra distinguished itself Grieg's with fine playing of Grieg's "Lyric Suite" and Respighi's "The Pines of Rome." The strings ensemble created a smooth and rich sonority during the "Shepherd Boy" and "Nocturne" movements of the Grieg. Perky woodwinds accented the "Norwegian March" and the brass wonderfully punched up the volume in the "March of the Dwarves." Concertmaster Eva Richey created a wistfully sweet solo in the "Nocturne." Victoria Racz (oboe) and Igor Shakhman excelled in their solos as well.

The orchestra took things up a notch with a resplendent performance of "The Pines of Rome." The French horns were brilliant in the first movement, and the entire ensemble made a delightful racket that was cut off with precision by Brotons on the final note. Muted horns, solemn low strings, and Bruce Dunn's offstage trumpet solo imbued the second movement with a sense of mystery. The clarinet (Shakhman) marvelously parted the clouds with a quiet, pristine sound in the third, which also featured the percussion battery making a bouquet of bird songs. The ominous march of Roman legions along the Appian Way in the fourth movement ended triumphantly with timpanist Florian Conzetti having an especially rollicking time. Kudos also to Kris Klavik (English horn) for her evocative playing. Overall, the Respighi performance was one of the best ever by the orchestra.

Posted by [James Bash](#) at 12:43 PM 