

January 27, 2008

Symphony shines in Carnegie spotlight

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Special to the Star-Telegram/Stephen Chernin
The Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra plays Saturday at New York's Carnegie Hall, providing excellent performances to match the energized atmosphere.



- [Notes on the FW Symphony at Carnegie](#) 

NEW YORK -- It was a serious-minded classical music concert with just a dash of Hollywood premiere.

At the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra's Carnegie Hall debut Saturday night, flashbulbs popped, and luminaries of another kind -- Van Cliburn, Mercedes Bass, novelist Sandra Brown -- beamed from the boxes. Home folks whooped after every piece and leapt to standing ovations, giving the atmosphere an unusual charge.

But anyone who was there purely to hear music was rewarded, too, thanks to the talents and musical enthusiasms of Music Director Miguel Harth-Bedoya.

The orchestra presented the world premiere of his friend Osvaldo Golijov's *Mariel for Cello and Orchestra*, with German cellist Alban Gerhardt as soloist. The short but searing piece was inspired years ago when the composer learned of a friend's death.

The cello part was largely a plaintive song suspended over a tension-filled orchestral accompaniment, with percussion accents and scratchy-sounding slow trills and tremolos in the strings. The cello lingers in its high registers, its melody conveying a moment of being stuck, paralyzed by shock and grief.

Gerhardt found the lyricism, and he and Harth-Bedoya enhanced the drama by staying stock-still for a good 30 seconds after the last note, bow and baton frozen. Then, Golijov bounded onstage, and the crowd buzzed about the piece.

The rest was traditional stuff -- Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5* and the Brahms *Double Concerto for Violin and Cello* -- but the Tchaikovsky, especially, showed off how far the orchestra has come with Harth-Bedoya as music director.

He brought out all the dazzle -- the big unison passages for the strings were velvety rich, the brass blasted away, and the hall's famed acoustics made it all ring as it should -- just like in Bass Hall.

By comparison, the Brahms seemed undistinguished. Gerhardt and violinist Augustin Hadelich, both making personal Carnegie Hall debuts, showed jitters occasionally but blended well.

But the night was the hoped-for success. Under Harth-Bedoya, in repertory like the Tchaikovsky, it regularly delivers what most of us go to the symphony for: a big, lush wall of sound along with a pin-drop precision that's thrilling coming from an ensemble of 80.

And the world premiere by an important composer showed off Harth-Bedoya's ambition for the group and its place in the world.

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