

# Jay Harvey Upstage

Sunday, October 20, 2013

David Chan returns under the auspices of IVCI to help open its Laureate Series

A celebration of the violin makes sense in this harvest season as a way for the International Violin Competition of Indianapolis to reap the bounty of violin training and performance hereabouts.

To supplement the return appearance of David Chan, 1994 bronze medalist in the quadrennial competition, IVCI had the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music Virtuosi and Chamber Orchestra on hand Sunday afternoon at the Indiana Landmarks Center's Grand Hall.

Full disclosure: I am the parent of a Virtuosi alumnus who has since taught at the School of Music's String Academy, the nurturing ground of these adept precollege musicians.

Illustrative of their expert training, among other qualities: a habit of listening to each other, solid rapport virtually assuring unanimity of attack and release, dynamics and tempo. With good attention to changes in texture and color, a student sextet performed IU faculty member Atar Arad's arrangement of Prokofiev's Toccata in D minor, a solo piano work of characteristically barbed sonorities and propulsive accents.

David Chan is co-concertmaster of the Met orchestra.

"Seven Violin Duets," commissioned for the Virtuosi from IU composer Don Freund, found five of the violinists usually grouped in compatible twos, with all five weighing in at both ends of the set. The composer signals the straightforward mood of each duet with such titles as "Sudden Passion," "Thrilled to Death" and "Craggy Crossing." The ensemble made the most of the "sotto voce" tenderness of "Sweet Song," and one of the duos showed particular flair in "Astor Knots," a punning salute to tango maestro Astor Piazzolla. Another captured the rugged country-flavored fervor of "Burleska" with subtle humor.

A surprising insert in the opening piece — longtime Virtuosi favorite "Preludium and Allegro" by

Fritz Kreisler — let the two student cellists show off in a medley of tunes ranging from "Eleanor Rigby" to the "Habanera" from "Carmen" before the violinists re-entered the spotlight with the piece's exciting "Allegro" conclusion. Vigorous accounts of two Brahms Hungarian Dances by the whole Virtuosi group displayed its unanimity amid multiple shifts of tempo.

Chan's place in the program sun came in Beethoven's "Spring" Sonata (No. 5 in F major), assisted by pianist Chih-Yi Chen. Together, they presented a neat, well-turned, classically minded performance. It threatened to become too sobersided over the long haul. In the second movement, an episode in the minor brought forth an extra measure of feeling, but it took the short, captivating Scherzo to set the duo on a more expressive course in the Rondo finale, which was crowned by some welcome power and even grandeur toward the end.

With the visitors' Chamber Orchestra in accompaniment, Chan was featured in two contrasting works after intermission: Bach's Concerto No. 2 in E major and Wieniawski's Variations on an Original Theme, op 15. The highly ornamented latter work drew forth a continual display of commitment and technical elan from the soloist. The Bach concerto, which Chan also led from the soloist's position, seemed a little headlong in the opening movement, the ensemble pressing forward too much, making the total effect shimmery. The slow movement allowed everyone to regain poise and clarity, which came in handy in the fleet, invigorating finale.

For an encore, Chan and the Virtuosi offered a sweet rendition of Paganini's "Cantabile," which acknowledged the guest artist's regular job as co-concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.