

# Jay Harvey Upstage

Monday, September 3, 2018

Participants heard in the Sept. 2 afternoon session, International Violin Competition of Indianapolis: **Alina Kobialka, Gyehee Kim, Arianna Dotto, Joshua Brown, Boson Mo, Fabiola Kim**

Missing the morning prelims at the [Indiana History Center](#) this week seems to mandate not judging my favorite participants so far. But focusing on some standout performances of Sunday afternoon would be a good start, especially since convalescence from recent surgery doesn't have me yet at 100 percent mentally or physically.

Three composers loom large in the prelims repertoire list: Bach, Mozart and Paganini. A fourth group contains a variety of major and minor masters in their capacity as suppliers of encore pieces, sometimes the result of a particularly fetching arrangement by a star violin master.

Even well-schooled young violinists, adaptable though they may be, seem to shine particularly in one of the categories. This is where their personality can put a stamp on the music, though of course the goal is to sound commanding across the board so the jury passes them on to the next round. And all may get a special boost with evidence that they can be especially responsive to a pianist, whether in a Mozart sonata or an encore piece. Displaying the ability to be more than "all about the violin" is built into this competition from the start.



*Joshua Brown: A fresh 24th Caprice.*

In the Paganini caprices, the listener hopes for signs that the participant has such mastery of the technical demands that he or she can rise above them, giving the illusion almost of being effortless, or at least spontaneous. The most familiar caprice, No. 24, is better known to the average concertgoer than any of the first 23. I want to give special mention to **Joshua Brown** for how well he defined each variation in a piece that has been subject to variation treatment since it was new. The composition puts the theme in prismatic perspective, all its light filtered through the techniques that Paganini mastered and extended. Brown's performance was fresh and well laid out. Clarity in passagework linked to a brilliant sound also characterized **Gyehee Kim's** renditions of Caprices 5 and 17.

Her deep-toned, organ-like approach to the Adagio movement of Bach's G minor Sonata grabbed the attention favorably. A forthright sound and confident interpretive profile carried over to the Fuga, which verged on becoming a little too "dug in" — a characteristic of the seriousness with which Bach's fugal movements are usually approached.

For Bach performance of greater nuance, the choice of Preludio, Loure, Gavotte en Rondeau and Menuet I and II from Partita No. 3 brought out the best from **Fabiola Kim**. An understanding of the dance basis of the music seemed ingrained in her playing, and she ornamented the line with confidence in the Gavotte. Choosing the same selection, **Arianna Dotto** was also particularly impressive in the Gavotte, with lilting, rhythmically animated playing.

Fabiola Kim's Mozart selection, Sonata in A major, K. 305, was distinguished for her sensitivity to the piano (played by Akira Eguchi) and the lively spirit and sense of direction she imparted to the music. My favorite Mozart of the afternoon was presented by **Boson Mo**. With Rohan De Silva, he played the Sonata in E minor, K. 304. Mo seemed to understand something George Bernard Shaw said long ago about Mozart, that he was a dramatist even in his instrumental works.



*Boson Mo: Dramatic Mozart*

Mo's interpretation was spacious and captivating, boldly suggesting a theatrical scenario with entire appropriateness.

There were several first-rate performances of the encore pieces, starting with **Alina Kobialka's** performance of Wagner's "Albumblatt" as arranged by August Wilhelmj. Hers was an intense, lyrical interpretation with a beautiful ending. And Gyehee Kim's performance of Chopin's Nocturne in C-sharp minor, arranged by Nathan Milstein, displayed plenty of heart in the way she shaped phrases; it sounded as if she really had something to say in music that can come off as just a bonbon. The same might be said about the way Fabiola Kim and Arianna Dotto played Dvorak's Allegro moderato (Romantic Pieces, Op. 75, No 1), as well as of the steady ardor and convincing intimacy that Mo lent to Sibelius' Nocturne, op. 51, no. 3.



*Gyehee Kim: Depth of tone in Bach*