

2015. That year he won the gold medal at the Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. He is now based in Berlin and has an exclusive recording contract with DG. His first two CDs (Chopin and Debussy) were very good, and his New Jersey debut was up to the excellence promised by the recordings.

In Chopin's Concerto No. 2 Cho was a model of grace and elegance, even in the playful and virtuosic final movement. He had appropriate flexibility in his tempos, with all of Chopin's characteristic ornamental melismas beautifully shaped. Tausk proved to be an excellent accompanist; there were so many musical moments where everything just clicked that I lost count. The orchestra and piano were perfectly together all the time. Not that Cho lacked any brilliance when called for, but it was the highest level of musicality that brought the audience to its feet at the conclusion. We were then treated to a gorgeous rendition of Chopin's Nocturne in C-sharp minor (Op. Post.) as an encore. When Cho called Tausk out for a final joint bow, the conductor simply stood to the side and applauded the pianist with the rest of us.

After intermission, Dvorak's Symphony No. 7 was superb. Despite its rousing Scherzo based on a Bohemian furiant, a dance form alternating 2 and 3 beat measures, the symphony is considered the most European of the Dvorak's large oeuvre. It gave Tausk the opportunity to work with a very responsive NJSO to put their own stamp on this big romantic work. When a conductor is fully engaged in the music, as he was here, the result is always a superior performance. His big clear beats with lots of arm and head cues had to be a pleasure for the orchestra. He was not afraid to subdivide beats to achieve remarkable precision. During the slow movement, he often used his hand rather than a baton to shape the long lines.

Otto Tausk, now 48, is a conductor I expect to see more of. Vancouver is quite fortunate to have him, and I will keep track of how the orchestra fares under his leadership. If he continues his guest conducting engagements and makes a few strong recordings, he could be at the helm of one of the world's major orchestras in the next decade.

JAMES HARRINGTON

## Emerson Quartet with Shai Vosner

New York

The Emerson Quartet was founded in 1976 in New York and has been a standard of musical excellence ever since. Their repertoire and partnerships with a host of internationally acclaimed musicians have made their concerts a high point of each season. It has now been five years since their one change of members had cellist Paul Watkins replace David Finkel (now co-director of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, which hosted this concert). A little new blood does serve to invigorate and renew a group.

In October in Alice Tully Hall they were joined by Israeli pianist Shai Vosner, referred to by violinist Eugene Drucker as "our impressive younger colleague". At 48 Vosner was the only one on stage without some silver hair. His concert schedule through the end of this season rivals the Emerson's, but only about half of his engagements are solo piano recitals. He is active as a concerto soloist and chamber musician.

The powerful opening of Mozart's Piano Quartet No. 2 immediately established the complete integration of all participants. This piece is mature Mozart, composed only five years before his early death. Despite the expected virtuosity of the piano part, the alternation of passages between it and the strings made for an equality unusual for the time period. Vosner was the perfect companion to Drucker, Watkins, and violist Lawrence Dutton, taking the lead when called on and also providing elegant accompaniments for the strings. This was music making at its finest.

William Bolcom, who turned 80 last May, composed his Piano Quintet No. 1 in 2000 on a request from its dedicatee, Isaac Stern. The world premiere was played by Stern, three members of the Emerson Quartet (Philip Setzer, Dutton, and Finkel) and pianist Jonathan Biss. The opening took us back to the big romantic quintets of Schumann and Brahms with, in Bolcom's words, "important differences". The following *Larghetto* alternates its lyrical sections with others more reminiscent of a scherzo. A short, intense 'Lamentation' leads directly into the 'Rondo Furioso' finale. While I agree with Bolcom's description of the last movement—"a terribly speeded-up samba gone berserk"—I also thought the primary motive was like the

Tocatta from Ginastera's Piano Concerto No. 1. Bolcom used the infectious rhythm for a brilliant ending to a very enjoyable chamber work. All five musicians had a lot of work here. There was just about every string technique that I know of, and the piano part was fiendish. I tend to think of Wosner as a Beethoven and Schubert expert, but he had no problems with Bolcom's complex rhythms. The variety heard in just 18 minutes made this the most interesting work on the program.

The second half was filled by Dvorak's String Quartet No. 13. It was one of two quartets Dvorak composed after his return to Bohemia following several years in the United States. The joy of being back in his homeland with his family and all of the inspirations of his earlier life come through in the happiness of this music, not to mention its virile strength. After hearing an excellent performance of the Symphony No. 7 just a week before, I thought the symphonic nature of this quartet very clear. Coupled with the glorious sound of the Emerson group, the folk-inflected work was a fitting climax to a spectacular concert.

JAMES HARRINGTON

## Ying Quartet with Ricardo Morales

Eastman School, Rochester NY

Ricardo Morales, 46, principal clarinet of the Philadelphia Orchestra since 2003 and before that principal clarinet of the Metropolitan Opera starting at age 21, joined the Eastman School of Music's resident Ying Quartet on October 7 at Kilbourn Hall for the Brahms Clarinet Quintet. But let's save the best for last. The concert opened with leader Robin Scott's violin not staying in tune in Mendelssohn's Quartet No. 3. Perhaps that caused him to clip the upbeat to main phrases, making the music feel impulsive or rushed, even though the tempo never changed. Careful tuning before the Minuet largely fixed the problem, but another tuning before the Andante Expressivo finally tamed the critter once and for all. That led to a finely projected slow movement with lyrically shaped melodies and gorgeous work by violist Philip Ying, who took full advantage of Mendelssohn's wonderful harmonies and pairings with second violin Janet Ying and cellist David Ying. The Presto finale is "off to the races" on the printed page, but here the play-

ers' keen articulation of the rapid triplets, finely balanced instrumental pairings, and beautiful long arching phrases illuminated the complex fugal-like writing in the development with transparency. Yes, the best started here.

And it continued with *Chrysanthemums* by Puccini and the *Italian Serenade* by Hugo Wolf, the only string quartet works written by these composers, two bon bons the Yings had brought with them on a nine-city tour of China from which they returned just three days earlier. In the Puccini, a lament for a friend, Scott's use of a light sweet portamento immediately set the tone as the other players (especially the viola) drew out the finely wrought harmonies and inner rhythms. I never before appreciated how gorgeous Puccini's writing is here.

The same was true in the *Italian Serenade*, here with terrific rhythm—not driven but buoyant, with just the right amount of air between notes to give phrases an upturned lift. The lilt the players created couldn't help but make my foot tap and my body swing. Two shorties, supremely played—as fulfilling as listening to Richard Lewis, Fritz Reiner, and the Chicago Symphony perform the five-minute 'Wine in Spring' from Mahler's *Song of the Earth*.

Ah! Ricardo Morales! His very opening tone spoke volumes—so rich, round, and mellow (an old-fashioned voice teacher would describe it as a "round pear-shaped tone"). His pianissimo filled Kilbourn Hall so beautifully that he didn't have to push his tone at all. Add to that his supreme musicality. Brahms's Clarinet Quintet opens deceptively simply, before the twos against three, offbeat phrase openings, and hemiolas start piling up. I heard a bad performance recently that turned the Allegro into a complex, grating jumble. Here instead were long liquid phrases, transparent textures, exquisite balances, and an unrushed pacing gorgeously sustained. At the repeat in the first movement it seemed that the violist and cellist were integrated into the clarinet's

