



from
Young Concert Artists, Inc.

NAREK HAKHNAZARYAN, *cellist*

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A Prize-Winning Cellist Opens Young Artists Series

Narek Hakhnazaryan, an Armenian cellist who turned 20 on Thursday, has already won enough prizes to fill two paragraphs in his professional biography.

MUSIC REVIEW

STEVE
 SMITH

Among the latest entries is first prize in this year's Young Concert Artists International Auditions. On Tuesday Mr. Hakhnazaryan reaped a major benefit of the award: a Zankel Hall recital opening Young Concert Artists' 48th season.

Mr. Hakhnazaryan, tall and wiry, projected intensity from the moment he took the stage. But rather than opening with fireworks, he started with Schumann's genial "Fantasiestücke." Mr. Hakhnazaryan's tone was

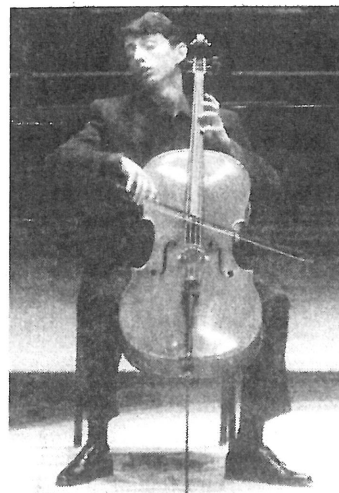
The next performance in the Young Concert Artists series is on Dec. 10 at Merkin Concert Hall, 129 West 67th Street, Manhattan; (212) 307-6655, yca.org.

Narek Hakhnazaryan
 Zankel Hall

lean but warm and supple, animating Schumann's lyrical phrases with grace. Noreen Polera, a pianist, was an alert, responsive partner.

Beethoven's Cello Sonata No. 3 (Op. 69) cast Mr. Hakhnazaryan and Ms. Polera as equals in a balancing act pitched between Classical elegance and Romantic expressiveness. They negotiated the sonata's capricious moods and quirky rhythms with compelling unanimity at a slightly subdued overall dynamic that made bold accents leap off the page.

Mr. Hakhnazaryan demonstrated his considerable technical prowess in the unaccompanied Sonata No. 1 by Adam Khudoyan, an Armenian composer. The work, from 1961, packed folkish melodies, tricky combinations of



HIROYUKI ITO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Narek Hakhnazaryan on Tuesday at the Young Concert Artists' opening concert.

simultaneous bowing and plucking, a passage in ghostly harmonics and more into a dense continuous span. Abrupt transitions made the piece seem restless and occasionally aimless, but Mr. Hakhnazaryan's commitment was persuasive.

In a commanding account of

Projecting intensity and demonstrating a technical prowess.

Shostakovich's Cello Sonata in D minor, the martial rhythms that interrupt the opening movement's melodic outpouring felt especially charged and brittle. Mr. Hakhnazaryan brought a daredevil verve to the intricate Scherzo and opened the stark Largo with an eerie, vibrato-free tone.

A gorgeous rendition of Rachmaninoff's "Vocalise" offered gentle relief, and the program ended with Paganini's flamboyant Variations on One String on a Theme by Rossini, transcribed from the original violin version.

A hearty response from the audience brought two encores: a gorgeous account of the Andante from Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata and a rollicking romp through "Exprompt," by the Armenian composer Alexander Arutiunian. To the very end, Mr. Hakhnazaryan's intense focus and expressive artistry never flagged.