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Young Concert Artists, Inc.

ALEKSANDR HASKIN, flute

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Concert review:

Powerful playing by Belarussian flutist Aleksandr Haskin

By Stephen Brookes
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The classical flute world tends to be a bit . . . well, willowy, for lack of a better word. So it was a refreshing change of pace to head down to the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater on Monday night to hear the Belarussian flutist Aleksandr Haskin, a young virtuoso who looks like he could also move that piano down the stairs for you, no problem.

The 26-year-old Haskin is the latest discovery of Young Concert Artists, and he turned out to be a musician of exceptional power and dramatic skill, completely in charge of his instrument. If he lacked the occasional refinement here and there, who cares - it only added to the impact.

The program got off to a furious start with Ian Clarke's "The Great Train Race," a wild little tone painting for solo flute that draws on just about every extended technique in the book, from key taps to the almost impossible circular breathing. Playing from a half-crouch, Haskin brought high drama and an offhand charm to the thing, tossing off gasp-inspiring riffs and winning over the audience immediately.

A rather deliberate account of Bach's Flute Sonata in E Major followed, but Haskin (accompanied by pianist Steven Beck) then worked a small miracle with Mozart's Andante in C Major, K. 315, turning in a reading that was both playful and completely natural.

Haskin displayed a lyrical side in Albert Franz Doppler's "Fantaisie Pastorale Hongroise" and the tender "Aria" from Otar Taktakishvili's Sonata for Flute and Piano. But the real depth of his playing came out in the second half of the program, particularly the personal and sharply imaginative accounts of Henri Dutilleux's "Sonatine," Bela Bartok's "Suite Paysanne Hongroise," and an engaging sonata by the little-known Russian composer Yuri Kornakov.

Haskin may have a little to do before he joins the top ranks of the world's flutists - but it was clear Monday that this is a musician of distinctive insight, well worth keeping an eye on.