



## Stephen Waarts, violinist

### The Washington Post

#### Teen violinist Stephen Waarts offers imaginative take on classics in local debut

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Stephen Waarts, an 18-year-old violinist studying at Curtis, gave an outstanding local debut Tuesday at the Terrace Theater. In a fine program of Beethoven, Bartok, Ravel, and Waxman – difficult music, in a range of styles and impeccably rendered – Waarts showed an uncommon, preternatural sense of tonal color and lyrical beauty on the instrument.

Gangly and spindly, Waarts looked like a young adolescent in the middle of a growth spurt. He fussed repeatedly with his shoulder pad, and his left hand sometimes appeared awkward, as though still figuring out where to put everything. But the fingerboard fireworks of the Bizet/Waxman “Carmen Fantasie” were tossed off with complete security.

Although the range of expression was mostly confined to the lyrical part of the spectrum, it was rich and imaginative. One might seek more bite and astringency in Bartok’s Solo Sonata, but Waarts’s approach made the first two movements especially (which nearly break the instrument apart with their vertiginous register-changes) emerge as real music. And while the articulation in the “Perpetuum mobile” from the Ravel Sonata lacked the last ounce of clarity, the “Blues” movement soared, each phrase a slightly different hue.

In the Beethoven Sonata No. 8, the musical imagination and his tonal sensitivity paid dividends time and again.

Pianist Chelsea Wang was good. Waarts’s encore was a languid, diaphanous rendition of the Granados “Andaluza.”

The concert was a presentation of Young Concert Artists.