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Dasol Kim, *pianist*

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Mozart piano concertos begin at the Cliburn competition

FORT WORTH — Starting Saturday, the semifinal round of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition switched to a half-and-half format each day: two solo recitals each afternoon, four performances of Mozart piano concertos each evening, with Nicholas McGegan conducting the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. Given a choice of nine concertos, the 12 semifinalists have chosen just four, Nos. 20, 21, 23 and 25.

One of the happiest developments over the 20 years I've covered the Cliburn has been the FWSO's vast improvement under Miguel Harth-Bedoya, music director for the last 16 years. But, given the orchestra's relatively little experience in 18th-century style, it was a great idea to book a specialist, Nicholas McGegan, to conduct this round.

Pianist Dasol Kim took a bow with conductor Nicholas McGegan after performing with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in the Semifinal Round of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition on Saturday. (Ralph Lauer/Van Cliburn)

Dasol Kim, South Korea, 28. Kim's solo recital on Thursday was one of the most musically sophisticated so far in the Semifinal Round, and in Saturday evening's second performance of the 20th Concerto he really showed how it's done. From the first phrases, which he built one on another, it was clear that suave musicianship was at work. Always clear, passagework was always going somewhere, but never rushing. Even quite brisk tempos in the middle of the slow movement and the finale never lost control.