



Aleksey Semenenko, violinist

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MUSIC

Concert review: Violinist Aleksey Semenenko shows he's a rising star with symphony guest appearance

By Larry Lapidus Mon., March 26, 2018, 9:24 a.m.

If you have only enough time or patience to read one sentence of this review, you will at least come away having learned the name of violinist Aleksey Semenenko. **Most members of the audience at this weekend's performances at the Fox, where Semenenko performed with the Spokane Symphony, had also just heard his name for the first time, and they will treasure the experience of having encountered a great musician at an early stage of his career, before his name is added to the short list of artists who made a permanent mark on the performance history of their instrument.**

In his lecture before the concert, Music Director Eckart Preu quietly remarked that Semenenko had "very precise ideas" about how the piece he was to perform, "Symphonie Espagnole" (1875) by Édouard Lalo, should be interpreted. That resulted in **an interpretation of Lalo's familiar work that astonished** even those listeners who felt they knew it best. Instead of the engaging virtuoso showpiece we expected, **Semenenko's profound re-evaluation and flawless execution** revealed a masterful and serious concerto for violin and orchestra, worthy of consideration alongside the greatest examples of the type by Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Brahms. Soloist and orchestra accomplished this by executing details with scrupulous care, but never allowing momentary effect to stall the forward momentum of the piece or to break the long arch of its design.

Admirable as this musicianship may have been, Semenenko added to it a quality which is as hard to define as it is easy to recognize: star power. The young man held the audience in thrall from first note to last, providing continual astonishment and delight with the beauty of his tone, the breathtaking fluency of his technique, and the inescapable communicative power of his personality. Applause after each of the work's five movements was capped with a thunderous ovation at its conclusion, which was rewarded with a rendition of the first movement of Eugène Ysaÿe's Sonata for Solo Violin No. 5 (1924). Not only did Semenenko transcend its technical demands as though they did not exist, he again won the audience's heart by meeting Ysaÿe's definition of the ideal violinist: "... a thinker, a poet, a human being, he must have known hope, love, passion and despair, he must have run the gamut of the emotions in order to express them all in his playing."