



NEW YORK MUSIC DAILY

Global Music With a New York Edge

Saluting One of New York's Great Music Advocacy Organizations at Lincoln Center Last Night

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Every generation tends to view successive ones as being more and more effete. That preconception becomes all the harder to argue with in an age where daily life for so much of the population is becoming more and more virtual and less and less real. **Why drag yourself to Manhattan at rush hour to immerse yourself in a sublime and intimate performance when you could get a virtual equivalent on Facebook Live?**

So to see a packed house for the annual Young Concert Artists gala at Alice Tully Hall last night was a shot of serious optimism. **Does the continued success of an organization whose raison d'être is to champion and springboard the careers of young classical musicians portend a sea change, maybe?** A slow tidal shift? Or does that simply reaffirm the eternal appeal of great art? All of the above, maybe?

The concert itself was great fun, a display of ferocious chops, and intuition, and joie de vivre, played to an audience reflecting the relative youth of most of the performers. The prospect of being able to see pianists Lise de la Salle and Anne-Marie McDermott, violinists Ani Kavafian and Juliette Kang, bassist Xavier Foley, harpist Emmanuel Ceysson and the Zora String Quartet alongside veteran flutist Paula Robison and cello icon Fred Sherry – just to name a handful of the 23 former and current YCA roster members – onstage is less likely than it might seem. Each has a busy solo, orchestral and chamber music career.

If pageantry could be genuinely profound, it would be the version of Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings played by YCA's conductorless fifteen-piece all-star ensemble. **With unbridled, fluttery joy balanced by more direct intonation and clear, uncluttered dynamic shifts, the group reveled in its balletesque riffs, drawing a straight line back to Mozart.**

Mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, backed by McDermott and the Zora String Quartet, followed a similarly straightforward trajectory from plaintiveness to a blaze of five-alarm drama in Ernest Chausson's Chanson Perpetuelle. That vigorous sensibility took a turn in a more upbeat, triumphantly lilting direction with Ravel's Introduction and Allegro, played by a septet including Sherry, Kang, Robison and Ceysson along with violinist Paul Huang, violist Toby Appel and clarinetist Narek Arutyunian.

The program closed with a mashup of Scott Joplin, Liszt and John Philip Sousa arranged for piano eight hands, performed by de la Salle and McDermott with Gleb Ivanov and Yun-Chin Zhou. As completely over-the-top as the concept was, careening from one idiom to another with zero regard for segues, there's no denying how much fun the four musicians were having while simply trying to maintain a semblance of tightness. **Which testifies to the kind of outside-the-box thinking that might or might not be putting more and more young people in the seats. That question continues to bedevil everyone in the concert business these days – and it's inspiring to see YCA coming up with some answers that are obviously working.**