



## Aleksey Semenenko, *violinist*

### The New York Times

#### Romantic Intensity, Replete With Trills and Flourishes

Aleksey Semenenko, Young Concert Artists Winner, at Merkin Hall

*Vivien Schweitzer | The New York Times | February 6, 2014*

Even by the reliably high standards of the Young Concert Artists series, which has been promoting gifted young musicians since 1961, the performance on Tuesday evening at Merkin Concert Hall by the Ukrainian violinist Aleksey Semenenko proved particularly rewarding.

Mr. Semenenko chose works that highlighted his strengths; a powerful technique, rich tone and passionate approach. There was a fluidity and warmth to his playing throughout the program, which concluded with a joyous, bravura performance of Paganini's showpiece "I Palpiti."



Aleksey Semenenko and the pianist Inna Firsova at Merkin Hall on Tuesday night

(Ian Douglas/The New York Times)

Inspired by an aria from Rossini's "Tancredi," the work incorporates harmonics and other virtuosic flourishes, which Mr. Semenenko deftly navigated. Inna Firsova, his excellent pianist, provided nuanced and expressive support in the program, beginning with Beethoven's Sonata No. 4 in A minor, one of his less frequently performed sonatas.

While he played the Beethoven well, Mr. Semenenko sounded more in his element in the ensuing repertoire, including Chausson's "Poème," a vehicle for his sweet, rich tone and sultry trills. He brought a burnished sound and intensity to Ysaÿe's Sonata for Solo Violin No. 3 "Ballade," written — like all his violin sonatas — for a close musician friend.

The duo's characterful interpretation of Debussy's Sonata in G minor also proved effective as they ably illuminated its impressionistic effects, pizzicati, metric ambiguities and introspective moods. Describing the Iberian-flavored finale of the work, which he composed during World War I, Debussy wrote that "it ultimately leaves the impression of an idea turning back on itself, like a snake biting its own tail."

Mr. Semenenko also offered two Tchaikovsky works, including a graceful rendition of the Valse-Scherzo (Op. 34). For the first encore, he played Tchaikovsky's "Mélodie." After an evening of demonstrating his prowess in Romantic showpieces, he concluded with a soulful rendition of the Largo from Bach's Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin No. 3 in C Major (BWV 1005).