



Paul Huang, *violinist*

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Virtuoso Paul Huang Made the Audience Part of the Creative Process in Orchestra Season Closer

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Performers like violinist Paul Huang are the reason I love live concerts. Recordings are wonderful and I am sufficiently in awe of the smart phone's potential, but there is no substitute for watching a virtuoso performer create a work of art. Those of us attending the Louisville Orchestra's season finale concert last Friday were part of the creative process...something to be celebrated in the face of destruction.

The concert, marketed under the moniker *Pictures and Painters*, began with Paul Hindemith's thinly veiled commentary on the mores of the then-emerging Nazi party. Hindemith composed his three-movement symphony *Mathis der Maler* (Matthais the Painter) in 1939. Themes for the orchestral work were drawn from an opera the composer was developing based on the artistic and class struggles of 16th century German Renaissance painter Matthias Grünewald. Music director Jorge Mester continues to select works with plenty of opportunities for musicians of the Orchestra to demonstrate their abilities. Principal Flutist Kathy Karr's interpretations in the first movement were a joy.

Enter the artist, Paul Huang. The lithe 22-year-old violinist already projects an air of quiet confidence, without arrogance. The opening theme of Samuel Barber's *Violin Concerto, Op. 14* is introduced immediately by the soloist who emerges from the orchestra as a bird in flight might separate from the flock. Huang's clear tone and mastery of intonation allow him to add subtleties to his performance that had me laughing out loud with the joy of it. The composer opens the second movement with an extended oboe solo, wonderfully performed by interim principal Jennifer Potochnic. Throughout the second movement Huang seemed to be performing a duet with the orchestra, embodied by Maestro Mester. And when it was over, absolute silence hung over Whitney Hall in anticipation of Principal Timpanist James Rago's introduction of the *moto perpetuo* created by the composer to allow the violinist to demonstrate their virtuosity. What Huang provided was four minutes of the kind of performance Paganini's admirers walked miles to experience. The Louisville audience was no less appreciative and called Huang and Mester back again and again until the violinist offered an enraptured encore of Corigliano's *Red Violin Caprices*. I was grateful for the opportunity to enjoy the purity of tone manifested by a 1683 Nicolo Amati violin in the hands of a gifted performer.



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