



Narek Arutyunian, *clarinetist*

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Concertos as Sounds of Spring

Three Rising Stars Perform in Young Concert Artists Gala

Anthony Tommasini | *The New York Times* | May 8, 2014

Young Concert Artists, which has been fostering the careers of gifted musicians since 1961, mostly presents the winners of its auditions in recitals, including a popular series in New York. But it has become a spring tradition for this essential organization to present a gala concert featuring select winners from recent years in concerto performances. Hearing young musicians in concertos reveals further dimensions of their artistry.

So it was on Wednesday night at Alice Tully Hall for the 53rd Young Concert Artists Gala Concert, hosted by the organization's founding director, Susan Wadsworth. With Carlos Miguel Prieto conducting the Orchestra of St. Luke's, three impressive young musicians played concertos by Copland, Barber and Rachmaninoff.



The violinist Paul Huang and the conductor Carlos Miguel Prieto at Alice Tully Hall. Richard Termine / *The New York Times*

Narek Arutyunian, an Armenian-born clarinetist currently studying at the Juilliard School, opened the program with an alluring, stylish account of Copland's compact, two-movement Clarinet Concerto, a 1948 work commissioned by Benny Goodman. Mr. Arutyunian brought a rich, reedy sound to the beguiling first movement, marked "slowly and expressively," which has the quality of a mellow, almost lazy waltz. He brought out pensive, subtle depths in the music while shaping the winding melodic line in arching phrases. And he excelled in the jazzy, playful second movement, which is like a 1940s American version of Stravinsky's Neo-Classicism, impishly dispatching riffs and bopping lines while incisively executing the music's rhythmic gyrations and irregularities.

The Taiwanese-American violinist Paul Huang, a boyish-looking 23, gave a masterly account of Barber's Violin Concerto. His warm, glowing sound and youthful energy were perfect for the opening movement of this justly popular work, in which a soaring melodic line flows atop the harmonically charged, restless orchestra. Yet, Mr. Huang was also alert to surprising melodic shifts and rhythmic twists in the violin part. There was nobility and wistful longing to the searching slow movement. In the fiercely difficult perpetual-motion finale, Mr. Huang, supported by Mr. Prieto and the orchestra, reined in the breathless tempo just enough to bring clarity and bite to constant streams of notes in the violin part, which actually made the music seem more dangerous and exciting. Mr. Huang was given a rousing ovation.

After intermission, Andrew Tyson, a pianist in the artist diploma program at Juilliard, gave a coolly commanding account of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2. Rather than just tossing off the scurrying passage-work and virtuosic flights, he dug into the music, bringing out thematic intricacies, making the notes matter. There are several beloved big-tune moments in this popular concerto, and Mr. Tyson played them with pliant Romantic expressivity. But his use of rubato was tasteful and his playing refreshingly direct.