



Seiya Ueno, flutist

The Washington Post

Flutist Seiya Ueno's local debut performance sells itself

Charles Downey | Washington Post | October 14, 2015



Photo: Matt Dine

Young classical musicians sometimes feel they have to turn to superficial or entrepreneurial ways to distinguish themselves. The local debut of flutist Seiya Ueno, presented by Young Concert Artists on Tuesday evening at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater, was a reminder that the best way for a musician to sell himself is by playing in a way people want to hear.

The success of this recital came down to one pairing, Claude Debussy's "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" and Pierre Boulez's "Sonatine." The Debussy arrangement showed off Ueno's rich, polished bottom octave in its famous opening theme. The piece's final note, fading gradually to nothing, was a stunning moment, despite a perfectly timed sneeze in the audience. With the Boulez, the composer's first published work, Ueno sliced into the narcotic stupor of the Debussy, with razor-sharp flutter-tongued notes and tightly coiled rhythms that crackled with energy.

A Bach opener, the B Minor Sonata for Flute and Continuo, BWV 1030, revealed a lightness in Ueno's tone, perhaps in imitation of the softer instruments that Bach knew, particularly evanescent in the brief slow movement. Richard Strauss's violin sonata, adapted for flute, tested the other end of Ueno's range, with plenty of bravura forte sound and beautifully placed high notes. In all of this, pianist Wendy Chen was a true collaborative artist, with a broad range of delicate touch at the keyboard to enrich Ueno's tone.

François Borne's "Carmen Fantasy," on themes from Bizet's opera, seemed almost an afterthought, a chance for Ueno to strut the technical prowess that won him the Grand Prix at the 2008 Rampal competition. For an encore, Ueno returned to Debussy, with the mysterious unaccompanied flute solo "Syrinx."