



Aleksey Semenenko, *violinist*



Berlioz piece and soloist Semenenko highlight ECSO concert

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Maestro Toshiyuki Shimada has honed the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, a fine and responsive group of instrumentalists, into a truly admirable ensemble, with their laudable attributes being on aural display Saturday evening in the second concert of their season at the Garde Arts Center.

The main work of the concert's first half, the Paganini Violin Concerto No. 1, featured Ukrainian Aleksey Semenenko, a winner of a number of prestigious international competitions, as soloist. High expectations greeted his arrival onstage, and he did not disappoint.

His is a full, rich sound, and he possesses a the-case-is-closed fabulous technique as well as — not always to be counted upon with virtuosi of this magnitude — a discerning musicianship and degree of nuance.

Assuming a confident, athletic stance, Semenenko dispatched the huge number of ferociously difficult multiple stops with the bracing ease of an evening stroll on a lovely autumn night; he absolutely nailed a stupefying number of high notes you'd think only Rin Tin Tin might be able to hear; and he elsewhere produced the sweetness that adagio movements demand of soloists but, alas, do not always receive.

Semenenko plays an 18th-century Landolfi violin but, with tone this gorgeous, who needs a Strad?

Shimada kept most everything in tight control — no mean feat — and though the ending of the half-hour concerto, as written, is a bit anti-climactic, the concerto came to a hardy, unifying conclusion.