



## The New York Times

### Commanding Solos in an Evening of Concertos Young Concert Artists Gala at Alice Tully Hall

Anthony Tommasini  
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Young Concert Artists, which for 52 years has built a solid record of fostering the careers of gifted instrumentalists, vocalists and, since 1994, composers, presents a popular series of recitals in New York. But the organization typically ends the season with a gala benefit concert in which, after some celebratory speeches onstage, three recent winners of its international auditions play concertos. So it was on Thursday night at Alice Tully Hall.

The Bulgarian-born violinist Bella Hristova, the German pianist Benjamin Moser and the Swiss pianist Louis Schwizgebel, whose young careers are thriving, played concertos with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Alexander Mickelthwate, a dynamic German conductor, was on the podium.

This year the chosen soloists were particularly excellent. Ms. Hristova, who gave a Young Concert Artists recital in New York in 2010, has been increasingly active on the international circuit. On this occasion, she brought accomplished technique, penetrating sound and probing musicianship to Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor.

From the first searching phrases of the solo violin theme at the start of this Neo-Classical concerto, it was clear that we were hearing an artist in command of what she was doing. The first movement soon breaks into spans of toccatalike passagework, which Ms. Hristova dispatched articulately, even while her ear was alert to jagged rhythms and harmonic quirks in the music. And she brought hearty energy to the rustic finale.

Then Mr. Moser (who at 6-foot-6 may be the tallest pianist since Van Cliburn) tore into Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat, giving an impetuous and powerful performance. Over all his playing was more impressive for its organic sweep and full-bodied character than for nuance and clarity. Still, this was an urgent and feisty performance.

After intermission, Mr. Schwizgebel was the soloist in Beethoven's Concerto No. 1 in C. This shy-looking young man recently gave a compelling account of Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand and Orchestra, with the New York Youth Symphony, in March. He revealed even deeper dimensions of his mature artistry in this elegant and vibrant performance of the Beethoven.

His passagework was lithe and sparkling; his phrasing lucid and shapely. Here was an insightful musician in action who brought out complexities in inner voices and gave an extra nudge to crucial rhythmic accents. He drew out mysterious moments, searching passages and milky textures. And he had a romping good time in the dancing rondo.

Mr. Mickelthwate, who is in his seventh season as music director of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, drew lively and sensitive performances from the St. Luke's players. During the preconcert ceremony, Susan Wadsworth, the founding director of Young Concert Artists, made a point of thanking Mr. Mickelthwate for contributing three days of rehearsals to this benefit concert. It showed.



Ruby Washington/New York Times

Young Concert Artists The violinist Bella Hristova performing with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, led by Alexander Mickelthwate at Alice Tully Hall.