

Keyboardist Fountain impresses before LSO wows audience with 'Pictures'

BY WILLIAM KERNS

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Lubbock Symphony Orchestra maestro David Cho is on temporary hiatus, but his full ensemble nevertheless thrilled listeners Friday at the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center Theatre, luring visitors to their feet more than once.

The orchestra closed Friday's performance with an incredible delivery of Modest Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," a thrilling composition unheard in this hall for the past decade, specifically since Tomasz Golka conducted it in September 2007.

The orchestra was led this weekend by guest conductor Donato Cabrera, present music director of the California Symphony Orchestra and Las Vegas Philharmonic. A mere two hours on the podium Friday, with baton in hand, proved how deeply he had bonded during rehearsals with Lubbock's musicians.

In fact, one could not help but notice concertmaster Delyana Lazarova's keeping her eyes on Cabrera's baton, never missing a cue. There was a reason that the crowd's later standing ovation would inspire Cabrera to recognize many individual musicians before celebrating larger sections.

Merging music and at least a reported influence of visual splendor, more than one player on stage mastered impressive, lengthy passages long before listeners were guided to "The Grand Gate of Kiev," complete with percussion, chimes and every other instrument bringing Maurice Ravel's exciting arrangement to its chilling conclusion.

Contributions by principal trumpet Will Strieder, principal harpist Jenny Miller, and percussionists Chris Mehrafshan, Erin Martysz, Jeremy Isley, Griffith Kimball and Josh Frans were among those loudly appreciated by the audience as Cabrera took his time sharing credit.

Cabrera had guided the ensemble through all 10 parts of the composition.

Program notes by Patricia Madigan point out that Mussorgsky had been a close friend of Russian painter and architect Victor Hartmann, who died unexpectedly at age 39 in 1873. Russian



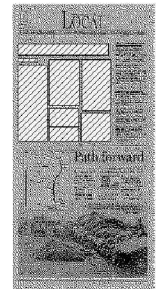
Richard Fountain, guest pianist

critic Vladimir Stassov, a mutual friend, arranged the following year for many of Hartmann's paintings and drawings to be shown at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. Seeing these visual creations, Mussorgsky responded by writing "Pictures at an Exhibition" for solo piano.

It was Serge Koussevitzky, later a Boston Symphony Orchestra conductor, who commissioned Ravel to orchestrate Mussorgsky's composition in 1922, almost 50 years after Hartmann's death.

Cabrera reportedly mentioned at a pre-concert Soundbites dinner that many arrangements and orchestrations of "Pictures at an Exhibition" had been written. The original piano composition is not difficult to find. However, my introduction to memorable portions of the score arrived via a live recording in rock and jazz format by progressive British band Emerson, Lake & Palmer in 1971.

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Donato Cabrera, guest conductor