



## The Oregonian

### Music review: Shostakovich overshadows Schumann

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In the annals of the music of war, few composers loom as large as Dmitri Shostakovich. His galvanizing Seventh Symphony -- written in 1941 during the siege of Leningrad -- became a musical symbol of courageous resistance to the German army.

Shostakovich's bleak Eighth Symphony was the better part of the Oregon Symphony's concert Saturday night in Schnitzer Hall, both in length (more than an hour) and in emotional weight. It's sobering that a grim Soviet symphony from 1943 should carry as powerful an impact as it did in this performance.

Led by music director Carlos Kalmar, the orchestra traversed the work's five movements in long arcs, building from poignant slow passages into anguished, pounding fortés. The pace was unflagging, and as a collaborative effort it was exemplary.

The first half of the concert was less impressive. Alexander Scriabin's short "Reverie" opened the evening. An excerpt from an early review, helpfully furnished by the program notes, summed up the effect: "Felicitous sounding and charmingly orchestrated, but a nothing. It takes no hold."

Robert Schumann's Cello Concerto followed in similarly fine but emotionally unengaging fashion. The cellist, Alban Gerhardt, gave a memorable performance of Edward Elgar's Cello Concerto with Kalmar and the orchestra two seasons ago.

Gerhardt, who seems to share Kalmar's essentially Apollonian disposition, treated the solo line with dazzling passagework and long, cantabile phrases, and his tone was strong and focused if not especially large or lush. But his narrow emotional compass, matched by Kalmar's direction, left the piece with little sense of urgency or passion.

The evening began with an announcement of more comings and goings, a regular symphony feature these days. Kalmar introduced the latest concertmaster candidate to replace Amy Schwartz Moretti: Jun Iwasaki, concertmaster of the Canton (Ohio) Symphony Orchestra. He then gave a prolonged, well-deserved tribute to trombonist Alan Pierce, a 45-year veteran of the Oregon Symphony.

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