

PittsburghLIVE.com

**PITTSBURGH
TRIBUNE-REVIEW**

PSO soloists shine in concert of contrasts

By Mark Kanny
 TRIBUNE-REVIEW CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC
 Saturday, November 5, 2005

The musical juxtapositions of this weekend's Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra concerts provide a stimulating experience -- especially given the wonderful musicality of guest conductor Andrey Boreyko and the welcome return of American pianist Andre Watts.

"Blue Cathedral" by the symphony's Composer of the Year Jennifer Higdon was the affecting opening work Friday night at Heinz Hall. Written in memory of her younger brother, Andrew Blue Higdon, the score is a winning blend of emotional and sonorous sensitivities. Given the intensity of the composer's feelings, the poise of "Blue Cathedral" is especially impressive.

The guest conductor paced the music well and showed a keen ear for color and balance. Flutist Damian Bursill-Hall and clarinetist Thomas Thompson were eloquent in their solos representing the siblings and well deserved their solo bows. English hornist Harold Smoliar, who was superb and emotional in his solos, deserved a bow, too.

The emotionality of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor was presented within the lucid context of Viennese classicism, but it is a wild piece nonetheless. Boreyko showed extremely impressive sensitivity to Mozartean style and was especially effective in his handling of the prominent woodwind parts -- that were superbly played by the co-principals.

Watts' maturity and decisiveness were tastefully rewarding throughout, although there were passages where dexterity was an issue. His first movement cadenza was out there, but led well to Mozart's exceptional conclusion to the movement -- during which Boreyko's imaginative woodwind nuances were gratifying.

A tribute to Mozart was offered after intermission, when the orchestra performed "Une Sourire" (A Smile) by Olivier Messiaen. The 20th century French composer completed the work in 1991, the bicentennial of Mozart's death.

It was Mozart's ability to smile through tragedy that struck Messiaen so deeply. His tribute piece, though not sounding at all like Mozart, has its own poise.

Boreyko's dramatic sense carried the blockbuster conclusion: Alexander

Tools

 [Print this article](#)

 [E-mail this article](#)

 [Subscribe to this paper](#)

 [Larger](#) / [Smaller](#) Text



Scriabin's "The Poem of Ecstasy." With highly contrasted tempi and careful attention to dynamics and balances, the guest conductor led a performance that was by turns tender and roof-raising.

Principal trumpeter George Vosburgh soared above the orchestra with juicy tone in his many solos, while at the very end, nine horns and percussion created a tremendous sound.

The Pittsburgh Symphony showed, once again, what a great orchestra it is.

This concert will be repeated at 8 p.m. today and 2:30 p.m. Sunday. Details: 412-392-4900.

Mark Kanny can be reached at mkanny@tribweb.com or (412) 320-7877.



Images and text copyright © 2004 by The Tribune-Review Publishing Co.
Reproduction or reuse prohibited without written consent from [PittsburghLIVE](http://PittsburghLIVE.com).