

Weiss Kaplan Newman Trio
New Bedford Symphony
Beethoven Triple Concerto & Solo Concertos
"perfectly balancing their energy, artistry and precision"

Review: NBSO, soloist serve a 'feast' indeed

By Laurie Robertson-Lorant
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In print, Saturday's NBSO program appeared to be a kind of sampler featuring five seemingly unrelated symphonic works, four of them showcasing the internationally acclaimed Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio. In the concert hall, however, the not-so-obvious relationships between the various works chosen for this eclectic and imaginative program revealed themselves through the combined talents of violinist Mark Kaplan, cellist Clancy Newman, pianist Yael Weiss and the orchestra under the baton of Dr. David MacKenzie.

The concert opened with Camille Saint-Saens' fiery Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso for Violin and Orchestra, which was written in 1863 for Spanish violin virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate, who, like Saint-Saens, was a child prodigy. **Played with exuberant passion by Mark Kaplan and the orchestra, this piece begins with a subdued introduction and picks up speed as the rondo combines the syncopated rhythms and sensuous harmonics of Spanish gypsy music with a technically challenging and dramatic repertoire of arpeggios, staccato**

bowing, and double and triple stops, brilliantly executed by Kaplan.

Sustaining the Latin flavor of the opening piece, cellist Clancy Newman and the orchestra played the brief and poignant Poema III for Cello and Strings by the celebrated Brazilian musicologist and composer Marlos Nobre, who composed this love song for his wife, Brazilian pianist Maria Luiza Corker, in 2002. **Newman's soulful and exquisitely tender performance made us wish this lovely lyrical piece had lasted longer.**

Next, the Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio joined forces with the orchestra to play Ludwig van Beethoven's Triple Concerto, the only concerto Beethoven ever wrote for more than one soloist. He composed it in 1804 for the 15-year-old Archduke Rudolph, who was studying piano with him and needed the support of other soloists.

It's safe to say the Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio gave much better performance of the Triple Concerto than the original court musicians, perfectly balancing their energy, artistry and precision as soloists and

ensemble players with the larger orchestra led by Maestro Mackenzie. Pianist Yael Weiss, unlike Archduke Rudolph, is a seasoned performer and a versatile, adventurous pianist, who is equally at home with glittering arpeggios and the languid folkloric harmonies and rhythms of the Triple Concerto's third movement, the Rondo alla Polacca.

Hearing the Triple Concerto in the context of the first two pieces on the program revealed similarities between works which, on paper, had initially seemed unrelated, but all of which depend on intense restatement of strong melodic lines relieved by variations of instrumentation, rhythm and tempo, with vivid contrasts between classical and folkloric harmonies.

The post-intermission segment of the program featured Cesar Franck's Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra and Maurice Ravel's "Bolero" — two well-known works that also depend heavily on restatement of strong themes as well as subtle and not-so-subtle variations. Although Weiss' interpretation of Franck's Symphonic Variations was faster and more percussive at times than I expected, **her technical skill was dazzling, and in the softer, more intimate conversations between piano and orchestra, her depth of feeling and delicacy of touch were mesmerizing.**

I have to admit that going into the concert, I felt a little jaded toward Maurice Ravel's "Bolero"; however, by the time this familiar piece reached its

triumphant finale, I was won over by the NBSO's robust and intelligent performance and felt I had heard "Bolero" for the first time. As one section of the orchestra after the other joined in, they repeated the sinuous Spanish-Arabic theme more loudly as more instruments added their individual tones and timbres — flute and piccolo, trombones and violins, snare drums and kettle drums, and so on as "Bolero" revealed its delights.

Despite the fact that Ravel claimed his inspiration for the piece was a music machine and that — according to the program notes — his aim in composing the piece was to repeat an impersonal theme in one long crescendo with no development, this "Bolero" had flair and fire, thanks to the musicianship and youthful spirit of the conductor and instrumentalists, who played their parts with enthusiasm and panache.

Once again, Maestro MacKenzie took an "old chestnut" and made it fresh and new, and once again, he created an imaginative and enthralling program that brought the audience to its feet to applaud the superb performance of the Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio and the NBSO instrumentalists of all sections.

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