

El Mercurio

Column

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## Teachers and disciples

**"The scherzo, which seems to pay homage to Beethoven's humor, and the final rondo were exquisite at the hands of this group of teacher and disciples."**



**Gonzalo Saavedra**

Since 2008, the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia has been holding world tours with professors and current and former students through the program "Curtis on Tour." This year, Chilean violist Roberto Díaz, who in addition to being a professor is the president and CEO of the institute, brought five outstanding students on tour with him: Maria Ioudenicht and Andrea Obiso (violin), Michael Casimir (viola), and Joshua Halpern and Young In Na (cello).

The sextet, guests of Fundación Beethoven's "Fernando Rosas" concert season, held performances at Municipal de Las Condes and Teatro de Carabineros. On Tuesday at Teatro de Carabineros, the group's concert was preceded by a performance from the Fundación Educacional Socedhuca Youth Orchestra from Maipú: 23 children from ages four to eight, who, with violins and cellos—some of them miniature like the children playing them—plus three flutes and four keyboards, filled the room with music and admiration. Four very dedicated teachers oversaw the children to be sure that all went smoothly. While the audience cheered, the Curtis performers surprised the crowd by appearing from behind, applauding as well. What a thrill!

The group from the United States began their performance with an anonymous arrangement of Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major (1779). This version, which has met with much success, distributes the melody among the instruments, allowing each one to shine while preserving the prominence of the original soloists: Obiso's daring violin and the extraordinary sound of Díaz, his

teacher, on the viola. Both were highlighted in the extensive cadenzas of each of the three movements, their deftness as always giving reverence to the music itself.

Following this, the group performed “Arcana” (2008) by Kevin Puts (1972), whose inspiration for this piece was a mysterious countryside in Hawaii. “Arcana” was especially appealing to the young audience, who observed carefully across the crowded venue. Puts, like his North American contemporaries, has no problem reproducing mechanisms of western classical music, with tonal centers and well-known modes, but he bestows upon them a new and unique polish, as demonstrated by the brilliant solo cellist, Halpern, and the others in the group.

The final piece was Brahms’ Sextet in B-flat Major Op. 18 (1860), one of the pinnacles of performance for this string combination. The work leverages its low reinforced register to create a smooth sound that allows the imagination to run wild. Perhaps where this is most evident is in the *Andante ma moderato*, a sort of musical magnet whose theme varies six times to imitate a broad spectrum of emotions (the harmonic progression and rhythm of the famous theme’s procession inspired Sergio Ortega to compose “El pueblo unido jamás será vencido” [“The people united will never be defeated”]). The scherzo, which seems to pay homage to Beethoven’s humor, and the final rondo were exquisite at the hands of this group of teacher and disciples.