

Barrie Concert Review – Saturday October 19th, 2019

Nurhan Arman Conducts Sinfonia Toronto and Violinist Elisso Gogibedashvili



Submitted by Alyssa Wright

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It was a busy weekend for arts and culture in Barrie; nevertheless it was a full house for the Barrie Concerts season opener at Hiway Pentecostal Church on Saturday, for Sinfonia Toronto with conductor Nurhan Arman and guest soloist Elisso Gogibedashvili on violin.

Sinfonia Toronto is a chamber ensemble of thirteen string players. In the tradition of European chamber orchestras, the upper strings perform standing in semi-circle, with the cellists seated in the center, and the bass tucked between the second violins and violas. The ensemble's biography explains that this formation blends each musician's soloist energy and passion into a brilliant ensemble style. And yes, it was exciting from an audience perspective to more fully see each player leaning into particular sections, and even some playful exchanges between individuals.

The program featured Antonin Dvořák's *Quintet in G Major, Op.77*, adapted as a "Chamber Symphony" by Mr. Arman, as well as his adaptation for chamber orchestra of Niccolò Paganini's *Violin Concerto No.1, Op.6*, with Ms. Gogibedashvili.

The first two movements of the Dvořák felt a little too weighed down with so many players per part –which I don't believe is at all indicative of the ensemble's abilities, simply the difference in nature between a quintet and an orchestra. The intricate bowings in the *Scherzo*, especially, just don't have the space and lightness of the original when there are four players per part. The third movement *poco andante* was more suited to the chamber version, though, as was the spirited

finale, with less complex rhythms and bowings allowing the *con fuoco* of the first movement to be felt at last – as could be seen amongst the players, as well.

The highlight of the night was the Paganini, played by Elisso Gogibedashvili with a strength and confidence that made me double-check whether she was indeed only nineteen. From her first notes of the *Allegro maestoso* through its stunning cadenza, she had us all in her spell – so much so, that part of the audience sprang to its feet after the first movement! The beautiful *Adagio* allowed us all to catch our breath for a moment, before taking off again with the rollicking *Rondo: Allegro spiritoso*, again with feats of virtuosity, and fun interplay between the musicians.

Ms. Gogibedashvili rewarded the audience with an encore for solo violin – Eugène Ysaÿe's *Malinconia*. A haunting piece that was full of slow, moody double stops, the spell of which belied the incredible technique it required. The faces of the Sinfonia's violinists showed the admiration and sheer joy felt by the entire audience, which, once the final chord echoed away, sprang to its feet again.