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Young Concert Artists, Inc.

Youth Finds Comfort Alongside Experience

By ZACHARY WOOLFE, April 4, 2011

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“Don’t worry — just go out there and play.” On-stage at the Rose Theater on Tuesday evening, the violinist Pinchas Zukerman recalled that advice from Susan Wadsworth when she presented his first United States recitals, in 1966, under the auspices of Young Concert Artists, her management and mentoring firm.

Young Concert Artists turns 50 this year, still under the direction of the indefatigable Ms. Wadsworth. It celebrated the anniversary with a 12-hour marathon last month and a gala concert on Tuesday at the Rose, with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s and conducted by Mr. Zukerman, that featured soloists who are members of Young Concert Artists, along with alumni from the organization’s earlier days.

As you would hope at an event like this, the youngest performers were the stars. In two of Sesto’s passionate arias from Mozart’s “Clemenza di Tito,” the 26-year-old mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano had nuanced emotion and an even, steady, focused voice. Joining Mr. Zukerman for Bach’s Concerto for Two Violins in D minor, the excellent Bella Hristova, 25, was subtle and elegant, her tone clear and pure. She brought some fire to the final movement, but with her impeccable sound and technique, it would be great to hear even more riskiness.

In Bach’s “Brandenburg” Concerto No. 5 in D, the eloquent violinist Caroline Goulding, still a teenager, stood out playing alongside the harpsichordist Anthony Newman, who joined the Young Concert Artist roster in 1968, and the flutist Paula Robison, one of the first members of Young Concert Artists back in 1961. Among the six excellent pianists who divvied up Mozart’s Concerto for Two Pianos in E flat (each duo got one of the three movements), Chu-Fang Huang impressed with graceful playing in the central Andante, as did Vassily Primakov in a sparkingly charismatic final Allegro. The program closed with an exuberant performance of Ludwig Wilhelm Maurer’s whimsical and effervescent Sinfonia Concertante for four violins in A minor.

There was something slightly off about a concert this youthful at which the latest piece on the program, the Maurer, was from 1838. But a gala aims to please broadly, and it was hard to object to vibrant performances of some of the most beautiful works in the repertory from up-and-coming artists who did full justice to the mission of Ms. Wadsworth and her organization.



Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times
Jennifer Johnson Cano at the Young Concert Artists 50th anniversary concert on Tuesday.



Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times
Caroline Goulding