

Chicago Tribune

Neeme Jarvi brings quiet authority to Sibelius-Prokofiev program with CSO



By John von Rhein • Contact Reporter
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For all the attention the Chicago Symphony Orchestra gives young conductors on their way up, it can hardly afford to neglect the elder statesmen of the baton, particularly those who still have something vital to offer CSO players and public.

returned to Symphony Center as part of the subscription series.

To affix "distinguished" to every major orchestra's recordings to his credit in his native Estonia. That his dynastic significance.

A pity that Orchestra Hall was no more than two-thirds full contained anything an audience.

In any case, Jarvi favored his fall on Thursday. His pairing of total neglect of Sibelius' music of Sibelius' orchestral output re-

Jarvi, who has recorded two complete, steady, well-balanced, astringent of organic inevitability that is hard to romanticize this masterpiece. Jarvi every undemonstrative flick of his bat-

Indeed, there's a quiet authority to Jarvi knew when he could stop beating time

ductor is Neeme Jarvi, who begin the weekend interpreter.

story that has taken him to ever, with nearly 500 Orchestra in his Jarvi surname

the auditorium Prokofiev works

what happened to SO's almost that so much

.5 that was with the kind of singing on

in the players that he cueing mainly took the form of

... The guest conductor also maintained a supportive soundscape for the evening's terrific soloist, violinist Vadim Gluzman, in Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1 in D. This was an even more electric account than the one Gluzman and Jarvi recorded last year in Estonia for their new all-Prokofiev CD on the BIS label, thanks to superior orchestral playing.

From the sensitively contoured lyrical flow of the opening pages, through the skittish diablerie of the central scherzo, to the seamless outpouring of singing tone at the end, Gluzman proved himself a master of Prokofiev's musical domain. His powerful bow arm pulled a tone now silken, now guttural, from the Stradivarius once owned by a virtuoso of an earlier era, Leopold Auer. Above all, his swashbuckling manner was alive to the fantastical elements that make this concerto one of the jewels in Prokofiev's crown. Altogether a winning entry in the season's CSO Prokofiev survey honoring the composer's 125th birthday.

The audience broke into enthusiastic applause and, with Jarvi's encouragement, called Gluzman back to the stage for an encore — the "Les Furies" movement from Eugene Ysaie's Solo Sonata No. 2, a wild bravura fantasy on the old Latin chant "Dies irae." ...

a sidelong glance, nothing more. Quieter passages had the right withdrawn quality, while the final pages — soaring strings over majestic trumpets and trombones, the famous final chords surrounded by open air — brought the performance to a thrilling close, without trying to thrill.

Sibelius' three-movement concert suite is all we ever hear of the landscape evocations known as "Karelia." Jarvi found the right sound and stride for this familiar music, eliciting atmospheric playing from the woodwinds in general, Scott Hostetler's English horn in particular.

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A relaxed and lilting account of Alexander Glazunov's Concert Waltz No. 1 at the start of the program made it a kind of holiday sweetmeat to go with the Christmas bunting and wreaths that adorn the Armour Stage.