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Apr 22 2014

Fuse Concert Review: Violinist Xiang Yu — A Stupendous Technique and a Musical Voice All His Own

Classical Music, Featured, Music

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At this point, violinist Xiang Yu sounds like a mature artist ready to commence a major career.



Xiang Yu — Opportunities to hear him perform include tonight at Symphony Hall with the NEC Philharmonia or at Jordan Hall (free!) on April 30 at 8 p.m.

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Fuse News: Boston's Caribbean Carnival — A Must-See Celebration

Boston Caribbean Carnival, an explosion of color and sound, shouldn't be missed.

Arts Fuse Remembrance: David Aronson, Boston Expressionist

By Susan Miron

Xiang Yu is no stranger to rave reviews and competition medals, most famously a First Prize in the 2010 Yehudi Menuhin International Competition for Young Violinists in Oslo. Last week he was featured on *On Point* with Tom Ashbrook on WBUR, and this week he debuted at the Gardner Museum Sunday Series. He will be appearing as a soloist with the **NEC Philharmonia** at Symphony Hall tonight in Sergei Prokofieff's Concerto #1.

Yu's **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum concert** on Sunday was a considerable success. While Yu is completing work on his Artist Diploma at NEC (one of two students currently in that prestigious program), he is already a polished artist, with both a stupendous technique and a musical voice all his own. Born 24 years ago in Inner Mongolia to Chinese parents, he moved to Shanghai for 10 years of study. He then came halfway across the world to study with Donald Weilerstein at NEC and, clearly, this was a wise decision. At this point he sounds like a mature artist ready to commence a major career.

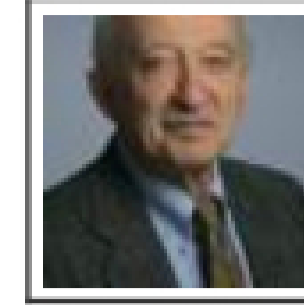
Sunday's concert featured four virtuoso pieces for violin and piano, two of which, the Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major (1886) by César Franck (1822-1890) and Debussy's Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor (1916-17), are found often, perhaps too often in the case of the Franck composition, on recitals.

The program opened with the "Chaconne in G Minor for Violin and Piano," which was putatively composed in 1705 by Tommaso Antoni Vitali. It is much more likely that the work was patched together from unknown sources by violinist and composer Ferdinand David. In the early years of the twentieth century the work was revised by Léopold Charlier, who eliminated many of the less interesting variations and added a number of passages of heightened virtuosity. Yu was fully equal to the technical challenges of the Charlier version. It was a dazzling opening.

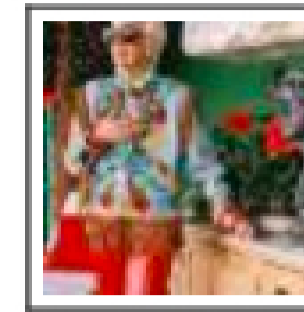
The Franck Violin Sonata has been played by at least a half dozen string and wind instruments, and many of us who attend concerts regularly are sick to death of it. So it was almost a shock to find myself really enjoying this performance, Yu's virtuosic playing making the piece (with its gorgeous third movement) almost fly by. The violin and Dina Vainshtein's piano were extremely well balanced, the latter never overwhelming the former.

Shortly before his death from cancer of the colon in 1918, Debussy intended to complete six chamber sonatas. Besides the Cello Sonata, and the Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp, there is the Violin Sonata, the last work he finished. Yu and Vainstein played it with more imagination and rhythmic freedom than one usually hears. As in the case of the Franck, the performance cleared away decades of clichés and made the piece sound spontaneous, even fresh.

The last piece on the program was written, like most of the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski's violin music (two concerti and smaller works for violin and piano), for his close friend Pawel Kochanski. "Nocturne and Tarantella" is a dream piece for a super-virtuoso dream piece. The audience was wowed. (So was I.) Opportunities to hear Yu include tonight at Symphony Hall with the NEC Philharmonia and at Jordan Hall (free!) on **April 30 at 8 p.m.**



While American art grew bolder, larger, louder, and more ironic, David Aronson was mystical, introspective, and poetic.



Fuse News: "Iris" — The Indelible Style of Iris Apfel

Iris Apfel a witty New York fashion icon, now in her nineties, is living her career to the fullest.



Fuse Remembrance: Anne Meara, A Different Kind of Appreciation for a Different Kind of Star

Anne Meara left a deep impression on all she came into contact with.



Fuse News: 2015 Elliot Norton Awards Announced

Congratulations to the nominees and the awardees.

J.R. Carroll

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Susan Miron, a harpist, has been a book reviewer for over 20 years for a large variety of literary publications and newspapers. Her fields of expertise were East and Central European, Irish, and Israeli literature. Susan covers classical music for *The Arts Fuse* and *The Boston Musical Intelligencer*. She is part of the Celtic harp and storytelling duo A Bard’s Feast with renowned storyteller Norah Dooley and plays the Celtic harp at the Cancer Center at Newton Wellesley Hospital.

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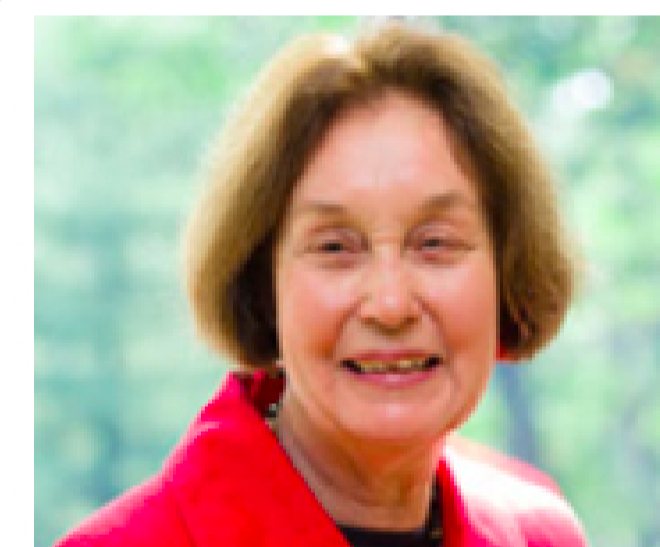
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On theater and dance for The Arts Fuse

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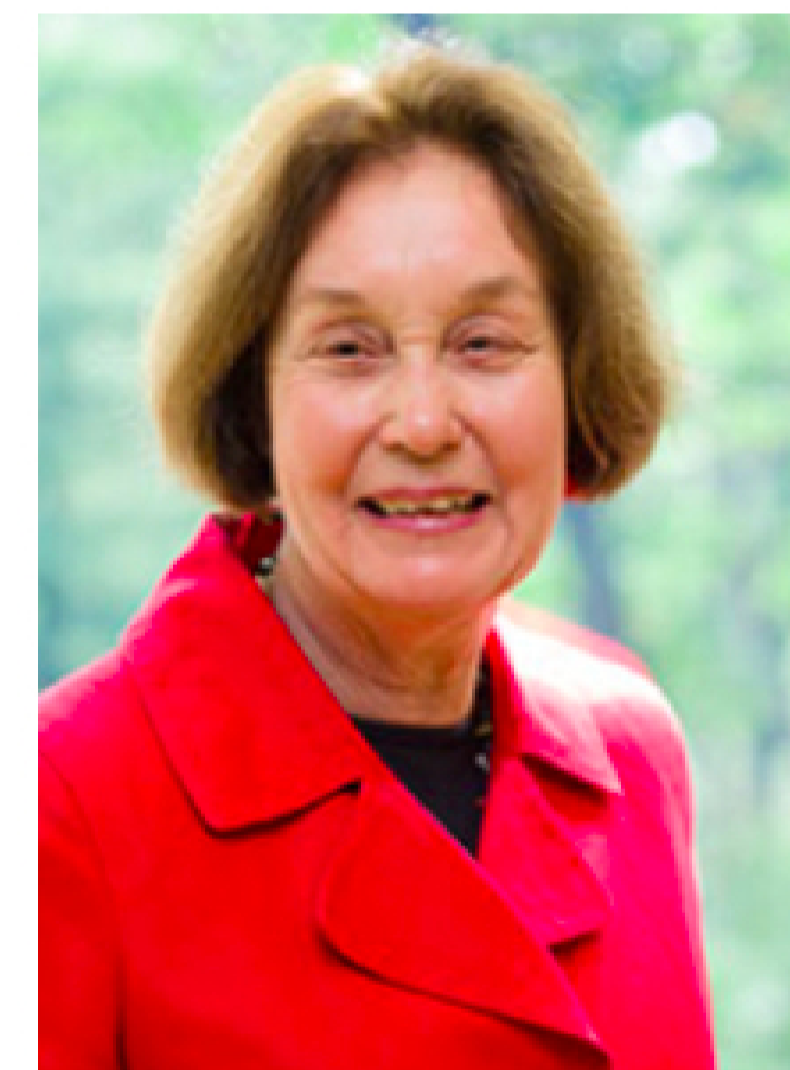
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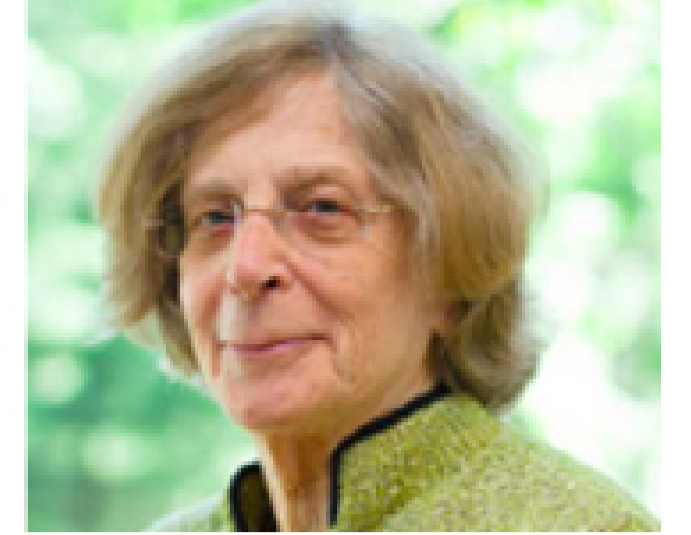
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