

# Southern arizona symphony orchestra performance appraisal case study

[Environment](#), [Water](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

I attended two concerts at the Southern University Symphony Orchestra Hall and the Tulsa Performing Arts Centre in Oklahoma. This is what I observed.

The concert which was performed by the Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra was certainly a revelation in many respects. It included two Chinese works which have gained considerable fame all over the world and which were quite ideally interpreted by the orchestra. There was also the Brahms Second Symphony for good measure which is one of the most popular romantic works in the repertoire and which is very much a staple part of the orchestra's routine.

The Yao Dance Overture is indeed a beautiful piece and under Tao Fan one could sense that the orchestra was truly at one with proceedings. The shimmering sounds of the opening demonstrate the vast beauty of Chinese rhythmic dances which move along quite merrily and with a lot of swagger. Although there were some points where the orchestra could perhaps have played better, on the whole I was very much enthused by everything in question. The middle part of the work was also given considerable weight with the temp slowing down to show that dance is not only a series of swift rhythms but is also about achieving balance between quietness and shades. Tao Fan was certainly under the skin of the piece and his conducting definitely showed the way forward on how the piece should be played. The acoustic was slightly dry but otherwise the music came across as very clear and beautiful.

We then moved on to the Yellow River Concerto which is another important work in the Chinese canon. It is a piano concerto of sorts and has been made famous by several exponents and great pianists who have taken it upon

themselves to spread its message accordingly. Here we had a very fine Chinese pianist in the form of Cong Fan with the Yin Chenzong version being used and who brought an intrinsic beauty to all proceedings demonstrating a certain intimacy and bond between themselves and the members of the orchestra.

The opening movement was very beautifully played with the conductor keeping what may be termed as a steady temp throughout and demonstrating a good command of proceedings. Chenzong was perhaps the more involved pianist of the two and his playing was truly out of this world especially in the parts where the music takes on a certain turn which is overtly dramatic. The sound of the orchestra was also extremely well managed and everything came across as quite radical especially in the concluding parts of the movement which demonstrated a certain alacrity and directness in proceedings.

The second movement was also very well played and here the pensive aspect of the work came to the fore in more ways than one. Yet again one could observe the wonderful interplay between wind instruments and soloists which is important for the success of the work and I would dare say that everything came across as very satisfactory indeed. I also enjoyed the third movement which was very pensive and beautiful.

The final movement was also very well played with emphasis on the rhythmic structure of the piece as well as the sense of expansive beauty which characterises the Yellow River in all its glory. I felt very enthusiastic after the work concluded and would definitely recommend the performance wholeheartedly and without reservation. The Arizona orchestra definitely

attempted to delve into the innermost recesses of the work and this lent good projection to everything.

The final work on the programme was the evergreen Symphony Nr 2 by Johannes Brahms, probably one of the most famous symphonic works in the repertoire. Tao Fan chose a swift tempo to start off the first movement very much reminiscent of the great Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet whose recorded cycle on Decca Eloquence deserves pride of place. Fan went through the motions of the first movement with some alacrity and intensity focusing again on the importance of the woodwinds as the main point of thrust.

The slow second movement was also imbued with pensive pathos and great sensitivity throughout and once again I was very much enthused by the wind playing which was top notch. Comparisons may be odious perhaps but on the whole, I felt that Fan contributed an excellent reading of this movement which conjured up memories of great conductors such as Otto Klemperer, Herbert von Karajan and Sir Thomas Beecham.

The Scherzo was also very well played indeed with the sprightly moments coming out very beautifully indeed. Moving on to the Finale, one perhaps hoped for some more drive and momentum accordingly but on the whole the work was concluded very successfully and without much problems with the orchestra accrediting itself quite excellently throughout.

I can say that I left the concert hall extremely exhilarated by the whole concert which was truly an eye opener to me in several respects. Principally it exposed two important works from my homeland which were given rather splendid interpretations and secondly there was the excellent performance

of the Brahms symphony to round off the evening. This concert truly shows that art has no boundaries.

The Tulsa Performing Arts Center was quite larger from what I had expected it to be, there were about 70 people for the dimension of the chamber. I was seated on the last row halfway back in the hall. I arrived fifteen minutes before time and I was able to read the program and follow the techniques of the concert without much trouble.

Yes I was ready to witness the first piano concert ever of my life. I wasn't aware of what to expect, my emotions were high, as the moderator approached the auditorium to help us understand about the program, after that he introduced Barron Ryan, telling the audience a little about his work and provenance.

Next, Barron entered the chamber quickly want to play his first work Concert Etudes Op. 40 No. 1`Prelude` by Nikolai Kapustin The notes on my program explained that this was a programmatic work based on the Shakespeare play which I had read later after the concert. It was easy to follow the melodies for the different characters. The first theme was played by the strings in a high range, very lightly. What I liked about this theme is that you can hear both the right and left hand in perfect harmony.

Henry Mancini's work is slightly more effusive and Barron played the opening chords quite brilliantly in this respect. I almost felt the music pervading through me, especially in the closing part of the work which was very beautiful and very direct.

I have to confess that I was totally unaware of Antonio Carlos Jobim and his work Triste. However I was indeed pleasantly surprised by the proceedings of

the work which is in triple time and which demonstrates that everything moves ahead irrespective of obstacles. The mournful and rather melancholy nature of the work was quite well captured by Bonell.

Erroll Garner's 'Misty' was also quite well played and the chords fairly leapt out of the pages with Bonnell providing very effective mannerisms and fine character to this perhaps over exposed work.

Scott Joplin's Mexican serenade also came across as quite ravishing and intrinsically beautiful although Bonnell did appear to be rather hasty in parts. I enjoyed Joplin's music as he brings the harsh sentimentality of rock and mixes it with the virility of the classical genre quite well.

The Etudes by Chopin could be said to have been the highlight of the concert with their high points and intense virtuosity. One could almost compare the pianist with the composer in some stages especially in the 4th Etude with its defiant chords and the harmoniously concordant arpeggios which are truly a joy to listen to. The whole sense of élan for the occasion was rather palpable and one has to say that everything came together with intense brilliance.

Barron Ryan is a pianist who has huge promise and will definitely make the grade and this concert in Tulsa is surely a testament to his rude strength and character as a concert pianist.

## **Works Cited:**

Avison, Charles (1752). Essay on Musical Expression.

London. Downloadable from IMSLP.

Bujic, Bojan (n. d.) " Criticism of Music" in The Oxford Companion to Music, Oxford Music Online, accessed 1 January 2013.

Charlton, David (2003). " Hoffmann as a Writer on Music", in Hoffmann (2003), 1-22.