

Hong Kong Cello Festival 2010 Review

The 2nd annual Hong Kong Cello Festival 2010 from June 5, 2010 to June 12, 2010 came to a close with much excitement and a deeper appreciation of the cello. Starting with two consecutive nights of Participant Concerts and ending with the Giovanni Sollima Concert and Masterclass, one is exposed to the whole range of possibilities for playing and enjoying this beautiful instrument. Most importantly, this festival brought cello enthusiasts of all ages together, sharing the joy of music and forming a comradeship based on a mutual love of the instrument. All participants were presented with a special edition Hong Kong Cello Festival 2010 Rosin, courtesy of Bogaro & Clemente and a Lanyard with Badge Holder, courtesy of Fusion Bags. The success of the Festival would not have been possible if not for the support of generous sponsors and the hard work and planning of all the Cello Factory staff and Hong Kong Cellist Society volunteers.

Participant's Concerts

For two nights, students gathered to showcase their efforts in learning the cello for the past year. There are beginner students, as young as four in their first year of learning, playing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star". At the same time, adult learners, ranging in age and profession, were brought together to perform in front of an audience. All performers with different playing levels were given a chance to play. In return, the audience was given a flavour of the process and hard work that was put into the learning and perfecting of an instrument.

We were fortunate enough to have a special guest, Wong Ka Lap, who performed a beautifully played piece by Frederic Chopin, Polonaise Brillante Op. 3, for both nights. This perfect ending to the Participant Concerts gave everyone a glimpse of the possibilities one can achieve given devotion and sufficient time. On the second night of the Participant Concerts, audience was given an additional treat to listen to two special guitar performances played by professional musicians, Paco Chau and Stephan Chau.

Both concerts were conducted in a lively and relaxed atmosphere. The MCs moved the program along and encouraged participation of both the audience and the performers. Many of the anxieties of the performers were alleviated thanks to the intimate and personable environment, especially for first timers and young children. Through this experience, hopefully both the audience as well as the performers gained more understanding and enthusiasm in the pursuit of cello playing. The Participant Concerts exemplified that music as a medium can bring people from all walks of life closer together.

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Upcoming Events

Cello Recital by Mischa Maisky

3 October 2010 (Sun) 8pm

Concert Hall, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

\$520, 400, 280, 160

www.urbtix.hk or 2111.5999

Pre-performance Talk: Mischa Maisky the Maestro
Speaker: Jimmy Shiu (Music Promoter)

(conducted in Cantonese)

3 October 2010 (Sun) 6:30pm

Foyer, 4/F, Auditoria Building,
Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Free admission on a first-come first-served basis.

Note from Founder

by Sarah Tsang

One day, music lit up my life. Even though the faint light emanating from a single match holds no brightness, I still believe that you, who resonate with the same passion, share this perfect moment with me. Before the magic of one match diminishes and it gets dark again, I hope that more matches can be lit to continue the light of music.

I am not talented nor do I dare call myself a musician. To me, music is a continual search, a part of living and is the essence of all things.

Let us make a departure via music. And hope that in the process, we can learn to self cultivate, learn to live, learn to share and learn to love.

Giovanni Sollima & CCOHK

The HK debut of Giovanni Sollima & City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong on June 11 2010 was a memorable night of great chamber music that brought us from the 18th century to the present. The program featured four Italian composers from early Classical up to Modern times. The transition of the different periods of music was seamlessly executed given that the pieces all embodied the Italian spirit, grace and charm.

The Cello Concerto No. 3 in G major composed by Luigi Boccherini was skillfully interpreted by Sollima. We can feel the joyful vitality of the concerto as Sollima's bow danced lightly and playfully in both the first and third movements. The flow of music from solo cello passages to trio passages with the first and second violin and finally with the entire orchestra, creates an ebb and flow that is natural and comforting. In the lyrical second movement, Sollima made the cello sing out with an expressive and colourful tone.

Then came the L.B. Files for Cello & Ensemble, composed by Sollima himself. This work consists of Spanish elements and is a tribute to Boccherini, who emigrated and lived in Spain. Sollima masterfully played this piece that encompasses a variety of contrasting styles, techniques and tone colour. From articulated gestures to lyrical expressions to delicate pizzicatos, this work is Sollima's vision of Boccherini as the "dancing cellist". This "dance" was not only expressed through the music but also in the literal sense



during the performance when he physically danced around the stage while playing the cello as if it was a violin. The cello and the bow were used in inventive and creative ways to produce a mixture of textures and sounds.

The concert concluded with three encore pieces due to the overwhelming positive response from the audience. Once again, Sollima did not fail to please the audience by starting with the skillfully played Paganini piece, leading on to a slightly rock and roll Jimi Hendrix and finishing with a traditional American jig on the piano adapted for cello. This was a truly entertaining performance and it demonstrated Sollima's mastery of the cello and all the different sounds that can be produced in new and ingenious ways.

My 2010 Concert Experience

by May Chau

//Dear Cello God, please have mercy on me..." I hastily sent a quick prayer upwards to the power-that-be, as we made our way centre stage. I sat down alongside my team-mates, Brian and Bubi... our three bows at the ready. I saw my mom sitting at the edge of her seat with anticipation, my dad was the picture of calmness... and there was JC with a big smile on his face – still amazingly supportive despite having heard this piece exactly 791 times before. I smiled back – my heart seemed to stop racing quite as fast, and I was ready. I took a deep breath and lifted my bow.

To be honest, that was the only breath I remember taking for the entire... what... a minute and a half? I remember lots of things, like my heart beating a syncopated beat in contrary to the piece we were playing... the heat of the spotlight bearing down on us, and the murmurs of the audience. I remember the faint unpleasantness of my nerves fraying at the edge of my being. Yet, all of that was swept away by the whimsy of the musical notes, the triumphant smiles on our faces when we hit that G# squarely on its head, and the satisfaction of a job well done by this team of trio. What remains with me even now... is simply...joy.

The next day, I returned to help out and to cheer my fellow classmates on. It also gave me a better understanding of the sheer madness of what organizing these concerts for us students was like. Sarah is a meticulous commander in chief. Nothing can possibly escape her (pretty) eagle eyes! Along with Tiffany, Jane, Daisy, and everyone on the Cello Factory Team, they gave us a wonderful gift not only by letting us perform... but to have fun above all and love what we can do and what we are inspired to do by other students and teachers alike. It was exhilarating to see how everyone worked hard and laughed just as hard, united by a common love.

I had a chance to get to know our Cello Factory family better. Yin channels the great Michael Jackson and moonwalks across the stage. He is also our resident candyman – which is lucky for Jane, since she is always hungry! Carol has an incredibly warm heart and will help out a fellow student in a wink. Ah... and William the delinquent... whose occasional absence from class doesn't seem to affect this aspiring cello virtuoso. Val and I both hail from the land of the maple leaf – and she is almost as crazy as I am, eh? And Wong Ka Lap – who scared the living daylights out of me during my first lesson with him – turns out to have a rather quiet, sharp sense of humour! From Jess' pretty smiles to Hiok's too cool style, the young enthusiasts to the undeniably brilliant talents – everyone was fuelled by the simple pleasure of music and camaraderie.

And now that the Participants' Concert has come to its end, I finally remember how to breathe again. I have faith that eventually "Showstopper" will stop haunting me in my dreams... (um... my apologies... maybe your nightmares too...) but I am looking forward to filling my head with other wonderful pieces. (Piazzolla's Libertango? Maybe even Morricone's Gabriel's Oboe? What? Did you say Building Technic with Beautiful Music instead?? Hmph...) See you all in August!



Cello Trivia

Q: Do you know of a quintet piece that includes two cello players?

A: The String Quintet in C major, D. 956, op. posth 163, written by Franz Schubert. It stands out for its somewhat unconventional instrumentation, employing two cellos instead of the customary two violas. Most other string quintets follow the example of Mozart and call for an ensemble consisting of the four standard instruments of the string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello), plus a second viola. The second cello creates a special dark sonority which is unique to this piece. Schubert wrote the quintet two months before his death and this is his final instrumental work (summer of 1828). Unfortunately, he did not live to hear this work performed. This Quintet was premiered in 1850 and published in 1853.

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If you would like to volunteer to the Hong Kong Cellist Society or contribute to the newsletter, feel free to contact us at lillian@hkcellistsociety.org.hk for ways you can help.



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