

Music Prodigies Steal the Show

By John Bentel

The Foreign Affairs Recreation Association and State of the Arts Cultural Series recently featured eclectic performances by talented piano prodigies and a concert violinist, and the music of Central Asia and Brazil.

Piano prodigies ranging in ages from 7 to 14 delighted a State Department audience in July. Alan Mao played a challenging selection, including *Waltz Scherzo no. 7* by Dmitri Shostakovich and *Little Monkey* by Chia Chen Chou. Lisa Li offered *Rondo on Argentine Folk Songs* by Alberto Ginastera and *Here Comes the Circus* by Li-Ly Chang, sponsor of the yearly International Young Artists' Piano Competition. Tina Jian, also a viola player, offered a sensitively rendered *Scherzo in B flat, op. 20* by Frederic Chopin. Ludwig van Beethoven's *Sonata in C Minor, op. 13 (1st)* was delightfully rendered by Ruobing Zhang, and Juncheng Sun played Sergei Prokofiev's challenging *Sonata in B flat, no. 8, op. 83 (3rd)*.

Concert violinist Rafael Javadov performed a rousing concert of contemporary musical selections in August. He received his bachelor's degree in Ukraine and his master's in Russia, and has performed numerous recitals as a soloist and with various chamber ensembles. The audience showered Javadov with resounding applause.

Also in August, ethnomusicologist and historian Adam Grode presented a program entitled "A Musical Journey in Central Asia," a concert-lecture that featured *Kashgar Rawap* and *Kazakh Dombra*, songs offered to promote understanding of the region's rich culture and musical heritage. The audience had an opportunity to try out some of the musical instruments.

In September, the jazz duo of guitarist Roberto Tyson and flautist Arch Thompson played music from Brazil. Tyson, an accomplished guitarist, composer/arranger

and performer, says he enjoys playing in a duo or as a soloist. Through the influence of his father, he said he came to infuse the traditional sounds and cadence of the Caribbean into his interpretation and arrangement of classical standards, producing his own unique jazz. Thompson's eclectic style fuses elements from classical music with R&B, Latin music and traditional jazz. His scat-singing, improvisational skills and fondness for composition helped him create an original jazzy style. The audience thoroughly enjoyed this dynamic duo.

The State of the Arts held its 6th Annual Talent Show Sept. 28. Barbara Pollard led off with a rousing gospel selection, and returning artist Cynthia Andrews provided a satisfying vocal selection. Gail Duncan

delighted the audience with an Irish reading, vocalist Ben Perry sang and poet Paul Hopper had the audience laughing with his short, humorous poems. Guitarist Charles Rowe and his "Fruitcakes" kept the laughs going with a light-hearted original song that continued the laughs, and Wanda Johnson played the piano and delighted the audience with a song. Chinni Dragon offered a colorful Bollywood dance, and the Recovering Angels' gospel selection captured the audience's heart. The show also featured the INR Ensemble playing wind instruments and Steve Black and Jackie Newton providing interpretations of modern-day performers. ■

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