



The Musical Gourmet

Prometheus - unchained

By Joseph Gold

Ian Cheung is a quiet young man, quiet and unassuming. And profound. He was the violin soloist last weekend for the Prometheus Symphony concert.

Let's set the scene as if it were a baseball game. Ian is dressed in a jacket and a tie as he approaches home plate. He doesn't take any practice swings. The pitcher winds up and Ian hits a long one to the deepest reaches of center-field. The announcer screams: "home run!" Ian rounds the bases and takes a bow when he reaches home plate. The announcer says, "We've never seen such calmness in any player."

That was the scene last weekend. Ian Cheung's vehicle was the First Violin Concerto by Prokofiev. I have never seen a soloist so calmly composed. He walked to his position in the midst of the Orchestra, and then, without any warm-up, proceeded with an interpretation of this unique violin concerto that was masterful.

Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto breaks all the rules. It begins and ends quietly and magically. Only in the second movement is there a display of virtuosity. That Ian Cheung was up to every challenge is putting it mildly. The audience responded enthusiastically. Oh, how I wish he had given us a solo encore.

I spoke with Cheung during the intermission. It was almost as if he had done nothing, but his virtuosity remained in my memory. He made it look so easy.

After intermission, the conductor Eric Hansen, was his usual engaging self. Not only is he an outstanding conductor, he is an inspiration to all of his musicians. They responded with a subtle interpretation of Debussy's "la plus que lente" and then finished the concert with a virtuoso rendition of Kodaly's suite from Hary Janos.

Once again I wish there had been an encore. Perhaps Ian Cheung will bring some of his colleagues from the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra and play for us in the Piedmont Center for the Arts. He is an experienced concertmaster of orchestras and is co-concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra. Anytime I see Eric Hansen in action is an inspiration and pleasure.

Prometheus had the fire from the gods in his hands and delivered "big time".