

ZUILL BAILEY

CELLO

SAN LUIS OBISPO TRIBUNE

Symphony Review: Concerts brighten SLO winter

James Cushing - Special to the Tribune
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During the last four weeks, an extraordinary cluster of concerts has gladdened the hearts of San Luis Obispo music lovers.

Two sterling piano recitals, some startling chamber music and a fiery orchestral evening with cello star Zuill Bailey have strengthened our sense that we live in a good place for the human spirit.

The San Luis Obispo Symphony concert on Saturday seemed to be looking forward to spring as well, with a sunny performance of Schumann's arch-romantic Rhenish Symphony and virtuoso showpieces by Saint-Saens and Tchaikovsky.

Michael Nowak's interpretation of the Schumann emphasized flexible tempo, a cinematic sweep and a smooth riparian flow — it's supposed to evoke the Rhine river, after all.

The dance motif in the third movement was especially vigorous.

Nothing prepared us for the charisma of cellist Zuill Bailey, a technical wizard with movie star looks (some ladies said Antonio Banderas, some said Joaquin Phoenix).

He jumped right into the Saint-Saens A-minor Cello Concerto and drew a singing tone from his instrument that paralleled the passion in his face. Incredibly fast, knotty passages came out as naturally as sobs. The standing ovation was immediate.

The symphony concert was sponsored by Aaron and Lyn Baker and by Sheila Tiber.

Next month, Mahler!

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