

ZUILL BAILEY

CELLO

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Concert review: Hudson Valley Philharmonic, 'Essential Elgar,' in Poughkeepsie

Finnish, Russian works also are performed

By **JAMES F. COTTER**

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POUGHKEEPSIE — "Essential Elgar" headlined the second concert of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic Saturday evening at the Bardavon. Guest conductor Elizabeth Schulze led the players in an inspiring and exciting program of national music from Russia, England and Finland. **Cellist Zuill Bailey was the featured soloist for the Elgar selection, and his playing was charismatic.**

The concert opened with a favorite curtain-raiser, the Overture to "Ruslan and Ludmilla" by Mikhail Glinka, the father of Russian music. Full speed ahead, the first chords charge through the scales in a headlong statement of the first theme of the sonata. Drum rolls and pizzicati strings accelerate the tempo to pause for a brief interlude with a soft-pedaled second theme. Everything is repeated, with Schulze urging the instruments on for an exuberant coda.

Edward Elgar's Concerto for Violoncello in E minor is a study in contrast, rhapsodic and introspective, which cellist Bailey interpreted with a personal passion and technical virtuosity. His fingering, bowing, strumming and plucking drew and held attention through all four movements with perfectly timed accompaniment from the orchestra. From the first four measures, he developed the recitative of the opening adagio with lilting semiquavers to the following allegro and a further adagio. The final allegro in the form of a melodic rondo completes this romantically moving concerto from Elgar's last years.

After intermission, Jean Sibelius' Symphony No. 2 in D major displayed both Schulze's leadership and the talented sections of the orchestra: the brass chorus, timpani, woodwinds and strings. The buoyant sonority of the allegretto dances and throbs from swelling crosscurrents of melodic phrases, shifting in the andante to a prolonged pizzicato in the low strings with rising bassoons sounding the resonant motif echoed by oboe and clarinet. The oboe solos again in the third movement with trombones joining the trio in a flowing scherzo that moves without pause into the allegro finale, a marvelous hymn that builds wave on wave to the soaring close. The musical momentum brought the audience to a standing ovation that was certainly well deserved.

Colbert Artists Management

111 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019
www.colbertartists.com ~ 212-757-0782