

# THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

## Grand Rapids Symphony shows itself as city's prize with Rising Stars concert

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By John Phipps

On the same evening ArtPrize finalists were announced, the Grand Rapids Symphony showed what a prize the city already has in its orchestra.

In the opening Rising Stars concert of its 80th season Thursday in St. Cecilia Music Center's Royce Auditorium, the orchestra shone like a lustrous gem, smoothed by years of polishing into a fine piece of mature beauty.

The orchestra brought its A-game to the concert, sculpting dynamic aural visions, weaving rich textures and painting with bold strokes here, subtle pointillism there as it ranged with apparent ease across the world premiere of Lockington's celebratory "Ceremonial Fantasy Fanfare" in honor of ArtPrize, the playful Mozart Violin Concerto No. 5, Andrew Norman's recent meditative "Light from Light" and Beethoven's variegated Symphony No. 8.

Guest soloist Michi Wiancko, one of two rising stars of the evening (the other being Norman, who introduced his 10-minute work) brought the violin concerto to life with pure tones, agile runs and spirited bowing. Her work on the upper strings was at once sweet and secure, appealing yet carrying well over the orchestra. Lower registers sometimes were less powerful against the ensemble but didn't suffer long.



Adam Bird | The Grand Rapids Press

Guest violinist Michi Wiancko performs with the Grand Rapids Symphony on Thursday evening at St. Cecilia Music Center

With a pleasant and assured stage presence, the artist seemed to enjoy a comfortable relationship with the orchestra that brought out the best in each. Moments were frequent when it all flowed together as beautifully as if they had performed with each other for a long time. And Wiancko's cadenzas were well-conceived and done with virtuosity across the range of skills, from runs to double-stop harmonies and contrapuntal flourishes.

The grateful audience gave her a growing standing ovation through three bows.

### REVIEW

**Grand Rapids Symphony, Rising Stars Series**

**concert:** 4 out 4 stars

**Conductor:** David Lockington

**Guest artist:** Violinist Michi Wiancko

**Highlights:** World premiere of Lockington's "Ceremonial Fantasy Fanfare" in honor of ArtPrize; Wiancko's performance of Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5