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## Who Says Morihiko Can't Dance?

By David Lowry

Morihiko Nakahara is well known for saying that he can't dance. Though he might have heard that from dancing partners, he's no greenhorn at conducting spirited dance-related music.

The focus of the Philharmonic's March 27 performance at the Koger Center wasn't specifically dance, but there were plenty of spirited sounds and speeds, not the least of which was the orchestra's expert performance of Prokofiev's Symphony No. 1, subtitled "Classical." Aside from a few tuning problems on E-strings in the violins, the performance was nearly impeccable.

The "classical" aspect of Prokofiev's First Symphony refers more to its architecture than to its harmony, which incorporates what some like to call the composer's "wrong note technique." Well, bring those "wrong" notes on — it's wonderful music.

The Prokofiev was a great prelude to the appearance of Michi Wiancko, a violinist of renowned stature playing Violin Concerto (2007) by Margaret Brouwer. Wiancko is one of those remarkable performers who's "got it" with virtuosity, wonderful sound and superb musicality. Brouwer wrote the concerto specifically for Wiancko, in fact.

The structure of Brouwer's concerto is just as "classical" as Prokofiev, with three movements (Narrative, Ballad and Gypsy) and rewarding phrases that made musical sense.

The harmonic aspects were mixes of what we are starting to learn as 21st-century concepts — incorporating many aspects of 20th-century styles. In the midst of some starkly atonal sounds, we hear a quote of Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind." And in the slow movement cadenza we get, quietly emerging, a drum set. It's remarkably fine compositional work, and it was played with remarkable passion. The audience loved it, insisting on several curtain calls.

Le Tombeau de Couperin by Maurice Ravel was played as charmingly and expertly as the Prokofiev symphony. The concert ended with three dance episodes from On the Town by Leonard Bernstein, bringing some overt fruition to the dance theme.

Once again, this civic orchestra showed that it is rising to an expertise few thought possible.

