

SCOTT YOO | conductor
'reviews'

Take a stirring and harmony-rich piece of music, an inspired, high-energy conductor and an orchestra of fully committed, well-rehearsed musicians and what do you get? The answer: A thrilling performance that stimulates and arouses the audience, producing wild applause and hoots of appreciation.

– **Winnipeg Free Press, 2/26/09**

Conducting without a score, Yoo made a commanding presence in a compelling reading of Schumann's Symphony No. 2 in C Major. Forward momentum was a hallmark, as was an admirable transparency and balance in the orchestra's playing that allowed the inner voices and repeated motives to emerge meaningfully.

– **Columbus Dispatch, 2/2/08**

Friday night's concert by the Louisville Orchestra was a prime example of the full-out, full-body school of music making. Guest conductor Scott Yoo led works by Saint-Saëns, Beethoven and the contemporary American composer Jeffrey Cotton -- in a way that the podium was a springboard for physical involvement. And with pianist Pascal Rogé, who was soloist in Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 5, Yoo had an ally just as determined to expend every last calorie on the score at hand. The results were tremendously engaging, even when the music wasn't fully equal to the performers' zeal. You want bold? Well, bold was what you got. Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 found Yoo and his colleagues in splendid form -- insightful, incisive, willing to push tempos to emphasize momentum without going to anti-idiomatic extremes. Crouching, stretching, thrusting his arms forward, sometimes simply standing still and allowing the musicians to play -Yoo was an exemplar of total commitment. Trained as a violinist, his affection for string choirs was evident. He did not, however, neglect the other sections of the orchestra, balancing his forces so Beethoven's transparency of texture remained in the foreground.

– **Louisville Courier-Journal, 1/13/08**

The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Maestro Scott Yoo began this season's Mandel Hall residency Sunday at the University of Chicago with a polished, bracing presentation of three contrary works. Richard Strauss' "Metamorphosen for 23 Solo Strings" is a tough nut to crack. Composed in 1946 at age 82 as a response to the firebombing of his beloved Dresden, the somber tone poem slowly moves in a post-Romantic vocabulary long since abandoned by his immediate predecessors. It brims with deeply felt pathos, but coaxing a structurally coherent reading of this 25-minute movement is one of the conducting profession's great challenges. Yoo found the arc, and balances were deftly measured. The final measures of Strauss' work quote the funeral march from Beethoven's Third Symphony, a nice segue for the orchestra's sharp-edged, percussive reading of the Fourth Symphony. Beethoven's brisk tempos weren't exaggerated, but neither did Yoo and company skimp on verve, tempered though it was with stylish and shapely wind solos.

– **Chicago Tribune, 10/17/07**

And then there's conductor Scott Yoo-- the larger orchestral world has to be nuts not to have gobbled him up in a major way! This is only the second album I've heard with him, and on both he's got it all: inflections galore, subtlety, exquisite balances, the ability to get a chamber orchestra (where there's no place to hide)-- especially the strings-- to sound like the best in the world, and above all, the gift of injecting an extra edge into the pace that makes a performance thrilling. His grip on pacing, dynamism, phrasing, and the ability to hold back and suspend extended passages are some of the elements that give each movement an overarching tension and cohesion.

– American Record Guide, Sept/Oct 2007

The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra was forced to go to its bullpen this week. When artistic partner Nicholas McGegan was marooned in Scotland and unable to catch a flight to the Twin Cities, the orchestra turned to Scott Yoo, a New York-based conductor with whom it's successfully collaborated in the past. On Friday morning at St. Paul's Ordway Center, Yoo filled McGegan's ample footwear exceptionally well on Mendelssohn's "Reformation" Symphony and a splendid interpretation of Mozart's 21st Piano Concerto. On the latter, Yoo admirably filled the role of liaison between the orchestra and soloist Jonathan Biss, an especially tricky task when one has just been handed the score days ago. But Yoo and the orchestra proved ideal accompanists for Biss, who delivered one of the gentlest versions of the Mozart 21st one could imagine.

– St. Paul Pioneer Press, 10/7/06

Conductor Scott Yoo turned that magical conclusion of Igor Stravinsky's Apollon Musagete to incandescence on Saturday at the Lincoln Theater. While Stravinsky's 1927 ballet Apollo has long been part of Miami City Ballet's repertoire, Yoo unveiled new sonic overtones and inner voicings in his subtly calibrated performance with the strings of the New World Symphony. Yoo brought X-ray clarity to the strands of Stravinsky's astringent instrumental fabric. With 20 new players (including three recent Tanglewood Music Center fellows), the ace New World strings have rarely sounded so lithe, precise and transparent.

– Miami Herald, 9/22/06

The festival's linchpin is its electric conductor, Scott Yoo, co-founder and music director of the much-acclaimed Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra. He brought thrilling immediacy and verve to all three of Friday's selections. Yoo's skills were especially evident during a fresh, dynamic performance of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's well-known Symphony No. 31 in D major, K. 297, "Paris," when it was just he and the orchestra. He has clearly gained the respect and trust of these young musicians, who responded to his every gesture, every facial expression, as he highlighted the work's ever-changing inner dialogues and struck a handsome balance between its rhythmic vigor and warm brio.

– Denver Post, 6/26/06

How does the Virginia Symphony stack up to other orchestras? Late last month, I got a chance to find out when the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hampton Roads' resident orchestra played the Ferguson Center for the Arts on different occasions. The Royal Philharmonic was led by famed conductor Charles Dutoit and featured soloist Joan Kwon in Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto, plus the "Karelia" Suite by Sibelius and Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. In the other corner, Scott Yoo, a 34-year-old, up-and-coming conductor, presented the Virginia Symphony in an all-Mozart program made up of Symphonies 17 and 40 and the Piano Concerto No. 21 performed by Stewart Goodyear. The two concerts proved to be a wonderful lesson in conducting styles and the different factors that go into assessing a performance. And though the Royal Phil gave a polished, elegant reading of Mozart's music, my vote goes to the Virginia Symphony for giving a more energetic, thrilling ride. At times, I felt I was hurtling along a cobblestone street in one of those 18th-century carriages Mozart used to ride in. Swiss-born Dutoit is a very reserved conductor who uses minimal gestures to guide his players. He barely acknowledged the audience, and he came off as detached, almost haughty. The Mozart performance sounded lackluster, almost too refined - all the notes were in the right places but the work didn't sing. Yoo and the Virginia Symphony players, on the other hand, took a completely different tack. Yoo was totally connected to every aspect of the music: cueing every player for his or her entrance, swooping or stretching his arms to regulate tempos, and crouching down or leaping up to emphasize the dynamics in the piece. He took time to speak to the audience about the music, which made me listen more intently. Yoo also wasn't afraid to put some muscle in his Mozart. Instead of holding back and delivering a silk-stockings rendition, he had the players put more power into their playing of the work.

– Norfolk Daily News, 2/16/06

Much of the credit must go to the concert's ebullient conductor/soloist/cheerleader, Scott Yoo. Heard (and enjoyed) earlier this season in a high-energy Bach program with the Colorado Symphony, Yoo was a man in constant motion throughout. In the concluding violin-viola Sinfonia Concertante, he shared the solo duties with violist Phillip Ying of the renowned Ying Quartet. It was a sight, and sound, to behold. Talk about musical multitasking. Yoo drove his players through the music's many twists and turns, providing concise cueing (along with smiles of encouragement). Not that he ignored his colleague out front - the two soloists soared and swooped like a couple of old buddies, interacting with ease. All the while, of course, Yoo dove into his solo part with the same unbridled enthusiasm that he displayed in that Bach program with the CSO. The guy simply oozes music. And to think he earned a degree in physics at Harvard. Earlier, Yoo was content to merely conduct, as Jon Manasse brought freshness and vitality to Mozart's Clarinet Concerto.

– Rocky Mountain News, 6/20/05