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# San Bernardino builds show out of Schumann's constructions

  
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The San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra scratched the classical music itch big time with not one, not two, but three orchestral works by Robert Schumann, and the intensely cerebral exercise of listening to three Schumann pieces left me aching for something raucous, something playful.

Schumann's music has all the orderly construction, with all the requisite repeats, of music of the Classical period, while being representative of the Romantic period with lovely, lyrical melodies. One work of this "bridge" music would have satisfied the itch.

Still, the orchestra and conductor Carlo Ponti Jr. thrived on the music, performing with great sensitivity to the intricate if dense orchestrations, beginning with "Overture, Scherzo and Finale," too big to be background music and too small to impress. Horns and brass played with appropriate lightness while strings played with grace and energy. Getting the horns-to-strings call-and-response section correct on the repeat, they brought the Scherzo to a delightful airy and breezy ending.

### Rich horns, strings

The orchestra neatly handled the mood shifts in the first movement of Symphony No. 4, expressing considerable joy and keeping great clarity of lines. Concertmaster Todor Pelev's elegant solos in the second movement warmed the stately tempo, and the repetitive third movement grandly opened up into a huge expansiveness that I craved to be huger.

Four rich horns drove their lines through the orchestra to power the fourth movement, with the strings providing classy shaping of the line. Throughout, Ponti provided clean direction.

Pianist Kyle Shafiee's debut with a professional orchestra elevated the event beyond just another concert as he performed Piano Concerto in A minor, having reached an amazing performance level in just nine short years of studying piano. With seemingly unabashed confidence, he delivered technical skill and sensitive artistry, while working synergistically with Ponti and the orchestra.

He stressed the first movement's lovely melodic lines with deep grace, shared a tender call-and-response with principal clarinet John Gates, and brilliantly contrasted powerful, dramatic octave work with glistening, shimmery legato and arpeggio sequences. He displayed classy, mature expressiveness, stating the second movement's quiet simple lines with immense dignity.

His unassuming, no-theatrics posture belied the tremendous technical challenges of the demanding work. Despite a slight lean toward sameness of expression toward the end, Shafiee delighted the audience with a masterful performance.