

THE NEW YORK TIMES MUSIC REVIEW

Texas Ensemble Plants Flag in New York



Erin Baiano for The New York Times

From left, Augustin Hadelich on violin, Alban Gerhardt on cello and Miguel Harth-Bedoya conducting at Carnegie Hall.

By [ANTHONY TOMMASINI](#)

Published: January 28, 2008

To judge by the accented conversation and hearty glad-handing among audience members, there were a lot of Texans in attendance on Saturday night for the [Carnegie Hall](#) debut of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. Still, that the hall was nearly full was a testimony to the growing reputation of this active regional orchestra, which maintains a year-round season, has built a \$27 million endowment and draws loyal audiences to Bass Hall in Fort Worth.

Critics and cultural leaders in the Dallas-Forth Worth area give one person most of the credit for the orchestra's growth: Miguel Harth-Bedoya, the dynamic young conductor who has been its music director since 2000. In this concert he and his players lived up to expectations, especially with their assured, rich-hued and impassioned account of [Tchaikovsky's](#) Fifth Symphony.

Though Mr. Harth-Bedoya was born in Peru and now lives in Fort Worth with his family, this concert felt like a homecoming. After graduating from Juilliard, he was the music director of the New York Youth Symphony for four years during the mid-1990s, leading impressive concerts with that admirable institution at Carnegie Hall. Since then he has

conducted major orchestras around the world, but he has put the Fort Worth Symphony first.

The Tchaikovsky was first rate. The string tone, if sometimes a little thick, was warm and resonant. Even during flourishes of brass and full-bodied harmonic passages in the winds, you could sense Mr. Harth-Bedoya cautioning the players not to overplay or force the sound but to keep things plush and sonorous.

There was plenty of excitement in the performance, especially during the fitful turns of the rueful first movement and the blazing finale. Over all, though, this interpretation was majestic rather than volatile. Sometimes the execution was shaky, but mostly, as the players strove for the desired color and expressive character of a passage, the notes fell right into place.

The Fort Worth players did not sound as confident in the opening work, Brahms's Concerto for Violin and Cello in A minor. It is an elusive score. During long passages the solo instruments have ruminative, intimate exchanges over a subtle orchestra backdrop, and it is difficult to maintain balances.

The young soloists, both notable emerging artists, played impressively: the brilliant violinist Augustin Hadelich, born and raised in Italy but German by heritage; and the Berlin-born cellist Alban Gerhardt, who combines lush sound with agile technique.

The program included the premiere of Osvaldo Golijov's new arrangement for cello and orchestra of his "Mariel," a 14-minute work from 1999, originally for cello and marimba. The piece is a mournful elegy for Mr. Golijov's friend Mariel Stubrin. An aching melody threads its way through shimmering, quietly sputtering orchestral harmonies. An undertow of throbbing bass keeps the music grounded even as the cello is seized with agitated outbursts. Mr. Harth-Bedoya showed an ear for the South American folkloric elements of the music, and Mr. Gerhardt played beautifully.

This concert was a milestone for the orchestra. Yet what Mr. Harth-Bedoya and his players are accomplishing at home matters a lot more.

The violinist Augustin Hadelich, a soloist in the Brahms concerto, will give a recital Monday night with the pianist Ian Parker at St. James's Church, 865 Madison Avenue, at 71st Street, (212) 288-4100.