



The three violinists selected for the Grand Final of the Singapore International Violin Competition were (from left) Dmytro Udovychenko from Ukraine, Angela Sin Ying Chan from Hong Kong and Anna Agafia Egholm from Denmark. PHOTOS: SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL VIOLIN COMPETITION

Violin competition unearths new talent

Musical treats galore at the third edition of the Singapore International Violin Competition

CONCERT

SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL VIOLIN
COMPETITION 2022: GRAND FINAL
Victoria Concert Hall
Last Wednesday, 7pm

Chang Tou Liang

The third edition of the Singapore International Violin Competition, originally slated for January 2021, had to be postponed twice because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Organised by the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory, the fortnight-long string extravaganza reached a climax during the past week with a Final and a Grand Final.

Earlier rounds featured performances of solo music, duos involving piano and a specially commissioned work, *Before Daybreak*, by young Singaporean composer Koh Cheng Jin.

Twenty-six of the world's finest young violinists were whittled down to six for the Final, which took a departure from Mozart violin concertos of past editions by having instead performances of Mozart's Piano Quartets.

For these more intimate works, each violinist – partnered by Albert Tiu (piano), Miguel da Silva (viola) and Wang Zhihao (cello) – was judged as independent but inter-dependent members of a chamber group.

Three violinists were then selected for the Grand Final by an international jury consisting of prominent violinists, pedagogues and a festival director. Supported by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) conducted by Joshua Tan, a marathon evening comprising three full-length violin concertos proved to be an embarrassment of riches.

Two artists elected to perform Beethoven's monumental Violin Concerto In D Major (Op. 61), which plays for some 45 to 50 minutes.

Angela Sin Ying Chan from Hong Kong opened with a sleek and well-judged account of the concerto, showcasing clean articulation and

intonation. While she could have stood out more in entries against seemingly overwhelming orchestral forces, her choice of playing Beethoven's own cadenza for the first movement was a bold and adventurous one.

Originally written for his piano version of the concerto, this extended cadenza incorporated a solo timpani part, capitalising on the recurrent motif of four percussion taps which opened the work.

Working in sync with SSO principal timpanist Christian Schioler, this provided a refreshing change to what is often heard in most concerts.

Denmark's Anna Agafia Egholm, playing the same concerto, displayed an aristocratic mien with an unflinching conviction that highlighted the music's greatness. She sounded commanding, with a muscularly incisive and more sharply contoured account as if carved out from granite. There was simply no fear of her being drowned out.

She performed the more regularly essayed Fritz Kreisler first movement cadenza, coming out none too shabbily. The slow movement's formal lines were realised

with stark beauty, later flowing seamlessly into the Rondo finale's joyous exultation.

That performance would have garnered top spot if not for Dmytro Udovychenko from Ukraine, whose version of Brahms' Violin Concerto In D Major (Op. 77) was a storm of passion from start to finish. His big-boned entry alone showed he was not taking any prisoners, and it was blood and guts from there onwards.

Also unafraid to display vulnerability, the slow movement which opened with guest oboist Simon Emes' wonderfully poignant solo was almost a confessional, one delivered with heartbreaking intensity.

These were without doubt the most moving moments of the evening. The jury concurred by awarding Udovychenko the first prize, with Egholm and Chan receiving second and third placings respectively.

The Singapore International Violin Competition continues to unearth world-class violin talent, and its fourth edition will be keenly awaited.

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