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## Music XML

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Posted on Tue, Oct. 18, 2005

### Pang poised beyond her years

By Georgia Rowe  
TIMES CORRESPONDENT

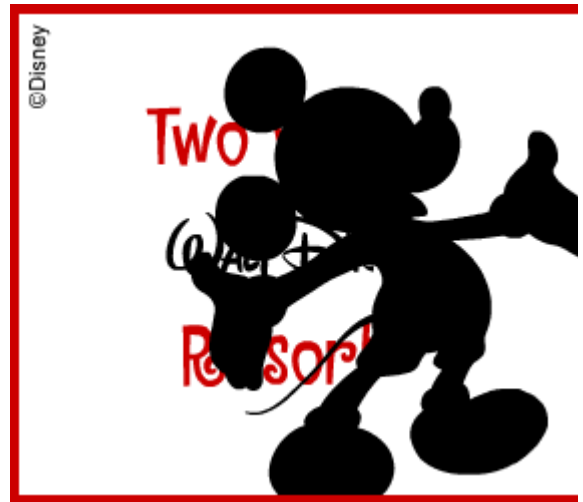
Prodigal talent has always been a cornerstone of the California Symphony's approach to programming, with rising stars such as Sarah Chang, Helen Huang and others making their debuts with the orchestra over the years.

Sunday afternoon at the Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts, pianist Chloe Pang became the latest in a long line of phenomenal young artists to start her professional concert career under the guidance of music director Barry Jekowsky and the orchestra.

Appearing as soloist in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466, Pang gave a performance that was the high-wattage centerpiece of a vibrant afternoon of music. The program, which launched the California Symphony's 19th season, also included Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 3 and the world premiere of a new symphony by the orchestra's composer in residence, Kevin Beavers.

The concert repeats tonight at 7:30.

At age 13, Pang has already established an impressive list of credits. The Orinda teen, who garnered national attention with an appearance on "Late Night With David Letterman," recently



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became the youngest pianist ever to record Bach's "Goldberg" Variations.

Sunday, she gave a performance of remarkable ease and precision. Looking fresh and lovely in a tangerine-colored strapless gown, the pianist radiated the kind of poise, confidence and musical assurance usually reserved for musicians many years her senior.

Mozart's Concerto No. 20 -- one of only two Mozart concertos in a minor key -- calls for a delicate blend of exuberance and Classical restraint, and Pang struck an admirable balance from the work's opening pages. She played through the first movement's turbulent passagework with grace, fluidity and plenty of sparkle. Under Jekowsky's direction, the orchestra responded with playing of splendid dynamism.

Taken at a fairly brisk pace, the slow movement sounded stylish and shapely, and the ebullient finale was a model of articulation. Pang's youthful performance gives the entire concerto a polished sheen; with Mozart's 250th anniversary season coming up, my guess is that she'll be playing it often.

The rest of the concert was just as rewarding. Beavers' new work, simply titled "Symphony," was of particular interest; the composer is the fifth participant in the orchestra's Young American Composer in Residence program, and this 20-minute work is the longest he has produced in that capacity. Cast in three movements -- a tranquil central section framed by two boisterous outer ones -- the orchestral writing is robust and energized; Beavers has clearly developed his voice and craft during his three-year stay with the orchestra. Sunday's performance, conducted by Jekowsky with considerable brio, that the residency program is alive and well. (The orchestra has just named its sixth composer in residence Gabriela Lena Frank, who will hold the post from 2005 to 2008.) Jekowsky continues to build an ensemble sound within the orchestra, and the performance of Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 3 yielded excellent results. This was a traversal marked by aggressive charm and a keen sense of youthful Romanticism; each section of the orchestra had its moment in the limelight, with particularly har contributions from concertmaster Roy Malan and principal flutist Janet Ketchum.

There was an unscheduled addition to the program. This week's concerts are dedicated to the late Dr. Stan Schwartz, a longtime California Symphony supporter and member of the orchestra's directors. Schwartz, Jekowsky told the audience, took a special interest in the orchestra's composer-in-residence program; in his honor, the orchestra played the "Elegy" of former resident composer John Adams. The work was originally written for string quartet and played at Schwartz's memorial service earlier this year. It has since been orchestrated, and Jekowsky led a beautifully warm and enveloping performance of the expanded version.



Bc

Chloe Pang is the latest in a long line of young phenoms to perform with the California Symphony.

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**CONCERT REVIEW**

- WHAT: The California Symphony plays works by Mozart, Rachmaninoff and Kevin Beavers; Chloe piano
- WHERE: Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts, Civic Drive at Locust Street, Walnut Creek
- WHEN: 7:30 tonight
- HOW MUCH: \$20-\$59
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