

NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA OF THE U.S.A. 2013

by Ray Shows

Secondary music education in this state has a great deal of which to be proud. We have excellent teachers and superb students. When you combine the two, wonderful things can happen. This summer three of Minnesota's native sons/daughters were invited to participate (after a competitive audition process) in the inaugural National Youth Orchestra of the United States. When I first heard of this new "national" orchestra from talking with students in the Artaria Chamber Music School coaching program, I was immediately impressed with the scope and quality of this program in its inaugural summer. Acceptance into this 120 member ensemble was highly selective and the level of the players notably high. As three of Minnesota's best string players were invited to participate this summer, I thought it would be important to share some of their experiences in the program:

Jennifer Kim – Violinist from Rochester, student of Young-Nam Kim

Arjun Ganguly – Violist from St. Cloud, student of David Arnott

Nora Doyle – Cellist from Minneapolis, student of Mina Fisher

For readers who may be unfamiliar with the NYO-USA, what exactly is this new ensemble?

JK: The National Youth Orchestra of the USA is a program created and organized by Carnegie Hall. Its members are 120 of the top orchestral musicians (aged 16-19) in the country, selected by an audition process. These musicians convene for about one month in the summer to rehearse, perform, and tour—fully funded by Carnegie Hall!

How did you hear about this orchestra?

ND: I heard about the orchestra from a friend of mine. She's currently studying cello performance at the University of Minnesota and was not eligible, but I've very glad she told me about this orchestra!

Where did you rehearse and perform this summer?

AG: Rehearsals were held primarily at SUNY Purchase College in New York. Our performance during the residency was at the SUNY Purchase concert hall since Carnegie Hall was being renovated and could not hold any performances. On tour we

performed in the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Moscow Conservatory, the newly opened Mariinsky II Theatre in St. Petersburg (NYO was the first American orchestra to perform there!) as part of the White Nights Festival, and Royal Albert Hall in England as part of the BBC Proms.

What did you enjoy most about being a part of this "new" orchestra?

JK: I love the close-knit community our orchestra has developed. I met the most incredible musicians and friends in NYO. There is an enormous amount of respect between peers—we all admire each other's talents so much! Carnegie Hall did an amazing job fostering closeness not only between musicians, but also the faculty and residential staff.

AG: The level of energy in the musicians of the orchestra was one I'd never before come across. Everyone there was dedicated to playing great orchestral music as a communal effort. The enthusiasm and humility of the players, who were all very accomplished musically and otherwise, was really refreshing and let us excel as an orchestra rapidly.

ND: This is a tough question—there were so many things I loved about NYO! The places we traveled to and performed, the faculty and the other members of the orchestra were just a few things that made the experience wonderful. The opportunity to be a part of such a high-level orchestra was really exciting and inspiring. All of the staff, faculty and other members of the orchestra were friendly and the whole atmosphere was just really positive.

What was it like working with violinist extraordinaire Joshua Bell?

ND: When I first heard he would be the soloist with NYO I could hardly believe it! He's such an amazing musician and he's so famous—all of my friends back home were jealous that I would get to meet him not to mention getting to play with him...! Working with him was great, he's very easy to follow in my opinion and he really plays with the orchestra as if we're playing chamber music and the 120 of us are a duo partner, which I think is really cool. It was interesting to hear slight alterations in his musical ideas from performance to performance. I'm sure he's performed the

Tchaikovsky hundreds of times, but he kept finding ways to keep the music fresh and interesting.

What did you learn about music, musicians, yourself from participating in the NYO this summer?

JK: I learned that music really is the ultimate unifier. I met amazing, wonderfully talented people from all walks of life—from small town kids in high school orchestra to Maestro Gergiev, one of the most influential conductors alive today. But regardless of our disparate backgrounds, we all felt the same joy when bursting into the tutti of Tchaikovsky's first movement and the same darkness in Shostakovich's second.

Will you audition for a spot in next year's orchestra?

ND: I definitely intend to audition for next year's orchestra and would encourage anyone else that is eligible to also audition! Don't be afraid to try—I certainly didn't think I would be good enough to get in, but I was pleasantly surprised.

AG: I will definitely audition for next year's orchestra.

JK: [Will be attending Harvard University this year so is no longer eligible to participate in the NYO]

Any other thoughts or comments you would like to make about your NYO experience?

AG: Working with Maestro Gergiev and performing at the BBC Proms were the two things that made NYO truly great. Gergiev is the master of music, and one of the largest cultural icons of St. Petersburg. Working with such a renowned conductor is an experience very few get to have and it very much affected all of us. When I got the email that NYO is performing at the BBC Proms, I literally read the email 5 times over to make sure I didn't make a mistake and then checked out the facebook statuses of all the musicians in the orchestra to confirm. The BBC Proms concert was the apex of the tour venues. We saw a queue of people lining up to buy tickets on our way to 8 A.M. breakfast for that night's show. Indeed it was amazing to see such a large audience so silent and invested in our performance and hear the roars and applause afterwards.

These were my favorite things that made our inaugural year unforgettable.

This article was prepared by MNSOTA Chamber Music Chair Ray Shows. More information about the NYO-USA can be

found at this website <http://www.carnegiehall.org/Education/National-Youth-Orchestra-of-the-United-States-of-America/>. ↗