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ECONOMIC ACTION**
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DOW UP NEARLY 400 POINTS, ALL MAJOR INDEXES
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THE DAILY JOURNAL

Leading local news coverage in San Mateo County

Tuesday · November 25, 2008 · Vol IX, Edition 86

www.smdailyjournal.com

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THE DAILY JOURNAL

DATEBOOK





Making it to Carnegie Hall

By Keith Kreitman

DAILY JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

There's an old joke about a man who stops another on a street in Manhattan: "Sir! Would you, please, tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?"

"Practice, young man! Practice, practice, practice!"

Well, like millions of other musicians, I have practiced, practiced, practiced, and never made it to Carnegie Hall. But 12-year-old violinist Stephen Waarts of Los Altos, got me there, anyway.

As a winner in the Fifth American Arts Festival for the young, he was invited to perform there in a winner's recital Nov. 22, and I dragged along.

OK! So, it wasn't conducted on the main stage of that famed and massive auditorium but the Weill Recital Hall is still Carnegie Hall.

The main stage, itself, in a modestly formal classical design, is far more impressive in person than in photos. Our guide joked it was a block across and a block high and that was little short of the truth. The numerous levels of balconies wrapped around the outer walls leave the impression they are lovingly embracing the performers on the stage.

A copy in design, the Weill Recital Hall is a perfect venue for solo and chamber music performances, this time by a bunch of young and aspiring performers drawn from across the land.

Ranging in quality from several "God awful" vocalists through to the super tal-

ented Stephen Waarts, this was a memorable experience. The hall was full of loving parents and friends, including Stephen's father, Rob, and little old me, ready to cheer on our favorites.

Although this was not a competition of any sort, Stephen did receive the loudest and longest ovation from all across an auditorium of a partisan audience when the recognition awards were handed out. Interestingly, and perhaps chauvinistically, the entire representation from California struck me as the best of the bunch.

While most of the young performers scurried from the wings to take their places, performed, quickly bowed and just as quickly scurried off, the more concert experienced Stephen mounted the stage in his Barack Obama "cool" mode. Then, with a nod to his excellent accompanist, Akiko Chiba, he launched into Waxman's "Carmen Fantasie" and finished off with two dignified bows.

Although the Waxman version is not one of my favorites of the fantasies from the opera "Carmen," it did offer Stephen the opportunity to demonstrate both his graceful, dynamic and sensitive bowing in the slow passages and his dazzling finger work in the super fast passages.

I could not help but guess that most of the audience was thinking, "That kid made a mistake. He showed up in the wrong place. He was supposed to have performed on the main stage."

There were several other youngsters who were unforgettable, especially a pair of darling, naturally gifted siblings

from Los Angeles. Jade Chen, all of seven-years-old and no taller than the top of the piano, came out looking and dressed like a petite Chinese doll. She clambered up on to the piano stool and proceeded to entrance all with her musical sensitivity and the maturity of her interpretation of "The Lark" by Glinka-Balakirev.

Later, her 9-year-old brother, Eden, showed up. Hardly taller than she, he knocked my socks off with the variety and power his little hands could beat out on that massive grand piano, as well as, his pixyish sense of humor in "The Cat and the Mouse" by Aaron Copeland.

We are sure to hear a lot about these two in the future.

Another little guy, pianist Scho Young from Massachusetts, was hot on their heels with the powerful "The Bells of Moscow" by Serge Rachmaninoff.

Finally, I impressed with a handsome, blonde teenager from California, Christopher Goodpasture, who tested the strength and endurance of the Steinway grand, with a powerful "Isolde's Liebestod" from a Wagner opera. Chris looked as if he would be more comfortable body surfing the waves than have only his fingers surfing a piano keyboard but he proved to me he is a potential major talent.

OK! So, I got to Carnegie Hall only on the coattails of Stephen Waarts. But, I still got "bragging rights." How many other musicians can say they ever got to Carnegie Hall in any way?