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## Miami Symphony comes back strong

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As in sports, politics, and relationships, the mark of a champion is the ability to rebound from catastrophe, shake off the past and leap back into the fray, rising, hopefully, to new heights.

After what could diplomatically be called an unfortunate showing last month, the Miami Symphony Orchestra bounced back impressively Thursday evening with a concert of populist Romantic music at the Arsht Center's Knight Concert Hall.

To be sure, the ensemble remains a work in progress with variable woodwinds and brass, and a middleweight sonority that lacks tonal gleam and brilliance. But under the intensely volatile conducting of Eduardo Marturet, the orchestra clearly wanted to make a statement about its capabilities and did so with a fiery and committed performance of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5.

### FAULTLESS DIRECTION

Marturet is an impressive musician and the Venezuelan conductor's ability to inspire his players and infuse even the most familiar repertoire with new life was at its finest in this rendition of the Russian composer's war horse.

From the broad, spacious pace of the lugubrious opening bars, Marturet's direction was faultless, putting Tchaikovsky's conflicted drama and soaring lyricism across with equal fervor.

There were passing slips and oddities, with key wind and brass lines disappearing at times. But for the most part, this was a worthy achievement by the ensemble with a lovely and expressive horn solo in the Andante, and significantly agile string playing.

Marturet maintained cumulative tension to the coda, avoiding bombast while giving the triumphant final bars the requisite splendor and impact.

The rest of the evening continued with the Baedeker Guide of European Late Romanticism with Grieg and Elgar.

### BRISTLING PASSION

Soloist Yakov Kasman got off to a shaky start in the heroic opening bars of Grieg's Piano Concerto, but the Russian pianist soon found his footing, or rather, fingering. Silver medalist at the 1997 Van Cliburn Competition, Kasman's Moscow Conservatory training was soon made clear and, Kasman was alive to the bristling passion as well as the melancholy side of Grieg's Scandinavian lyricism. The pianist sensitively distilled the pensive meditation of the Adagio and rose to the challenge of the finale superbly, the final bars majestic and thrilling with rattling octaves.

The lack of weight and richness in the Miami strings diluted the impact of Grieg's climaxes, but the orchestra was a committed partner for Kasman, and Marturet provided a focused, yet flexible accompaniment.

The evening began with Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* with the Amernet String Quartet. Marturet led a sensitive if fitfully cautious performance, yet the Amernet's fleet, edgy virtuosity wasn't really a stylistic match for Elgar's nostalgic heartache. The quartet's solo lines seemed to suffer in the resonant acoustic, with Misha Vitenson's violin solos losing body and definition.

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