

Miami Symphony Orchestra opens strong

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Eduardo Marturet, the energetic music director of the Miami Symphony Orchestra, conducted the season debut Oct. 18 at the Arsht Center's Knight Concert Hall.

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Eduardo Marturet, the energetic music director of the Miami Symphony Orchestra, has his eye on both the future and the past. In his opening statement in the program notes Oct. 18 at the Arsht Center's Knight Concert Hall for the symphony's 2008-9 season debut, Marturet refers to the orchestra's relative "youth" – 20 years compared to the average big city American orchestra at over 100 years – but concludes how "old" that is in South Florida's recent classical music continuum. The Venezuelan-born conductor also announces sponsorship programs, the MSO's founder Manuel Ochoa Endowment Fund, and the newly created outreach, the Allapattah Children and Youth Symphony.



Marturet possesses a dancer's grace in his lithe moves on the podium alternating between a restrained, almost closed vertical stance to torso twisting and circular arm movements. But what counts is his profound respect for the literature that never becomes too weighty or pretentious. In the opener of Russian, German and French works he launched off with Dimitri Shostakovich's (1906-75) Festive Overture, op. 96, written in 1954 to commemorate the October Revolution and a lively musical homage to Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmilla* (1842). If the brass fanfare opened up a bit on the light side the general frame of the orchestra had consistency and sparkle. The tutti kept the tempo appealing with pianissimo changes but the gallop of the final crescendo was somewhat bland.

Maracaibo-born guest violinist Alexis Cardenas, a Paris Conservatoire graduate and First Prize winner in 1998, has few mannerisms on stage and plays with a firm technique if a limited dazzle factor. In the Johannes Brahms' (1833-97) Concerto in D major, op. 77, dedicated to his friend the great violinist Joseph Joachim, the orchestra's French horns and oboes introduced the main theme in the Allegro with a light touch that was nicely matched by the young Venezuelan's agreeable violin tone. The overall thinness of sound belies the heft of Brahms and its rhapsodic intimations. Arpeggios and double stops were competently applied but the cadenza, written by Joachim, lacked proper texture and strong flavor.

The Adagio was a steady improvement as the orchestra's overall momentum furnished lovely burnished colors from brass and winds.

Cardenas added to the musical portraiture with rising dramatic turns that never sounded maudlin or overly solemn. Marturet neatly kept the tempo both steady and compelling in the coda and contrasted the key shift to F major with flair. The "playful" Allegro giocoso has an immediate hopping and skipping quality with its Hungarian flecked melody spiked with double stops that Cardenas matched physically in his more animated stage presence. His sharp and clean bowing had sure-fire power and the animation was well matched by Marturet and company in the coda.

For an encore Cardenas cooked a jazzy and infectious concoction of Bach and Brahms called "Pajarillo" resulting in enthusiastic applause.

Maurice Ravel's (1875-1937) Valses Nobles et Sentimentales conforms almost perfectly to Marturet's physical stage presence that so seamlessly approaches the lithe moves of a dancer. In the Modéré sections he played up the melting languor although there might have been a greater swoop to the phrasing. Crescendos were brisk and almost chipper in the Assez animé and circus-like in the Assez vif. The wind section was well delineated throughout the eight movements and the Lent section ended with lovely slow notes from the harp.

The closing piece, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov's (1844-1908) perennially pleasing Capriccio Espagnol, op. 34, also confirmed Marturet's clear talent for sparkling and Latin-fiery works. In the Alborada or "dance of dawn" his entrance was immediate and engaging as concertmaster Daniel Andai interchanged deftly with the able clarinets.

The Variazioni had solid French horn support with echoes from the orchestra. The "Gypsy" Scena e canto gitano of five cadenzas of horns and trumpets, Andai's violin, flute, clarinet and harp were rhythmically sharp and classic examples of Rimsky-Korsakov's brilliant orchestration skills. The Fandango dance had a rousing and bold ending. Marturet draws distinct colors from his orchestra like a talented landscape artist.

In its next concerts Dec. 6 and 7 at UM's Gusman Concert Hall and Miami Beach's Lincoln Theater, the Miami Symphony Orchestra will present harmonica virtuoso Antonio Serrano in works by Britten, Arnold, Piazzolla, Marquez and Ravel.

