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Rare works spark exciting MSO program

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Though not nearly as common as in the pop music world, the classical tradition had its share of one-hit wonders, from Pachelbel to Mascagni.

Max Bruch doesn't quite qualify, since his *Kol Nidrei* for cello and *Scottish Fantasy* for violin and orchestra receive occasional outings. Yet his posterity is largely based on his concise and melodic Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor..

That's unfortunate since the German composer wrote a great deal of attractive music: two other violin concertos, three symphonies, oratorios, some superb chamber music and a host of concertante works. Two of the last were exhumed Saturday by Eduardo Marturet and the Miami Symphony Orchestra at Gusman Concert Hall.

Composed in 1912, Bruch's Concerto for Clarinet and Viola is a somewhat ungainly work. Cast in the same lyrical, introspective style as the G-minor fiddle concerto, the drama and virtuosity are more muted and the tunes less indelible, though Bruch's unerring craftsmanship remains.

Alexander Fiterstein has become a popular Miami visitor in recent seasons, and the young Israeli clarinetist's airtight technique and fluent virtuosity made a solid case for this offbeat work's virtues. The performance suffered from uneven advocacy, however, with less distinctive playing from violist Michael Klotz. Klotz, a member of the Amernet String Quartet, rendered his ungrateful part with proficiency but far too slender and underprojected tone, his viola often inaudible even in the fifth row of Gusman's very live acoustic.

Both men also has turns in the solo spotlight. Klotz was heard to much better advantage in Bruch's lovely *Romance* for viola, spinning a sensitive, burnished solo line with Marturet drawing sumptuous string textures from the orchestra. And Fiterstein led off the evening with a dazzling rendition of Rossini's *Theme and Variations*, the clarinetist's liquid passagework and personality-plus playing delightfully enhancing the score's wit and effervescent spirit.

Both Klotz and Fiterstein joined the Miami Symphony as orchestral players for Dvorak's Symphony No. 8. With its sectional writing and abundance of solos, Dvorak's rustic and tuneful canvas provides a timely snapshot of the current state of the MSO.

It was not too long ago that the Miami Symphony's playing was more often apart than together. Under Marturet's leadership, the orchestra has clearly improved and made great strides. The violin section has grown into a cohesive group and a chief asset, with rich, gleaming tone. Lower strings are less steady with cellos, in particular, needing upgrading. Woodwinds and brass have some talented members but remain uneven as sections, with horns notably wobbly Saturday night.

Even so, under Marturet's hyperkinetic direction, the Miami Symphony served up a rich-textured, graceful, and often very exciting performance of Dvorak's popular symphony. Marturet judged the

ebb and flow of Dvorak's music masterfully, giving the melodies the requisite lift throughout. The middle movements had the pastoral qualities, and Marturet drew out the final lyrical section warmly, allowing the brassy headlong coda to make a brilliant impact. The conductor inadvertently added metal percussion to Dvorak's scoring, his violent gestures repeatedly smacking his baton against the first cellist's stand with a distinctive clang.

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