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## Teen cellist will take it from the top

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Anna Litvinenko will perform Dvorak's Cello Concerto with the Miami Symphony Orchestra.

As the orchestra rehearses Dvorak's Cello Concerto, the soloist sways, carefully eyeing the conductor's beat and dynamics. This is standard preparation for an orchestral performance, except that the soloist is 15 years old.

Anna Litvinenko, a 10th-grader at Miami's New World School of the Arts High School, will perform the Dvorak -- a Mount Olympus for cellists -- Saturday with conductor Eduardo Marturet and the Miami Symphony Orchestra.

Litvinenko is unfazed by the challenges of a work championed by such legends as Pablo Casals, Gregor Piatigorsky, Mstislav Rostropovich and Yo-Yo Ma.

"It is the most beautiful piece ever written," she says. "I could not believe the sheer romance and yearning of the second and third movements. It makes you dig deep inside when playing."

Music director Marturet is similarly enthusiastic about his soloist.

"When I first heard Anna, I immediately noted an outstanding, unique young artist," he says.

She was 12 when Marturet invited her to join the cello section as the first participant in the

orchestra's Outstanding Young Artist program. In the summer of 2008, she performed Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme* at Marturet's invitation with the Sinfonica Juvenil Teresa Carreno in Caracas, part of Venezuela's acclaimed El Sistema youth-orchestra program.

Litvinenko's father, a native of Ukraine, is a cellist with the Miami Symphony and a former music teacher with Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Her mother, a pianist, was born in Cuba and studied at the Odessa Conservatory. Litvinenko credits her parents, who are now divorced, with her passion for music. Her mother began teaching her piano at 4, while her father screened videos of great cellists for her.

"The cello took over," she says. "At age 7, I found my passion."

By third grade, Litvinenko was playing a Haydn cello concerto and Monti's Czardas as party pieces. At New World School, she studies with Aaron Merritt, a former member of the New World Symphony who found her a "seasoned musician" when she auditioned as an eighth grader.

"She is working to develop musical colors and a more natural sound," Merritt says, but adds that she is "amazingly well groomed, with a maturity level that allows her to absorb and listen objectively."

Litvinenko had a trial run at the first movement of the Dvorak concerto when she performed with New World Symphony at its annual side-by-side concert last spring as winner of the orchestra's concerto competition. New World conducting fellow Edward Abrams, who led the performance, was won over by her audition.

"After tuning quietly, she produced this enormous sound right from the concerto's opening phrase," he says. "It was stunning. We were shocked and blown away."

Far from considering the Dvorak concerto the top of the mountain, Litvinenko wants to learn the Elgar and Shostakovich concertos and sonatas by Kodaly, Poulenc, Franck, Shostakovich and Debussy.

"It is a whole different world to be a soloist, and I enjoy every minute of it," she says, quickly adding, "I would not mind being part of an orchestra."

Marturet has no doubts about her future. "She has the chops, charisma and personality."

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