

With an alarming moment, Miami Symphony provides gleaming performances of Prokofiev and de Falla

By Lawrence Budmen
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“A Valentine’s Nostalgia” was the theme of the Miami Symphony Orchestra’s concert Friday night at Gusman Concert Hall.

The tragic story of Romeo and Juliet might not exactly fit that topic but some unexpected excitement made the issue irrelevant. As music director Eduardo Marturet was concluding a generous selection of excerpts from Prokofiev’s balletic version of Shakespeare with an emotive and powerful reading of *Juliet’s Death*, fire alarms went off throughout the auditorium, bringing the performance to a halt while the hall was evacuated. The concert resumed forty-five minutes later (after staff and fire officials summoned to the scene were satisfied that there was no fire or

danger) with Marturet repeating the final section of the Prokofiev ballet.

The interruption was doubly unfortunate because Marturet offered a freshly conceived, stimulating view of a familiar score, leading complete sections from Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet* ballet rather than the truncated suites that are usually performed in concert. Marturet’s approach was more symphonic rather than balletic, a programmatic symphony of Shakespeare’s tale of doomed lovers. The conductor emphasized strong contrasts of loud and soft dynamics, with fast sections taut, replete with dramatic tension. Slow movements emerged languidly atmospheric, almost impressionistic.

Except for some burbles in the horns and overemphatic trombones in the *Dance of the Knights* (amplified by the hall’s bright acoustics), the greatly improved Miami Symphony ensemble rose to the occasion. Led by concertmaster Daniel Andai, the orchestra’s string section produced velvety sonorities with a burnished glow. Outstanding flute, clarinet and bassoon solos were sweet in timbre and precisely articulated while the solo trumpet exuded brilliance. The full ensemble produced a rounded, vibrant sound.

Marturet's interpretation of Manuel De Falla's 1925 ballet score *El Amor Brujo* was superbly idiomatic, awash in Andalusian color and languor. Highlights included the familiar *Ritual Fire Dance* throbbing with terror and rhythmic energy, and a gorgeously expressive cello solo with the theme repeated by the full lustrous string section.

The orchestra's bright, strongly articulated performance was matched by mezzo-soprano soloist, Mabel Ledo. Singing the vocal excerpts in an operatic rather than flamenco manner, Ledo's rich lower register soared. In an interesting revision of the score, Marturet had Ledo sing the final pages rather than play de Falla's purely instrumental conclusion.



Mabel Ledo

In excerpts from Bizet's *Carmen*, Ledo was the center of attention in gutsy versions of the *Habanera* and *Chanson Boheme*. Indeed she personified the volatile gypsy with vibrant, take-charge vocalism and a commanding stage persona. Marturet led an exhilarating, fast paced *Les Toreadors* (Act I Prelude) and sensitively evoked the Gallic tinted Spain of the *Aragonaise*.

As an encore, Ledo sang a sensuous version of *Mon coeur s'ouvre a ta voix* from Saint-Saens' *Samson et Dalila*, the personification of the seductive temptress with Marturet's strings lending gleaming support.

The program will be repeated 8 p.m. Sunday at the Lincoln Theatre. www.themiso.org