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Chinese pianist Lang Lang performs at The Royal Albert Hall in central London during the 2007 Classical Brit Awards.

## Concert review

# Chinese pianist Lang Lang plays in Festival of Orchestras

By **Scott Warfield**  
SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

**F**or more than a year now, the Festival of Orchestras has been a road show, struggling to find local concert venues that were available when touring orchestras could be in Central Florida. After concerts in Longwood and Kissimmee, and at the Orange County Convention Center, the Festival returned to its nominal home at the Bob Carr Performing Arts Centre on Saturday evening for the final concert of its current season.

The visiting ensemble was the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra, an exceptionally young group that serves as a training orchestra for musicians under the age of 27. Despite their collective youth, this was a solid professional group, which played with enthusiasm and at times with surprising and almost excessive attention to detail.

In fact, one might have forgiven these players almost anything, since their regular conductor, Christoph Eschenbach, was unable to conduct. Instead, Wilson Hermanto, himself only a decade older than most members of the orchestra,

covered for Eschenbach. Hermanto and this orchestra had worked together in the past, so there were no problems throughout the evening. In fact, one might guess that this last minute change encouraged the young musicians to play with heightened intensity and care.

The opening Prokofiev "Classical Symphony," for instance, was filled with noticeable dynamic swells, twists and turns that might have been overlooked, or at least toned down, by more seasoned professionals. For the most part, these mannerisms were not a problem, although things got a bit heavy-handed toward the end of the first movement. On the other hand, pianissimos were also impressive, as in the final two notes of the third movement, which were almost inaudible.

The orchestra then took a back seat, figuratively speaking, as it accompanied Chinese pianist Lang Lang in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 17. Although Lang has something of a rock-star personality, he played Mozart's solo part with an understated and exquisitely refined sense of

touch, holding back ever so slightly at the tops of his phrases. Hermanto and the young orchestra provided a perfect frame for Lang.

For those who wanted to see something flashier, Lang obliged with Chopin's Polonaise in A-flat, Op. 53, as an encore. He played with a "take no prisoners" approach that might not have been to everyone's taste, but which nevertheless brought the crowd to its feet.

The program concluded with a more than capable reading of Brahms' Symphony No. 2. There were numerous fine solos throughout the work, which suggests that many of these young musicians may soon find themselves employed by first-class professional ensembles.

As for the Festival of Orchestras, this concert may have been the end of its wandering ways. Next year's concerts will all be held at Northland Church in Longwood, a much more welcoming venue than the out-dated Carr.

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**"AN UNFORGETTABLE, TOUCHING AND WONDERFUL MOVIE."**