

## Review Simone Porter, Ludovic Morlot a star combo at Hollywood Bowl



Violinist Simone Porter, left, and conductor Ludovic Morlot. (Mel Melcon, Lawrence K. Ho / Los Angeles Times)

By **RICHARD S. GINELL**

SEPTEMBER 5, 2014, 1:30 PM

**I**n his second program with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl this week, enterprising maestro Ludovic Morlot zeroed in on two areas in which he is making his mark with the Seattle Symphony: American and French music of the 20th century.

And Morlot had a future star to work with in violinist Simone Porter, the 17-year-old, Seattle-raised Colburn School student who was making her Bowl and Philharmonic debut Thursday night.

Wait: Let's strike the word "future." She sounds ready. Now.

Bypassing the usual concerto warhorses that regularly turn up at the Bowl, Porter took on Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto, which survived the fashion wars of the 20th century and is increasingly finding a place in the 21st.

The piece gives a violinist everything one would want to make an impression -- ravishing tunes, arching lyricism and dazzling virtuosity with a tart edge. The latter, though, comes only in the form of a brief race-track finale all out of proportion to the lengthier spans of the preceding two movements.

The remarkably mature Porter easily encompassed every aspect of this bipolar concerto. Her ripe tone quality sang directly and naturally throughout the first two movements, with a seamless legato, no forcing, and a sure grip of the overall line.

She has arrived at the point where she could explore the angles and colors of all of those treacherous figurations in the finale at a lightning-like tempo, not just skittering over the surface or blurring the notes as even some great violinists of the past have done here.

Morlot struck a good balance between luscious Romanticism and lean neo-classicism -- and conductor and soloist polished off the coda with revved-up panache.

Each half of the concert led off with delicate Ravel -- the “Ma Mere L'Oye” Suite and “Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte.” Morlot quickly managed to impose a contemplative mood in both pieces -- no easy task in this vast, noisy amphitheater -- with performances of lucid, spotlighted detail and a solid bass underpinning.

Copland's “Appalachian Spring” -- which had plenty of vigor, just enough sharp rhythm, and a satisfying meditative coda -- closed the announced program but hardly anyone left, for the anticipated fireworks hadn't materialized yet.

That came with the encore, the “Hoe-Down” from Copland's “Rodeo” in which the grinning Morlot seemed to be getting a kick out of the shotgun-like blasts and starbursts overhead.

Not too surprisingly, given this hoot of an encore, the concert drew 9,922 picnickers -- a high for a Classical Thursday.