

ILYA KALER

Kaler's superb Brahms performance with Ars Viva, a season highlight

The performance of the Brahms Concerto, a work Kaler has played since he was 16, was surely one of the finest musical solo offerings heard this year. It is hard to think of a single moment where a note was not played without the fiercest intensity or a resounding lyrical touch. His is a magnificent bold tone that comfortably filled a hall with underwhelming acoustics, and he eased into each treacherous transition fearlessly.

His cadenzas, written by Brahms' dear friend Joseph Joachim, were kinetically charged and crowd-seducing. Even as the house lights dropped for the slow movement, Kaler delivered a refreshingly alert Andante, untarnished by any excess sweetness. The final movement sizzled.

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