

The early stages of Joshua Roman groupie-dom

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The first time I saw the Seattle Symphony's new principal cellist Joshua Roman, it was at a subscription performance of Mahler's Seventh Symphony in June 2006, shortly after the then-22-year-old took the principal's seat from the retiring Raymond Davis. We noticed that there was a new face in the orchestra, and wondered afterwards, "Who was that floppy-haired kid?" Well, we now know who that floppy-haired kid is, and he's taking Seattle by storm. Our symphony group's seats this season are up close, and it's such a pleasure watching Joshua Roman play, seeing him check in with the other string principals periodically, clearly enjoying himself the entire time. While flipping through the program during the intermission of John Lill's Beethoven piano concerto cycle, one of our group's members saw that the cellist was participating in a performance of the Brahms Quintet, and our nascent Joshua Roman groupie-dom kicked in. We ordered tickets straight away. The recital opened with Christian Zacharias performing Schumann's *Kinderszenen* (a lovely little set of vignettes), followed by the string players performing Haydn's String Quartet Op. 20, No. 4, and concluded with their combined forces on the Brahms Quintet. It was great to see all the musicians playing with obvious enjoyment. The second violin has long rests in the Brahms, and Stephen Bryant just tucked his violin under his arm and smiled blissfully as he swayed to the music. (One thing I noticed is that Zacharias played with more rubato than the quartet was expecting, and things fell out of sync every so often in the first movement.) We thought that perhaps we were the only people who were Joshua Roman groupie-wannabes, but no, we've got plenty of company. His first solo recital in Seattle was sold out, with a line for tickets that led out the building and down the street. Those that managed to score tickets loved it. Not a bad start. But I saw him first. **Nitpicker's corner** I didn't literally see him first. It was a joke.

(Bonus: Joshua Roman interview on KUOW last week, begins at timecode 14:00.)

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