



East Coast Chamber Orchestra's passionate yet refined performance

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Passionate and refined are an unlikely pair of adjectives to use in the same breath to describe anything but, somehow, the words perfectly characterized the playing of the East Coast Chamber Orchestra, which performed at Wolf Trap on Friday. Its 18 members have been together for a decade but are about to release their first CD.

ECCO's members are young, have day jobs with other orchestras and chamber groups across the country and, when they come together, play without a conductor. Most of all, **they play like 18 offshoots of a single, focused mind.** If a corporation can be a person (as apparently is the case these days), then *ECCO is the very personification of a corporate soloist, playing with the freedom soloists have to move to an inner clock, to shape phrases with subtleties that are generally not available to groupthink and to react personally to the music.*

The program gave the players plenty of chances for passion and refinement. It included the late-in-life romantic revisiting of Arnold Schoenberg's Suite in G for String Orchestra, the early harmonic explorations of then-18-year-old Samuel Barber's Op. 1 "Serenade for String Orchestra," the wild thrashing of Beethoven "Grosse Fuge" and the lush-than-thou sonorities of Tchaikovsky's "Serenade for Strings."

Of these, perhaps **their performance of the Beethoven, an arrangement of the original version for string quartet, was the most compelling.** With four on a part and the addition of a pair of basses, **the intensity of Beethoven's rantings never seemed to strain at the very outer boundaries of instrumental effort as they do when single strings give it their all, and the moments of quiet repose were heavenly interludes of personal peace.**