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### Weiss carries 'magic' of his superstar mentor

Paul Liberatore  
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ORION WEISS pronounces his first name just like the constellation: Oh-Rye-On.

"It was a leftover from my mom's hippie period," the 26-year-old concert pianist explained from his Upper West Side Manhattan apartment. "And my dad went along with it. It's a stage name I was born with."

Hailed by the Cincinnati Post as "a new star on the pianistic horizon" (pun apparently intended), the baby-faced Juilliard grad returns to the Marin Symphony on Nov. 2 and 4 to play Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major in the Marin Veterans Memorial Auditorium.

Last season, he took on Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto to enough acclaim to be invited back.

"Every so often, a talent comes along that is so natural, genuine and exciting you can hardly believe your ears," the Cincinnati Enquirer said of Weiss, comparing him to his former teacher and mentor, the superstar Emanuel Ax, best known for his recitals with celebrity cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

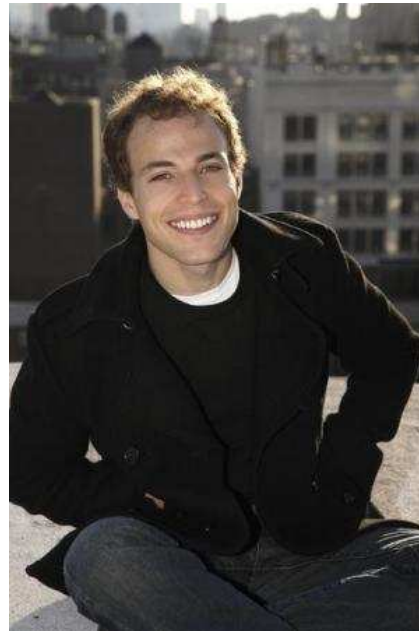
When Weiss was a 14-year-old student at the Cleveland Institute of Music, he had the opportunity to play some Chopin etudes for Ax while he was visiting the school for a master class.

The way the story goes is that Ax asked the nervous kid which of the 24 notoriously difficult etudes he knew how to play.

"I play them all," Weiss said modestly as he could.

He began with the first two, which Ax considers all but impossible to play, especially if you're a teenager.

But play them he did, impressing Ax enough that he agreed to take



Pianist Orion Weiss performs with the Marin Symphony at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 2 and 4.

the youngster as his only student four years later when Weiss was accepted at Juilliard.

"It wasn't even a question of precocity because it was so accomplished," Ax said in an article in Berkshires Week, recalling that initial encounter. "It was so brilliant. So I just thought, 'This is phenomenal.'"

Asked about what he learned from Ax, Weiss used words like "magic" and says the master "let me in on his secrets."

He tried to explain what that means, but admitted that it's really ineffable.

But it comes down to learning to think like Ax when he's performing, Weiss intimated, getting inside the composer's head and communicating the thoughts and feelings in the music.

Did he learn to do that?

"I hope so," Weiss replied. "But you don't receive that kind of teaching like you would some other kind of lesson, like in math."

Judging from the raft of stellar reviews Weiss has accumulated, he's learned his lessons well.

Here's one from the Cleveland Plain Dealer:

"The gods of music must be smiling upon Orion Weiss. Here was playing of inspired virtuosity, but with bountiful thought behind the technical strength."

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When: 7:30 p.m. Nov. 2 and 4

Where: Marin Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Marin Center, San Rafael

Tickets: \$27 to \$65

Information: 499-6800 or [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com)

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