

Music Commentary

Portillo and Its Young Musicians

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For the **seventh consecutive year**, the **International Music Portillo Festival**, organized by **Vibra Clásica** high in the Andes, took place. This event is a learning workshop that each time gathers—after an application process—around **fifty young Chilean and international instrumentalists**, together with teachers. In the iconic hotel of the same name, perched among high mountains and beside the **Laguna del Inca**, a new group of musicians worked intensively to prepare chamber and symphonic works which, after being performed in those heights, descended to the urban setting.

The **Gran Sala Sinfónica Nacional** in Santiago received the result of that experience, presented by the orchestra specially formed for the occasion and conducted by **Alejandra Urrutia**.

One might think that the goal of these days would be simply to reach a polished performance of repertoire that is often colloquially dismissed as routine or overplayed. But that was not the case. As in previous years, this closing concert also confronted the young musicians from **ten countries** with announced complexities and high interpretive demands.

As the centerpiece of the program, **Symphony No. 2 “The Four Temperaments”** by the Danish composer **Carl Nielsen (1865–1931)** was performed—a work of dynamic rather than programmatic inspiration that appeals to the ensemble of human temperaments: **choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic, and sanguine**. In this way, the audience heard a highly varied display whose sections are markedly agitated, moving through constant thematic surprises, some very fleeting, and rhythms of every kind, ranging from lyrical passages to martial ones. **Urrutia’s baton offered impeccable work, marked by great concentration.**

The beginning of the evening was highly impactful, an unexpected surprise. The **Concerto for Drumset and Orchestra by Joe Chindamo** was premiered, featuring **David Jones** as soloist (both Australians). What an appealing novelty: percussion integrated into the overall sonic balance, yet with solo passages of overwhelming virtuosity that captivated the audience. There was almost an orgy of syncopated rhythms that brought the conductor and the attentive youth ensemble to full brilliance, clearly revealing how demanding the rehearsal days high up in the mountains had been.

The **young musicians of Portillo** proved themselves to be true masters, receiving a final ovation as resounding as **Jones’s drumming**.