**Yo-Yo Ma captivates Symphony Hall with sincerity**

**BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

With Yo-Yo Ma, Symphony Hall, Feb. 18-20.

**By Allison Marino**

Two men sit in their cars in the middle of a gridlocked freeway on the morning of a scorchedly hot day in Los Angeles. Both men are on their way to work at jobs intended to protect their society — one works in the defense industry and the other is an LAPD detective — but the stresses and strains that society has placed upon them are slowly wearing them away. The defense employee (Michael Douglas) looks around himself frantically, absorbing the images of laughing children, grotesque adults, flashing construction lights, and incoherent hand gestures, and as an annoying fly lands on his neck he decides to leave. Exiting his car and entering the foliage next to the freeway he tells the driver behind him that he is “going home.” The police officer, Martin Prendergast (Robert Duval), continues on to his office as the two men separate, like two halves of a brain tackling the same problem in drastically different ways. This is an interesting premise for what unfortunately turns into a diabolically disappointing movie. Furthermore, the play of these two men, their families, and their city, is an attempt at an American morality play in every facet of America today, a thriller that is laughable at best, and a film that deserves to be deployed for the enjoyment it derives from the violence it claims to be critical of.

After leaving his car, Michael Douglas’ character begins to walk across the city of Los Angeles to the home of his ex-wife and young daughter, who is celebrating her birthday that day. Along the way, he meets a Korean store owner, some Hispanic gang members, a neo-Nazi fanatic, a few anal fast-food workers (in a scene that won’t play very well in all of America), and the conductor Robert Spano led the orchestra for this blockbuster program because Seiji Ozawa was ill. Composer Stephen Albert’s recent and untimely death in December 1992 made Ma’s performance of his Cello Concerto particularly poignant. Even though Ma’s technical facility was undoubtedly awesome, the true life of the performance lay in his intensely sincere interpretation of Albert’s Concerto. Whether the mood was bittersweet and lyrical, passionate, or frenetic with seemingly impossible tempo changes, the cellist seemed an extension of Ma. He smoothed unravelling neo-romanticist tension; the total focus was at times major, minor, chromatic, and even borrowed from the East. Albert composed the Cello Concerto specifically for Ma, often consulting with him to work out compositional blocks. Well-crafted and expressive, the concerto displayed Albert’s unusual compositional talent and insight as Ma brought it to life. The loss of Stephen Albert’s will definitely be felt in the musical community.

Preceded by the Haydn Symphony, Ma’s performance was the highlight of the evening.

**Violence becomes a joke in the ludicrous**

**FALLING DOWN**

Written and directed by Ebbe Roe Smith.

Starring Michael Douglas, Robert Duval, Rachel Ticotin, and Eddie Frias.

By Chris Robarge

Falling Down

Michael Douglas (left) shows excellent product placement sense as he confronted by gang members (Agustin Rodriguez and Eddie Frias) who are ready that he is walking through their territory in the dimly-lit home board.

Douglas was a man who would get extremely upset if anything did not happen precisely as he wanted it to. He had been fired from his job a month ago, and who still left his mother messages after seeing his acts of violence; and who still left his mother messages. He doesn’t like them very much. In a scene that won’t play very well in all of America, he tells the officer that he is “going home.” The police officer, Martin Prendergast (Robert Duval), continues on to his office as the two men separate, like two halves of a brain tackling the same problem in drastically different ways. This is an interesting premise for what unfortunately turns into a diabolically disappointing movie. Furthermore, the play of these two men, their families, and their city, is an attempt at an American morality play in every facet of America today, a thriller that is laughable at best, and a film that deserves to be deployed for the enjoyment it derives from the violence it claims to be critical of.

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Conductor Robert Spano stood completely still. Embroidered, audience and orchestra members alike stared as Ma alone poured out the dramatic, shifting emotions portrayed in the third movement of the Concerto. Pensively, softly, Ma developed the very personal, minor theme, with interludes of whispered runs and double stopping. Eventually, Spano and the orchestra rejoined Ma, and the maestro of the concertor changed. The fourth and final movement was intense, but more removed. When the virtuoso concerto was over, Spano and Ma embraced as the audience began its long and hearty applause.

Ma certainly stole the show, but Spano’s keen conducting made Haydn’s Symphony 101 and Dvorak’s Serenade for Strings excellents icing for the cake. Spano seemed nervous and stiff for the opening allegro-presto of “The Clock,” but he blossomed up by the take-home, take on a debt with a “tick, tick” accompaniment pervading it. The subdued fun in the repetitiveness mixed with a pleasant violin melody must have warmed Spano up for his bounced up and down with the "tick, tick," leading the orchestra wittily and accurately through to the symphony’s finale, a grand flourish in true late Hayde style.

**THE ARTS**

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