



from
Young Concert Artists, Inc.

CHU-FANG HUANG, pianist

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Music

Pianist Huang's Touch of Intensity

By TIM PAGE
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Chu-Fang Huang is among the most confident and accomplished young pianists around, and her Tuesday evening concert at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater gave evidence of a distinct artistic personality operating comfortably in many different kinds of music.

Indeed, this was musicmaking on a grand level: Huang's playing is strong, assertive, generally on the loud side (but never "bangy") and bursting with energy and in-

tensity. Her easy command of big repertory — the vast, exuberant first movement of Robert Schumann's "Fantasy," and the Niagaras of sound she unleashed in Maurice Ravel's own transcription of his "La Valse" — might lead a listener to suspect that she would be less comfortable in more intimate material. But she proved herself equally capable of a soft, molten, magnificently inward rendition of the Schumann finale, one of the most tenderly rhapsodic meditations in the repertory, and music that I can scarcely contemplate without a lump in my throat.

The program opened with three sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti — in G (K. 125), F minor (K. 466) and E (K. 135) — that complemented one another so completely that they might have been written to be played together. I especially enjoyed the thrill ride — ferocity and velocity in synthesis — that she made of the last piece.

The middle movement of the Schumann is famously unplayable and Huang reaffirmed her humanity by falling short in some leaps and missing fistfuls of notes in its wild last moments. (Even a leg-



BY ELLEN APPEL

Chinese artist Chu-Fang Huang handles a big repertory with ease.

endary technician such as Vladimir Horowitz did no better, as can be heard in his recently reissued Carnegie Hall recording from 1965.) But even those of us who don't believe "La Valse" belongs on the piano — where it makes little more sense than would a simi-

lar arrangement of "Bolero" (in both cases, the orchestration is essential) — could only marvel at the manner in which she yoked crazy, cascading glissandos and apocalyptic growls from the lowest register of the keyboard, all in steady waltz time.

I was least happy with her performances of three Debussy preludes, which were characterized by unusual vigor and clarity — two qualities, alas, that are nowhere near the top of a want list for this subtle, shadowy composer, for whom nuance was all. But it was good to hear some contemporary Chinese music by Huang Ruo: two selections from "Three Pieces for Piano," including a bravura workout for left hand alone, which Huang dispatched tidily.

Still in her early 20s, Huang has already won the 2005 Cleveland International Piano Competition, appeared with orchestras throughout the United States, Canada, Australia and China, and played a New York recital debut at Lincoln Center. We owe our gratitude to Young Concert Artists for presenting her in Washington for the first, but surely not the last, time.