



YUN-CHIN ZHOU, pianist



"Zhou is a pianist with an original character, insightful musicianship, breathtaking technique, and best of all, true joy in playing. His effortlessly produced piano colors and stunning technical feats are combined with a touching musical sensitivity."

- THE HUFFINGTON POST

"Yun-Chin Zhou provided the capper with Prokofiev's Concerto No. 3, and it was sensational. Mr. Zhou negotiated Prokofiev's prickly passagework at blistering speeds with immaculate fingering. As bravura pianism, the performance was brilliant."

- THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Yun-Chin Zhou scored a thorough triumph with an electrifying Prokofiev Piano Concerto #3. Zhou's mastery of dynamics is on perfect display. He has the audience in the palm of his elegant hand; Zhou electrifies us. Huge gloriousness of sound envelops us, with the pianist igniting virtuoso fireworks in a spectacular display."

- OBERON'S GROVE

"Yun-Chin Zhou showed unusual maturity in Beethoven's Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110, to which he applied aristocratic phrasing and dulcet detailing. Then Zhou

poured virtuosity all over five of Nikolai Kapustin's delightful Eight Concert Etudes, which explore the nexus of classical and jazz in a bevy of brilliant and jovial flourishes (all notated, not improvised)."

- THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

"There is no question that Mr. Zhou has amazing fingers. Scales, trills and octaves in either hand were simply child's play for him. As if the Rachmaninoff Sonata wasn't enough, Mr. Zhou gave a stunning account of the Soirée de Vienne, Op. 56."

- NEW YORK CONCERT REVIEW

"Pianist Yun-Chin Zhou's quiet stage presence belied the energy and effort he displayed during his superlative recital. His agility and forcefulness were doubtlessly impressive, but it was his attention to the softer, more precious moments that humanized the work [Rachmaninoff's Sonata No. 2], as he executed both pensive melodies and thunderous passages in a frenzied finale."

- THE KANSAS CITY STAR

"In Ravel's 'La Valse,' Zhou clarified the textures to an extent I've rarely heard, the acrobatics never throwing him off his musical narrative. In the Rachmaninoff Sonata No. 2, the keyboard fireworks were similarly impressive. Manifestly talented and poised, this young artist has laid down a most impressive first marker. He has conquered the instrument... This was highly professional artistry."

- THE WASHINGTON POST

"He assumed the role of dashing virtuoso in Brahms' Variations, complete with dazzling fingerwork and shapely phrasing."

- THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

"Pianist Yun-Chin Zhou brought fresh, unfussy exuberance to Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata...his phrasing and articulation in the finale seemed just right to my ears – boisterous without becoming aggressive, technically footsure but with a firm musical grasp. The sole encore was Grünfeld's Soirée de Vienne, Johann Strauss tunes tossed off with good-natured charm and technical prowess."

- KCMETROPOLIS.ORG

First Prize, 2013 Young Concert Artists International Auditions
First Prize, 2013 Gina Bachauer Piano Competition at the Juilliard School
The John Browning Prize • The Ruth Laredo Award • The Slomovic Prize
The St. Vincent College Bronder Prize for Piano • Friends of Music Concerts Prize (NY)
The Krannert Center for the Performing Arts Prize (IL) • The Lied Center of Kansas Prize
The Harriman-Jewell Series Prize (MO) • The Sunday Musicale Prize (NJ)
The Vancouver Recital Society Prize

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Photo: Matt Dine



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YUN-CHIN ZHOU, pianist

Pianist **Yun-Chin Zhou**, whose given name means *pure melody*, was acclaimed for his “sensational” and “brilliant” performance of Prokofiev’s Concerto No. 3 with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s and conductor Michael Stern at Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall.

Mr. Zhou also received critical praise for his recital debuts in the Young Concert Artists Series in New York at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall and in Washington, DC at the Kennedy Center. Additional performances include recitals for the Krannert Center, Boston’s Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Harriman-Jewell Series, Vancouver Recital Society, Morgan Library and Museum, Evergreen Museum and Library, Saint Vincent College, Lied Center of Kansas, the Port Washington Library, Colgate University, Friends of Music Concerts and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, as well as a re-engagement by the Salon de Virtuosi and chamber music at Alice Tully Hall as part of the YCA Gala Concert.

Mr. Zhou won First Prize at the 2013 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, as well as the John Browning Memorial Prize, Ruth Laredo Memorial Award, the Slomovic Prize, and seven performance prizes. He also won top prizes in the China International Piano Competition, the Gulangyu Piano Competition in Xiamen, the Busoni Piano Competition in Italy, and the Cleveland Piano Competition. He has appeared as soloist with orchestras throughout China, including the China National Orchestra in Beijing, and in the U.S. with the Columbus (GA) Symphony, Orchestra of Indian Hill, Fort Smith and Signature Symphonies. This season, he performs Bernstein’s Symphony No. 2 with the Greenville (SC) Symphony.

Yun-Chin Zhou studied at the Curtis Institute of Music with Gary Graffman and with Robert McDonald, with whom he continues his studies at The Juilliard School. He is a winner of the Gina Bachauer International Piano Scholarship Competition at Juilliard, which awards financial support for his studies there and sponsored a Paul Hall recital which was broadcast on WQXR’s Young Artists Showcase.



Yun-Chin Zhou, *pianist*

The New York Times

Young Concert Artists Gala Offers Stars in the Making

James R. Oestreich | The New York Times | May 11, 2016

With gratifying predictability, Young Concert Artists once again showcased three performers clearly bound for stardom in its annual gala concert on Tuesday evening at Alice Tully Hall. Over 55 years, the organization's track record in fostering the careers of rising performers has been remarkable, and it only distinguished itself further here.

Yun-Chin Zhou, 26, a Chinese pianist and the first-prize winner of the 2013 auditions, provided the capper with Prokofiev's Concerto No. 3, and it was sensational. Mr. Zhou negotiated Prokofiev's prickly passagework at blistering speeds with immaculate fingering. As bravura pianism, the performance was brilliant and told much.

The Orchestra of St. Luke's displayed its usual versatility throughout, conducted by Michael Stern, the music director of the Kansas City Symphony.



Yun-Chin Zhou, *pianist*

 Oberon's Grove

Young Concert Artists ~ Gala ~ 2016

Philip Gardner | Oberon's Grove | May 11, 2016

Music by three of my favorite composers - and an opportunity to hear three gifted young musicians in solo turns with the Orchestra of St. Luke's - drew me to the Young Concert Artists' annual gala at Alice Tully Hall in a state of eager anticipation. It was a wonderful evening, with a raptly attentive audience, and it ended with a full-house standing ovation following a magnificent performance of the Prokofiev third piano concerto.

Very slim and dapper in white tie and tails, the pianist Yun-Chin Zhou took charge of the Steinway after the interval and scored a thorough triumph with an electrifying Prokofiev *Piano Concerto #3*.

The concerto opens with an appealingly simple duo clarinet phrase, the pianist sitting in wait. Then Yun-Chin Zhou bursts forth with vivacious dexterity, his long fingers sailing up and down the keyboard with playing of remarkable accuracy and vitality. A big, dynamic build-up follows, and then we hear castanets playing - one of those touches of wit and irony that make Prokofiev's music so endlessly delightful to hear.

Things calm down...again the licorice-flavour of the clarinet delights; then a simply wonderful piano passage where Zhou's mastery of dynamics is on perfect display. Rippling effects and rising cascades of notes flow from the keyboard as the tempo builds to a splashy *allegro*. Flutes and the piano's highest register tickle the ear, the castanets seem almost mocking. Delicious!

The concerto's central 'theme and variations' concept begins with a gently pacing motif before a trill and flourishing scale from Zhou introduce an off-kilter melody. Trills signal a fast-pulsed passage and a syncopated theme before turning dreamy. Excellent horns, St Luke's! An air of mystery as the strings descend while the piano takes on an eerie quality, only to perk up again with zesty air and a gypsy tambourine intrusion. Zhou played marvelously over an "Arabian" decor; and then the music suddenly vanishes into thin air.

Zhou now had the audience in the palm of his elegant hand; the third movement launches with a jaunty dance, the pianist dazzling us with a rising theme and an accelerating tempo: Zhou electrifies us. Of a sudden, we lapse into a lovely *andantino* - the piano sprightly and pensive by turns, with more vibrant trills. Full-blown passion develops, settling into a poignancy of gently rippling scales.

Huge gloriousness of sound envelops us: the music rocks, with the pianist igniting virtuoso fireworks in a spectacular display. A sensational piece, sensationally played.

The audience went berserk, with Zhou called out repeatedly as the whole house stood and shouted in unabashed enthusiasm. Maestro Stern kept pushing Zhou into the spotlight, whilst the pianist in turn saluted the St Luke's players who were applauding him vigorously.



Aleksey Semenenko, Michael Stern, Julia Bullock, and Yun-Chin Zhou after tonight's exhilarating concert



Yun-Chin Zhou, *pianist*

The Millbrook Independent

Julia Bullock at the YCA Gala

Stephen Kaye | *The Millbrook Independent* | May 11, 2016

Knoxville: summer of 1915 by William Agee

...who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of night. May god bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away. After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

Expressing that sorrow of being on this earth, as in a poem by William Agee, written in 1938 about a summer evening in Knoxville in 1915 to music by Samuel Barber written in 1948 was what Julia Bullock did on the evening of May 10, 2016. Her song was filled with nostalgia of a time and place long ago kept alive and made memorable in prose, in song and in a performance so memorable it too will become part of that legend. Agee's prose and Barber's music are both related to the death of their fathers. For Agee, that became the subject of his life's finest work, *A Death in the Family*. The prose poem whose last few lines are above was made part of that work.



Julia Bullock sang at [the Young Concert Artist Gala at Alice Tully Hall](#) Tuesday night in a performance that transcended all that went before and foretold a level of singing at a new, finer, deeper and richer level. I was taken by the smoothness and control of her voice and her emotive ability. She reaches more than our ears; she reaches our own emotive sensibility. Dawn Upshaw, one of Julia's teachers at the Bard Music Conservatory, recorded this same work with David Zinman and the Baltimore Symphony. Julia has acquired a similar ability to reach her audience with not just sound but with that extra something that has to do with communication of feelings.

Julia Bullock followed Aleksey Semenenko playing solo violin in Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major with the Orchestra of St. Luke's brilliantly conducted by Michael Stern. His playing was crystal clear, with lovely tone, a treat in every way. He could have been more dramatic, but that will come. His career is well-launched.

The final work of the evening was Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major with Yun-Chin Zhou as the piano soloist. This wonderful piece of showcase music is a gem for both orchestra and pianist, and both played it to maximum speed and excitement. Zhou's playing was astonishing. His tall, spare frame belied the energy and brilliance he gave this music. When he let loose the sparks did fly - Stern and the orchestra responded and together they made joyous sounds most fitting for a gala. Zhou is well on his way. He is exciting, exacting and plays well to an audience.

Ms. Bullock's future engagements include appearances with Peter Sellars in the Ojai Music Festival in June, the LA Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel in July, Mostly Mozart in August and and Roulette in Brooklyn in September.



Yun-Chin Zhou, *pianist*



Piano Perfecto

-Christopher Gage | KCMetropolis.org | January 28, 2015

There was not an empty seat in the Folly Theater for energetic young pianist Yun-Chin Zhou's exciting piano recital for the Harriman-Jewell Series last weekend.

The Harriman-Jewell "Discovery" concerts are a great way to bring good music to those who might not otherwise experience it: free admission, helpful program notes, some tips on concert etiquette, and post-concert conversation with the artist all accomplish much in the way of making people comfortable at a concert and helping them enjoy and understand what they are hearing. It was nearly impossible, however, for the audience not to enjoy last Saturday's concert, in which pianist Yun-Chin Zhou brought the atmosphere to dizzying heights, playing an excellent concert of repertoire spanning from Franz Joseph Haydn to twentieth-century musician Charles Trenet.



Photo: Matt Dine

The program evoked an especially interesting contrast between the first and last pieces, two piano sonatas – Haydn's Sonata No. 59 in E-flat major and Sergei Rachmaninoff's Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor – that showed just how the genre both changed and stayed the same over the course of over a century. Many piano recitals start with Haydn sonatas, but this one was a particularly good choice for an opening piece, as the bright, dance-like quality of the first movement was made even more exciting by Zhou's brilliant playing, which brought out lines clearly but also made the individual voices fit together to form a cohesive work. The Rachmaninoff displayed some of the architectural characteristics of the Haydn – overall arc of the three movements, form of the first movement, primacy of thematic material – but the harmonies were, of course, much more adventurous. In performing this early twentieth-century masterpiece, Zhou worked the audience into a frenzy with supreme technical and emotional control, especially the beautiful gestures of the second movement.

After the Haydn, Zhou presented two pieces straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Franz Liszt's *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude* and Maurice Ravel's *La Valse*. The pianist's treatment of the Liszt was sensitive and introspective, presenting a change of pace from the energetic Haydn sonata that preceded it and demonstrating the spirituality and lyricism of the music. The first half of the concert ended with *La Valse*, a devilishly difficult piece that Zhou played masterfully, and the full house erupted with praise and appreciation after the last notes rang throughout the theater.

The most enjoyable part of the program – partly due to its uniqueness – was *Six Chansons* by Charles Trenet, arranged by Alexis Weissenberg. Each of these songs, evocative of the jazz-based harmonies of popular music in the early twentieth century, had a different flavor, from the surreal "Vous oubliez votre cheval" ("You're leaving your horse") to the soulful, bluesy "Vous qui passez sans me voir" ("You pass by without seeing me"). This charming set of pieces, along with the expert playing of the entire concert, enraptured the audience and contributed to a fantastic piano recital.



Yun-Chin Zhou, *pianist*

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

Pianist Yun-Chin Zhou performs in Harriman-Jewell Series Discovery Concert

-Libby Hanssen | *The Kansas City Star* | January 25, 2015

Pianist Yun-Chin Zhou's quietly appreciative stage presence belied the energy and effort he displayed during his superlative recital Saturday night at the Folly Theater. The musician took his bows with a small smile while the audience offered hearty applause and multiple standing ovations.

Zhou performed for a capacity crowd in the Harriman-Jewell Series' Discovery Concert, an event that connects world-class new talent with audiences. A good portion were children and teenagers who were pleasantly engaged.

Zhou's performance was marked by clarity that didn't quaver amid the bombastic choices for the program.

A lively line from Franz Joseph Haydn's Sonata in E flat major started the performance. The work was fluidly virtuosic, challenging but not overtly dramatic, with a primarily lighthearted texture and fulfilling attention to the contrasting voices.

Franz Liszt's "Bénédiction de Dieu Dans la Solitude" had an orchestral quality, with a song-like melody and various coloristic effects. The melody was accompanied with a fluttering effect initially, though the reprise had a more rippling, flute-like quality.

The gradual crescendo and lengthening of the line were so subtle as to be surprising. There was an air of quietude, though the final moments were drawn out without maintaining the energy of the beginning of the work.

A dazzling torrent maintained both energy and attention in Maurice Ravel's "La Valse" to close out the first half. Influenced by the enchanting dance style of Vienna, fragments emerged from a murky, low roll into a familiar and resounding theme before the chaotic whirling caused an exhilarating disintegration.

Zhou then presented "Six Chansons" from French chanteur Charles Trenet, arranged for piano by Alexis Weissenberg. These popular songs from the 1930s and '40s sounded quintessentially, nostalgically Parisian. Lyricism, inventive chords and a sauntering feel easily gave way to a startling cascade of runs in this animated, enticing piece.

Lastly, he performed Sergei Rachmaninoff's Sonata No. 2 in B flat minor. His agility and forcefulness were doubtlessly impressive, but it was his attention to the softer, more precious moments that humanized the work, as he executed both pensive melodies and thunderous passages in a frenzied finale.

For an encore, Zhou chose another lively, swirling piece. A lurid, astounding introduction began Alfred Grunfeld's "Soirée de Vienne," an arrangement on waltzes from Johann Strauss.

Audience members chuckled when they recognized the tunes and offered a final warm ovation for the young virtuoso.



Photo: Matt Dine



Yun-Chin Zhou, *pianist*

THE HUFFINGTON POST

In New York, Yun-Chin Zhou Seduces Zankel Hall Audience

-Jim Luce & Jacqueline Vanasse | *The Huffington Post* | November 25, 2014

Last week I attended the Peter Marino Concert opening the 54th Young Concert Artists Series at Carnegie's Zankel Hall. I was prepared to hear an excellent pianist. It turned out that Yun-Chin Zhou was far and beyond anyone I have heard in many years: an original character, insightful musicianship, breathtaking technique, and best of all, he conveyed true joy in playing.

Zhou began with Haydn's Sonata in E-flat major, which he performed with such style and elegance – it was *Horowitzian!* – and an admirable sense of pace and endless ease. That was also true in his moving interpretation of Liszt's *Benediction de Dieu dans la solitude*, where he carefully sculpted the soulful melodic lines with a deep viola-like sound and delicately shimmering and sensuous ornamentation. His effortlessly produced piano colors and stunning technical feats are combined with a touching musical sensitivity.

In the opening notes of Ravel's show-stopper, *La Valse*, Zhou conjured up mysterious moods from the lower depths of the piano, as if invoking dark magic. His hypnotic energy never flagged through the varied passages and moods, until he brought the work to its wild and feverish climax, sweeping the audience to its feet.

Opening the second half of the program, Zhou brought us a delightful novelty: jazzy virtuoso transcriptions by Alexis Weissenberg of *Six Chansons* by the great French chanteur, Charles Trenet. The cheeky vivacity of these pieces was fresh and inventive, as Zhou danced their dreamy or jaunty rhythms at the keyboard. These pieces, which are not published, were actually notated by Zhou by listening to Weissenberg's own recording – a feat in itself.

Ending the program with Rachmaninoff's dramatic Piano Sonata no. 2, we heard the full range of this extraordinary young pianist's gifts. There was passion, expressivity, serenity, generosity, humanism, fireworks and the sparkling of youth at every turn. The audience responded with applause that matched the sonata's thunderous conclusion.

Zhou's encore was nothing less than the finger-busting "Soiree de Vienne," Grunwald's epic take on themes from *Die Fledermaus*, which brought the full house to its third standing ovation. I cannot wait to hear this young master again.

A native of Shenyang, Yun-Chin Zhou's given name means *pure melody*. Before coming to the U.S. at the age of 19 to study at the Curtis Institute of Music, Yun-Chin won top prizes in the 2007 China International Piano Competition and the 2006 Gulangyu Piano Competition in Xiamen, and appeared as soloist with the China National Symphony Orchestra in Beijing. He began his piano studies at the age of seven. He currently works with Robert McDonald at the Juilliard School on a full-tuition scholarship. Yun-Chin made his Washington, D.C. debut in the Kennedy Center's Young Concert Artists Series last month to critical acclaim.



The incomparable pianist Yun-Chin Zhou
Photo: Matt Dine



Yun-Chin Zhou, *pianist*

The Washington Post

Pianist Yun-Chin Zhou opens Young Concert Artists of Washington Series

Robert Battey | *The Washington Post* | October 15, 2014

For its opening presentation of the season, Young Concert Artists of Washington chose pianist Yun-Chin Zhou, still a student at Juilliard but manifestly talented and poised. The program at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater on Tuesday showcased this artist's preternatural agility at the keyboard, but the jury is still out as to whether he has things to say in repertoire where the notes are only a passageway to deeper ideas.

In Ravel's "La Valse," Zhou clarified the textures to an extent I've rarely heard, the acrobatics never throwing him off his musical narrative. In the Rachmaninoff Sonata No. 2, the keyboard fireworks were similarly impressive, though in the second movement (enigmatically marked "Non allegro") the richly expressive accompaniment sometimes buried the melodies. In Liszt's "Bénédiction de Dieu Dans la Solitude," Zhou hesitated at too many bar lines in the opening theme, but his control of the gossamer lines undulating through the piece was very impressive, and he kept his head in the virtuoso climaxes, never rushing. I've heard pianists with a wider range of dynamics at the lower end of the scale, but all in all, this was highly professional artistry.



Photo: Matt Dine

The program's novelty piece was a set of six songs by the 20th-century chansonnier Charles Trenet, arranged by Alexis Weissenberg. The music was charming, if forgettable, but Zhou's insouciance, virtuosity and natural feel for these bon-bons were a perfect makeweight for the rest of the program. The opening Haydn sonata lacked the bumptious humor others have found in the first theme, and in the slow movement, the ornaments weren't always tidy (some seemed to get in the way of what he was doing). Zhou also sports the pianist's effect of ducking his head and hunching his shoulders when the dynamic drops suddenly – how increasing tension in the shoulders will serve to release it in the hands has always been a mystery to me. And, again, without hearing him in music of real profundity such as Schubert or Beethoven, it's hard to say what he would bring to a full-blown concert career. But for now, this young artist has laid down a most impressive first marker. He has conquered the instrument; the universe of music now awaits.

YUN-CHIN ZHOU, *piano*

REPERTOIRE WITH ORCHESTRA

BARBER	Piano Concerto, Op. 38
BERNSTEIN	Symphony No. 2: The Age of Anxiety for Piano and Orchestra, after WH Auden
LISZT	Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major Piano Concerto No. 2 in A Major
MOZART	Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466 Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major, K. 467 Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488
PROKOFIEV	Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 16 Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26
RACHMANINOV	Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 1 Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18 Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 40 <i>Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini</i> , Op. 43
TCHAIKOVSKY	Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23