



## Daniel Lehardt, *pianist*

### The New York Times

#### Daniel Lehardt Shows Daring Command in a New York Debut

*Anthony Tommasini | The New York Times | March 2, 2016*

Even before the 23-year-old Hungarian pianist Daniel Lehardt began his New York debut recital on Tuesday night, I was impressed by the adventurous program he had chosen. For this performance at Merkin Concert Hall, Mr. Lehardt, a winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, played an overlooked Beethoven sonata, followed by the premiere of a substantive piece by Tonia Ko, ending with a cornerstone of the repertory (by a fellow Hungarian): Liszt's daunting Sonata in B minor.



*Daniel Lehardt at Merkin Concert Hall.  
Credit: Hiroyuki Ito for The New York Times*

It took imagination to open with Beethoven's Sonata No. 16 in G (Op. 31, No. 1). While many of this composer's works are run through with humor, this ebullient sonata can seem almost slapstick. The opening Allegro unfolds in bursts of spiraling runs and scale fragments punctuated by chords that are slightly, and deliberately, out of sync. Taking a daringly fast tempo, Mr. Lehardt dispatched the music with scintillating crispness and conveyed its brash humor. But the breathless energy of his account also teased out the sonata's heedless daring. He revealed the slyness at work in the Adagio, with its almost mock-elegant trills and swirling passagework. The final Rondo was an impish, brilliant delight.

Ms. Ko, a composer in residence with Young Concert Artists, wrote in a program note that her "Games of Belief" was inspired by Schumann's fanciful piano works, especially his "Scenes From Childhood" suite. Her captivating score plays musical games of sound and color, often requiring Mr. Lehardt to strike keys with one hand while, leaning into the piano, moving his other over the strings to create sounds that combined percussive thumps with sighing harmonics. The more traditional elements involved rustling runs, skittish riffs and high tinkling figures that evoked pagoda chimes, all splendidly played.

Liszt's visionary Sonata in B minor is an epic fantasy lasting nearly 30 minutes, shifting from bursts of wildness to passages of profundity. Just playing it commandingly, as Mr. Lehardt did, is difficult enough. He brought narrative sweep and youthful abandon to the piece, along with power, poetry and formidable technique. As an encore, he played Bartok's charming "Evening in Transylvania" from "10 Easy Piano Pieces," the perfect cap to a demanding program.