



Daniel Lehardt, *pianist*



Young Concert Artists: Daniel Lehardt

Philip Gardner | Oberon's Grove | March 1, 2016



Photo: Matt Dine

Young Concert Artists presenting Daniel Lehardt, the 23-year-old Hungarian pianist, in a solo recital at Merkin Hall. Mr. Lehardt, is a prodigious talent and was at his peak in a stunning performance of the Liszt B-minor sonata which concluded the evening.

But first: Beethoven - the Sonata No. 16 in G major, Op. 31, No 1. Mr. Lehardt's performance was dynamic and impetuous, sailing thru the music with only the briefest of pauses between movements. In the opening *Allegro vivace*, flurries of notes displayed the pianist's clarity of technique; the music veers into a minor mode - and even into another key - before ending rather abruptly in G-major. The *Adagio grazioso* is amply laced with trills, sometimes descending into a grumbling lower register. There is a gentle wittiness here and there, as in a dance-like passage. Trills recur against insistently repeated chords. For the concluding *Rondo*, the call for virtuosity extends to the left hand. Things slow down a bit before the coda, and then the music suddenly runs out of itself, ending with a touch of irony. Mr. Lehardt played all of this most persuasively.

Tonia Ko is the current Young Concert Artists' Composer-in Residence. Premiering tonight, her newest work for solo piano, entitled *Games of Belief*, drew inspiration from Schumann's *Kinderszenen*. Mr. Lehardt returned to the stage but instead of sitting down to play, he reached inside the Steinway and began plucking strings.



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It became evident that a *prepared piano* effect was being sought; as the work progressed, mystical upper-range ripples alternated with deeper resonances. As prepared notes chimed, the music turned ghostly. Individually struck descending low notes take on a somewhat ominous feel, and the music concludes on a high shimmer. Mr. Lehardt's command of the music, and his skill at manipulating both the keyboard and the strings to achieve the composer's unusual effects, was impressive. Ms. Ko, so young and lovely, took a bow; she could not have asked for a better advocate for her music than Mr. Lehardt.

The sonic panorama that is Franz Liszt's Sonata in B minor drew an authoritative performance from Mr. Lehardt. Crafted in a single movement, this epic work calls for complete command of the keyboard, and for an extraordinary concentration and passion in the playing of it.

For the massive, tumultuous passages that erupt after a quiet start, the pianist summoned a *huge* sound from the Steinway. The music shifts to a quietly rapturous theme, with elegant trills and sweeping cascades of notes, then turns tempestuous again. The melody returns with rising passion, simmers down, and then goes deep and rich: a rhapsodic theme flairs up. An intense quietude ensues before another patch of turbulence; rapture is voiced, and then a marvelous passage of quiet lyricism. The music is honed down to extreme delicacy before going grand yet again, leading to the elongated, *misterioso* conclusion of this astounding sonata.

For his performance - with its alternating currents extraordinary virtuosity, purple passion, and chaste spirituality - the audience expressed their thanks to Mr. Lehardt with an enthusiastic and prolonged ovation. In reciprocal gratitude, he offered a Bartok encore - *Evening in Transylvania* - in which moody nocturnal passages alternated with folkish dances. The audience then called him back twice more.

At the end of the concert, I had the pleasure of meeting YCA violinist Paul Huang and YCA pianist Louis Schwizgebel; their YCA recital at the Morgan Library last season was such a thorough delight. Ironically, I'd been listening to Louis's Prokofiev 1st - my favorite piano concerto - earlier in the day.