



NEWS *from Young Concert Artists, Inc.*

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