



Yun-Chin Zhou, *pianist*

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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