

7th Season
86-87

Philippe
Bianconi
piano

*Silver Medal Winner 7th Van Cliburn
International Piano Competition*

Sunday, March 29th, 1987
Vancouver Playhouse



Meet the Artist

Philippe Bianconi, Silver Medal Winner of the 1985 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, made his debut with the Nice Philharmonic in 1975. Since then he has appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, the Monte Carlo Philharmonic, the Philharmonic Orchestra of Bucharest, and the Toulouse Orchestra, under conductors, Kurt Masur, Christoph von Dohnanyi, Lawrence Foster, Michel Plasson, and Philippe Entremont.

His New York recital debut took place at Carnegie Recital Hall in 1981 under the auspices of the French Cultural Services. He has also given recitals in Paris — including Radio-France broadcasts, Vienna, Milan, Amsterdam, Cleveland, Washington and Boston. Philippe Bianconi's North American appearances include engagements with the orchestras of Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Minnesota, Houston, Sacramento, Kansas City, Fort Worth, and Victoria (British Columbia), and recitals in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, Saint Paul, Seattle, Portland and Toronto.

He has collaborated with Hermann Prey on recordings of Schubert song cycles on the Denon label.

Philippe Bianconi was born in Nice in 1960 and attended the Nice Conservatory where he studied with Simone Delbert-Fevrier from 1970 to 1975. He also studied in Paris with Gabriel Tacchino (1976–77), and Gaby Casadesus (1977–1984). He has garnered a number of prizes, among them the First Prize in the Robert Casadesus International Piano Competition (1981), First Prize in the International Competition for Young Musicians in Belgrade, and second prize in the Epinal International Piano Competition in 1977. Philippe Bianconi now lives in Paris. His interests include opera, jazz, movies, the theatre, and swimming.

The Vancouver Recital Society is proud to present Philippe Bianconi in his Vancouver debut.

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PROGRAM

Sonata in F major, K.332
(1778)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756–1791)

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro assai

The complex development of keyboard instruments in the 18th century irresistably brings to mind the potential disasters that face the contemporary computer buyer — just as one “definitive” version appeared, some technical advances made by a rival make would cause the instant obsolescence of all earlier models. By the 1770's, however, the fortepiano was a respectable instrument and one which had the considerable advantage of combining the brilliance of the harpsichord with the broad expressive potential of the clavichord.

Mozart's many keyboard sonatas reflect this duality. On one level they are in the expressive tradition of C.P.E. Bach, while on another they were performance vehicles tailored for small-scale concerts by the composer himself. Though the elephantine modern concert grand can in no way reproduce the actual tone or touch of the instrument for which Mozart composed his sonatas, contemporary performances which stress what A.J.B. Hutchings once called “musical virtuosity rather than technical brilliance” remain entirely valid — even on 20th century instruments.

Sonata in C major
Opus 53 “The Waldstein” (1803)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1826)

Allegro con brio
Introduzione: Adagio molto
Rondo: Allegretto moderato

The *Waldstein Sonata* was composed in the earlier years of the composer's life in Vienna, at about the same time Beethoven was composing the *Eroica Symphony* and *Fidelio*. While slightly less popular than his most famous keyboard sonatas, Opus 53 none the less appears with considerable frequency on recital programs. And no wonder: it's an exciting work for both performer and audience, one which goes well beyond the traditional bounds of the solo keyboard sonata to suggestions of what has been accurately termed a “symhonic ideal.”

Listeners will note two particularly formal aspects of the work. In the first movement there is an especially long coda, a true “terminal development” section which shifts our overall perception of the form with dramatic effectiveness. Another unusual formal departure is the short second movement which acts as an extended introduction to the broadly stirring finale.

Intermission

Fantasien Op. 116
(1891–1892)

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Capriccio in D minor • Intermezzo in A minor • Capriccio in G minor
Intermezzo in E major • Intermezzo in E minor • Intermezzo in E major
Capriccio in D minor

At the end of his life Brahms composed four valedictory sets of short piano works — a collection of brief, intimate works which demonstrate Brahms' powers as a composer of the very highest quality.

The first of these, the Opus 116 *Fantasias*, marked Brahms' return to solo keyboard music after a lapse of over ten years. The work is comprised of three “not particularly capricious” capriccios, and four intermezzi. Brahms expert Peter Latham sums up these profound late works when he writes that they are “the very quintessence of Brahms.” In them... “Brahms can let his style evolve naturally without reference to anything but its own inner needs. His instinct for shapeliness can be trusted to see that every detail finds its proper place.”

Gaspard de la Nuit
(1908)

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1935)

Ondine
Le gibet
Scarbo

Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* needs little introduction to most recital goers. Renowned (or perhaps notorious) as one of the supremely difficult works in the keyboard repertoire, its immense technical challenges are matched by innovative attitudes toward figuration and sonority, as well as persuasive and sophisticated mood painting.

Ravel composed these “three poems for the piano” in 1908, the middle of an approximately ten-year-long period which saw the creation of some of the greatest works in his catalogue. The immediate inspiration for the work was a trio of prose poems by early 19th century poet Aloysius Bertrand. All three are in the fantastic, high romantic mode not without stylish hints of the supernatural and demonic.

The opening evokes the water-sprite *Ondine* with what Rollo Meyers calls “a cascade of scintillating arpeggios and iridescent harmonies.” *Le Gibet* is a macabre portrayal of a barren landscape — howling winds, tolling bells, the last red light of sunset and a gallows. *Scarbo* provides a brilliant finale depicting a malevolent goblin who (says Meyers) “seems to have been standing at the composer's elbow when he wrote these dazzling studies, urging him to have no pity on any performer rash enough to tackle them.”

Program notes by DAVID DUKE

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