

VANCOUVER *Recital* SOCIETY

Connie Shih

Piano

Sunday
March 26, 1995

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VANCOUVER *Recital* SOCIETY

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Connie Shih

BORN IN NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C. CONNIE SHIH MADE HER DEBUT at the age of six playing a Mozart sonata in a Gala concert at the Orpheum Theatre. Only four years later she was invited by the Seattle Symphony Orchestra to perform Mendelssohn's *Concerto No.1* in her orchestral debut.

In 1986 Connie was accepted at Indiana University by the renowned pianist and pedagogue Gyorgy Sebok as his youngest ever pupil. Says her mentor of seven years: "*Connie is born to be on stage. Her forceful and polished technique enables her to express her powerful and sensitive imagination.*" While at Indiana University, her other teachers in chamber music included Josef Gingold and Rostislav Dubinsky.

Among the many honours that she has won are First Prizes in the Canadian Music Competition in 1983, 1984 and 1986, the B.C. Festival of the Arts, and the Seattle Young Artist's Competition in 1985. Connie has performed in recitals and with orchestras in Canada and the United States including the Seattle, Toledo, Indianapolis, California, and Iceland symphony orchestras. Her recent performance with the Sonora Hungarica was recorded live and the CD will soon be released. In 1993, she performed recitals in Austria, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and has just recently completed a tour of China.

On television, Connie has been profiled in the New York International Film Festival's Gold Medal-winning documentary *Which Way to Carnegie Hall?* She has also been featured on the CBC TV special *Miracles on Chestnut Street*, and PBS TV's *Studio Six* and *Joy of Music*.

Now 21, Connie has more than fulfilled early predictions for a brilliant future. Just this past year the Canada Council awarded Connie the prestigious Sylva Gelber Foundation Award given annually to the most talented artist in its Arts Grant Competition. As a result of her compelling performances over the last two summers at the Vancouver Chamber Music Festival artists such as British cellist Steven Isserlis and American violinist Joshua Bell, both of whom have played with her at the Festival, have been busy and enthusiastically championing her talent. This coming fall, Connie will appear with Steven Isserlis at the Cricklade Music Festival in England where she has also been invited to perform in solo recital. Connie is currently enrolled at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia where she is studying with the eminent pianist and teacher, Claude Frank.

*Connie Shih is represented by
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535 El Camino Del Mar, San Francisco, CA 94121.*

Sonata in C major, Hob. XVI:48

JOSEPH HAYDN 1732-1809

Andante con espressione
Rondo: Presto

Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op.5

JOHANNES BRAHMS 1833-1897

Allegro maestoso
Andante espressivo
Scherzo. Allegro energico - Trio
Intermezzo (Rückblick). Andante molto
Finale. Allegro moderato ma rubato

INTERMISSION

Image terrestre

JEAN COULTHARD B. 1908

Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op.14

SERGEY PROKOFIEV 1891-1953

Allegro, ma non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro marcato
Andante
Vivace

Ballade No.1 in G minor, Op.23

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN 1810-1849



*Tonight's recital is being recorded for broadcast April 10 on
CBC Stereo's The Arts Tonight (105.7 FM).*

PROGRAMME NOTE ANNOTATORS OFTEN GO ABOUT second-guessing, with varying degrees of accuracy, the artist's underlying rationale for structuring a programme in a certain way. Is it the differences, or often more interestingly, the similarities among the works that the performer wishes to highlight? In an interview, Connie Shih speaks candidly about programming, contemporary music, and the relationship between artist and audience.

Gloria Wong: How do you set about putting together your programmes, and in particular, tonight's programme?

Connie Shih: I generally try to give expression to my belief that programmes should offer a variety of styles, composers, and genres, or in one word – diversity. One must also take into account the tastes and the psychology of one's audience. As a result, in addition to trying to reflect diversity, I take into account both the length of particular works and their placement in the programme relative to one another. I am also concerned to try and balance on the one hand my desire to expose the audience to something new – whether a recently composed or newly discovered work – and on the other hand, to recognise that, as the famed violinist Szigeti once said, audiences not only know what they like but like what they know.

GW: How often do you include works by contemporary composers, particularly Canadian composers in your programming mix? Also, how do you view the idea that contemporary music stimulates and challenges the audience to participate in a more heightened process of listening whereas in more mainstream repertoire the audience is involved in a somewhat more passive absorption of sound?

CS: As to the question whether contemporary music stimulates a more intense process of listening, I do not think it is possible to generalise. Some people will actually doze off during the performance of a contemporary work to which they do not feel any attraction, and that certainly doesn't constitute "a heightened process of listening."

By the same token, if an audience merely absorbs the sound passively during the performance of standard repertoire, I think that is probably a reflection of the inability of the recreative artist to compel the audience through his/her interpretive powers and force of personality.

GW: How were you introduced to Jean Coulthard's *Image terrestre*, and what was it that attracted you to this work?

CS: David Duke, with his encyclopaedic knowledge of Canadian composers and their works, helped me to select those that he considered would suit my personality and tastes. Much of my music-making is bound up with the concept of imagery, and I am a great believer in the use of colour to evoke varieties of emotion in music, much as a painter uses his palette. *Image terrestre* contains a musical palette of many colours, so it immediately appealed to me. It is also a bonus that both of us are British Columbians.

GW: If an artist's aim in performance is to invite the audience into a world which they can experience together, and to create a dialogue between performer and listener, what kind of dialogue do you hope to create?

CS: Paul Tortelier once said: "One never plays Beethoven or Brahms; one gives birth to children conceived through a love affair between the recreator and the spirit of the composer. Each child is bound to be somewhat different from the others. I have always tried fanatically to adhere to this dictum so as to have the utmost spontaneity in my performances. I try to immerse myself in the music so completely that I forget my own identity. To be successful, however, one must first open the doors to one's imagination, let the music react upon it spontaneously – an intuitive process – and recollect the various images, whether concrete or in the form of a mood or sentiment that exists in one's imagination, to recreate a "story". In essence, one is reliving what the composer, or what one supposes the composer felt while composing. If one is successful, the conception is communicated to the audience, drawing the audience into this process of recreation.

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