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Charm offensive

review concert

ADAM GYORGY, STEINWAY ARTIST PIANO RECITAL

Victoria Concert Hall
Wednesday, November 19, 2008
Shawn Chua



A crowd-pleasing and audience-friendly evening was promised, and pianist Adam Gyorgy delivered in spades, mining the archives for perennial familiar favourites but also playing lesser show-cased gems.

He opened with *Improvisation On Well-Known Melodies*, coaxing out the easy-listening musak with dreamy delicacy, though the inclusion of this light fare seemed at odds with the rest of the programme.

Adding his signature to the time-tested contributions of Liszt and Horowitz in Mendelssohn's *Wedding March* was not merely hot air-fueled chutzpah, but an effort backed by a confidence tempered by modesty.

As the familiar theme veered off into experimental extemporization, it was a leisurely and long walk to the altar before he returned to home ground with a mad dash up the aisle.

The absence of a proper programme may have unshackled Gyorgy from straitjacketed conformity. He inserted an unbilled *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6* into the mix and the fancy flight of fantasy was a delightful breath of fresh air.

Chopin's *Ballade in G Minor* was hauntingly spun out, the ebb and flow of the sprawling narrative unfurling in its multi-hued raiment.

Myriad colours and shades were hinted at through the hymn-like renditions of transcriptions of Bach's *Jesu, Joy Of Man's Desiring* and *Sheep May Safely Graze*.

The pianist seemed most at home with the works of fellow Hungarian Liszt, giving a sparkling and rippling delivery of *La Campanella*, where images of the titular bells were conjured up by the pin-point articulation of execution.

He closed with the rabble-rousing *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*, the barnstorming and roof-raising reading was replete with throwaway gypsy ardour as performer and instrument seemed to become one, hands a blurry haze at the keyboard.

One could tell that some in the audience were conflicted as to which was their favourite piece of the evening, for barely had one piece wrapped up to warm reception than the next began, dividing opinion all over again.

Gyorgy was on a charm offensive, smiling and nodding shyly to the appreciative audience as he took his stage calls. Pity that he only granted an over-too-soon *Flight Of The Bumblebee* for his sole encore.

With the showy programme, it would have been easy to fall into a trap of indulgent narcissism but the pianist displayed prudent economy of movement and cut out the exaggerated gestures. Evidently, none was needed, for everyone had the best seat in the house. There was a live video feed trained on the ivories.

It did not hurt that he was easy on the eye too. With the right packaging and promotion, this young man could well have women swooning in his presence a la Franz Liszt in his heyday.