

Pianist Ivan Moshchuk a perfect blend of technique, musicality in Gilmore Rising Stars recital

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Kalamazoo Gazette. Kalamazoo, MI, USA
November 6, 2011

KALAMAZOO — Sunday afternoon's concert at Wellspring Theater featured 20-year-old Russian-born pianist Ivan Moshchuk, a 2010 Gilmore Young Artist, who returned to Kalamazoo to perform in the Gilmore Rising Stars Series. Playing a dream program of works by Brahms, Beethoven, Rachmaninoff and Chopin, Moshchuk lit the skies with a brilliant, thrilling performance.

Each piece required total physical mastery as well as exceptional interpretive insight. The full house Sunday heard that rare combination of breathtaking technique and genuine musicality.

No one work stood out; Moshchuk provided distinctive musical faces for each piece-and each pianistic personality was exactly right for that composer's work.

The program opened with Brahms' romantic Six Piano Pieces. The No. 2 Intermezzo in A Major displayed the pianist's remarkable singing melodies. No. 5 Romance in F Major featured caressing strokes that never muddied Brahms' intricate inner-lines. Trills were miraculous, and the ending featured fantastic double pianissimos. Moshchuk's octave runs in No. 6 were impeccable.

Beethoven's Sonata No 30 in E Major, emerged in Moshchuk's reading in an entirely different and deliberate style that reflected the composer's assertive qualities. The Prestissimo (second movement) offered wonderful chromatic runs, while the final Andante, molto cantabile ed espressivo (relaxed slow, with singing and expressive phrasing) was extraordinarily lovely.

Things became even more enthralling after the Beethoven. Rachmaninoff, himself a leading pianist of his time, composed Preludes, Op.23 with daunting pianistic nuances often inaccessible to ordinary pianists - but Moshchuk is no ordinary artist.

Prelude No. 3 in D Minor proved a marvel in Moshchuk's playing with impressive crisp passages in the opening. The inner voices were never blurred, while Moshchuk made octave runs in both hands look easy. Prelude No. 4 in D Major, Chopin-like with left-hand broken chords sounding like strumming, evolved into exciting octave runs. Prelude No. 7 in C Minor heightened excitement still more with a blur of repeated runs, making for bravura playing.

Closing was Chopin's Sonata No. 3 in B Minor. Here, Moshchuk's exceptional gifts excelled, capturing Chopin's marvelous ideas with verve. Chromatic runs in both hands were flawless in the first movement. Moshchuk showed incredibly fleet fingers in Scherzo. Artistic juices flowed as Moshchuk plumbed Chopin's inner depths in profound playing of the first order.

Moshchuk satisfied the audience with a dazzling performance of Liszt's impossible-to-play Etude No. 10 in F Minor. It was a memorable afternoon of music.