



AVAN YU

PIANIST

MARCH 19, 2010



Avan Yu, pianist

At 22 years of age, Canadian pianist Avan Yu has performed in recital and as soloist with orchestras on four continents, consistently captivating audiences with his extraordinary musicianship. Mr. Yu made his New York debut at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in the fall of 2008 after winning the Silver Medal at the 16th Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition in the same year. He first came to national attention by winning first prize at the Canadian Chopin Competition at the age of 17.

At a recent gala concert at the National Arts Centre, Avan Yu appeared both as soloist with the orchestra under Pinchas Zukerman as well as with 'cellist Yo-Yo-Ma, and then — an unexpected surprise — introduced Prime Minister Stephen Harper to the gala stage.

Mr. Yu first performed with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra at the age of 14 and has formed a special relationship with an orchestra that has embraced him ever since. After four engagements in subsequent years, he appeared as featured soloist on the orchestra's first national tour of Canada in 30 years with appearances at the Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, Place des Arts in Montreal and, once again, Ottawa's National Arts Centre.

Abroad, Mr. Yu has performed with orchestras such as the Dresden Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique of Morocco, Xiamen Philharmonic in China, Real Filharmonía de Galicia, and the Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestra in addition to recitals for organizations such as UNESCO, Chopin Club in Warsaw, Animato in Paris, Canadian Vocal and Performing Arts Society, Jeunesses Musicales Canada and Debut Atlantic.

His performances have been broadcast live on WQXR in New York, CBC in Canada, NDR Kultur Hamburg, Spanish National Radio and Television.

Born in Hong Kong and raised in Vancouver, he currently studies at the University of Fine Arts in Berlin with Prof. Klaus Hellwig. His other principal teachers include the celebrated Canadian piano duo, Kenneth Broadway and Ralph Markham.

Avan Yu, piano

Ludwig van Beethoven

[1770-1827]

Sonata in F minor, Op.2, No. 1

Allegro

Adagio

Minuet, allegretto

Prestissimo

Robert Schumann

[1810-1856]

Fantasie, Op. 176

With imagination and passion

Moderate speed, and with energy

Slow and stately, but softly throughout

Intermission

Frederic Chopin

[1810-1849]

Ballade No. 2 in F major, Op.38

Nocturne in E-flat major, Op. 55, No. 2

Etude in C minor, Op. 25, No. 12

Claude Debussy

[1862-1918]

Etude, Pour les arpèges composées

Béla Bartók

[1881-1945]

Etude, Op 18. No. 2

Alexander Scriabin

[1871-1915]

Etude in D-flat major, Op.8 No. 10

Franz Liszt

[1811-1886]

Grande Etude de Paganini, No. 6 in A minor

programme notes

Mr. Yu's programme includes Etudes by a widely divergent group of composers - Chopin, Bartok, Scriabin, Debussy and Liszt.

The Etude started out life exactly as its translation suggests: as a "study" The works were originally conceived as practice material for particular technical skills and composers tended to inject every conceivable difficulty, both to dazzle and confound the student.

But ultimately, they were all intrigued by the challenge of the étude, and while they took little mercy on the performer, they also all succeeded in reflecting their own creativity.

Debussy famously commented that his études were "a warning to pianists not to take up the musical profession unless they are possessed of remarkable hands"

Bartok laced his own prodigious piano technique with astringent dissonances to highlight the fact that despite all the pyrotechnics in the world, he could still combine exquisite lyricism with moments of compelling stillness.

A contemporary critic wrote about Alexander Scriabin's playing that "he gives the impression of constantly improvising." A mystic, a dreamer and a visionary, he often chose obscure keys and filled his Etudes with complex rhythmic patterns.

Franz Liszt was one of the great keyboard virtuosos of the 19th century, considered by many to be the innovative genius of modern piano technique. The *Grande étude de Paganini* is based on the most famous of the 24 violin Caprices.

Chopin's Etudes were the first such works to become a regular part of the concert repertoire, not only for the composer but also for generations of performers to come. In them he developed all sorts of new and terrifying technical challenges and they are widely regarded as the first such works to combine musical substance and technical challenge thus creating a complete and new artistic form.

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message from the artistic director

Dear friends:

Another season draws to a close, and the new programme for the season 10-11 is yours for the asking! Nearly 400 members renewed at the last concert. That leaves approximately the same number who will have their opportunity to sign up tonight...or at any time until April 15. After that, we'll be opening our membership ranks to the waiting list which numbered just over 300, when we last counted!

Piano, voice, chamber music, early music, orchestra and - for the first time on a White Rock Concerts programme, - Grand Opera! My dilemma is exactly the same as it was last year - what can we possibly do for an encore? [Fortunately we still have a few months to try to solve that problem!]

In the meantime, enjoy tonight's concert, and at intermission [if you have not already done so] sign up for next year.

And just before you settle down to enjoy AVAN YU's performance, I must tell you about a dream I had last month..

I was at the stage door of the Church waiting for the *Vienna Boys Choir* to arrive. All of a sudden two highway busses drew up to the church, one to the South entrance, another to the North. Out of the first bus, poured the Vienna boys, while from the second bus there emerged the thirty young ladies of the *Little Eagles of Siberia*. I was. Of course, enchanted to see them again. But... who was going to sing for us?

Fortunately dreams don't last very long so I did not have to make such an impossible decision. But it highlighted for me the fact that here in White Rock, over the years, we have had the incredible good fortune to be able to bring two such splendid youth choirs to our concert stage. [Fortunately not at the same time]

Maybe we should think about bringing the *Little Eagles* back for the 2015-2016 season?

George Zukerman

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