

Spellbinding performances – Times of Malta

Sunday, September 2, 2012

Spellbinding performances

David Campignon.

“This interpreter showed that Schubert could make his point with the greatest of charm”

Another highlight in this 15th edition of the festival was the piano recital by David Campignon...a very accomplished pianist to the festival. The varied programme he presented was not an easy one, both from the technical and idiomatic viewpoint.

No chronological order was followed and the recital began with four *Preludes* by Debussy. Here the pianist plunged immediately into that exotic, highly charged and often mysterious sound world peculiar to Debussy. The preludes are works in which texture varies greatly, according to mood or perception, with the title being a sort of guide. The dreamy, misty landscape in *Brouillards* bore some kinship to the aqueous world of *Ondine*, but was separated from it by the more vigorous and even brashly colorful atmosphere of *La Puerta del Vino*. Supremely and superbly evocative was the way *Feux d'artifice* came across. When it came to some idiomatic contrast, there could not be anything better than Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in B flat Major, Op. 23, N.2* with its unashamedly lush and brilliant nature.

As for the two short Scarlatti *Sonatas in D* and *D minor*, these were straightforward, attractive and crisply performed with their harmonic interest less pronounced to modern ears than they were 250 odd years ago. Chopin's inevitable inclusion came along with the unique *Barcarolle, Op. 60*, in which so many different emotions went through a transition that developed according to bold rhythmic structure and always with Campignon's assertive yet elegant, tasteful touch.

The latter attributes accounted for great contrast between the two sections of Chopin's *Op.22*. The *Andante Spianato* was dreamy and very nostalgic, while the *Grande Polonaise Brillante* had a forward drive, a stately grandeur and, at the same time, beautiful melodies.

More of the latter abound in Schubert's great *A Major Sonata, D. 959*. As we all know, Schubert was the one who could make the piano sing. It is so easy hearing those melodies gushing forth throughout the work not to sing them along in one's head.

Yet the other side of Schubert is there too: the dramatic passages, the pathos, lyrical warmth and high passion.

Give me Schubert any time, more so by this interpreter who showed that the composer could make his point with the greatest of charm. As an encore, the pianist performed Skryabin's *Etude in C Minor*.

Albert Storace reviews concerts from the Victoria International Arts Festival.