

Critique of Poetry and Passion: Two-Piano Music of Franz Liszt

Joanne Kong and Paul Hanson's seemingly effortless performance of Franz Liszt's Christmas renditions, Psallite, Die Hirten an der Krippe, Adeste Carillon, and his Symphonic poems, Festklänge, Orphee, and Hunnenschlacht, unveiled the technical precision, the variety of loud and soft sounds, and happy and sad emotions within Liszt's compositions. Furthermore, Kong and Hanson's modest and traditional stage arrangement removed any external distractions; therefore, the audience was strictly focused on Liszt's songs. Also noteworthy was the background information both Hanson and Kong provided at the beginning of each piece (Modlin Center for the Arts Pamphlet). Again, it was through the effortlessness in communication and the background information Hanson and Kong gave about each of Liszt's works that was particularly impressive.

Kong and Hanson's refined presence was obvious the moment they walked onto stage in Camp Concert Hall for their 7:00 performance. The two approached each piano, took a bow, and proceeded to engage the audience with information about Liszt and the first tune they were going to play, "Weihnachtsbaum." Interestingly, Liszt borrowed the happy themes and melodies from popular Christmas jingles and added his own cheerful embellishments. What's more, while the Christmas themes were still present within each of Liszt's adopted pieces, it was obvious that Liszt enhanced them by using his own unique, challenging, and joy-filled notions. This background information, which was provided both in the concert program and through the pair's introductions, enhanced the audience's understanding of the songs.

Although Hanson and Kong's performance was formal, their presentation of the contextual information provided a less intimidating atmosphere. Their effortlessness and

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Comment: You'll want to avoid front-loading your first sentence with all of this specific information about the program.

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Comment: Are there vocabulary words you can use to replace the words "loud" and "soft"?

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Comment: Music suggests emotions to the listener, but emotional content doesn't reside in the music.

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Comment: The word "song" traditionally refers to texted music. Here you'll want to use "pieces," "works," or "compositions."

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Comment: Are you citing this pamphlet as a source?

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Comment: This sentence reiterates the previous one, so it should be eliminated.

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Comment: Can you replace "tune" with a word appropriate to instrumental music?

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Comment: You're feeling happy – but the music is not.

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Comment: This phrase is unclear. Does it refer to Liszt's compositions, or to the melodies he borrowed and adapted?

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Comment: What about "pieces" or "works"?

cohesion also helped to make their show enjoyable to watch. The pair's strength in communication was subtly revealed, especially throughout Liszt's Symphonic Poems. After Kong had presented background information about Liszt's unique poems, the two glanced at each other, and began. Their communication appeared in understated eye contact that seemed really innate and unforced. It was refreshing to see, amidst the concentrated passages that filled both piano scores, the effortlessness of Kong's and Hanson's communication. Once again, their communication added to, rather than distracted from Liszt's, at times dark and emotional, two-piano music.

The strength of both Kong's and Hanson's technical skills also provided a sense of ease, especially throughout the happy and fast areas in Liszt's Christmas renditions. The pair's body language, particularly within these moments was revealing; the two leaned close to each other as they lightly tapped the keys, and as they played louder or softer, the audience could see the change in Kong's and Hanson's physicality. Once more, these changes were done with a consistent air of grace and ease.

Poetry and Passion: Two-Piano Music of Franz Liszt was eloquently and powerfully performed by two talented and experienced artists, Joanne Kong and Paul Hanson. Throughout the concert, they maintained subtle and innate cohesion that characterized the strength of the two's communication. Moreover, the duo paid special attention to the construction of their performance; they provided the audience with contextual information about both the composer, Franz Liszt, and the unique pieces within his Weihnachtsbaum and Symphonic Poems. Hanson's and Kong's technical strength, communication and stage presence resulted in an exciting final performance.