

Music Review: Pianist plays a range of emotions in Chopin program

By Gayle Williams / Correspondent

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Pianist Arthur Green turns in remarkable performance for Chopin Project

There is not much I can think of that is more enjoyable than an evening of piano music by Frederic Chopin performed by a deeply thoughtful and skilled musician. The Chopin Project presented exactly this by bringing pianist Arthur Greene to us Tuesday night at Church of the Redeemer.

The favorites on the program, such as the Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23, came alive with an added measure of immediacy. Noting from the stage that Chopin's music encompassed every emotion, this score gave Greene the opportunity to prove that point.

From an ominous chord upward reaching tendrils of arpeggios soon whipped into a fury and continued to follow a passionate narrative that spanned the range of human experience. That sentence alone can't match the romantic sentiment of the actual music, which read like a German novella.

The Polonaise-Fantasy in A-flat major, Op. 61, performed later was lush and ruminating, but shared the sweeping emotions of the Ballade running all over the map.

Grouped together and sweeter natured in comparison were three disparate selections: Prelude in C-sharp minor, Op. 45; Nocturne in E-flat major, Op. 9, No. 2; and Etude in C-sharp minor, Op. 25, No. 7. Perhaps it was Greene's own focused care for the emotive content of each phrase and note that kept us riveted to the music.

All too often, one's mind is enticed into its own personal reverie with this music. I found myself hooked on every new element — or new to me, as Green performed the Nocturne with Chopin's original embellishments not found in the published score.

Greene returned in the second half of the program with both an early Mazurka in B-flat major, Op.7 that Chopin penned when he was about 20 years old and one of the last works he composed, Mazurka in G minor, Op. 67, No. 2. The contrast could be characterized as the perky optimism of youth to the wistfulness of middle age — Chopin lived only to the age of 39.

The Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58, is widely regarded as Chopin's most technically and emotionally difficult composition. One would not have known by the ease with which Greene commanded even the most effusive note-filled passages with crystal clarity. The shifting passions of the music appeared to flow unobstructed from the performer's heart through the fingers to the keyboard. While tender where it needed to be, this was overall a bold and forceful performance.

Earlier in his career, Greene won first prizes in the William Kapell and Gina Bachauer international piano competitions and was a top laureate at the Busoni International Competition. He has made many recordings and performed recitals with many of top orchestras around the globe. The experience of this single performance in Sarasota leaves me wondering why he is not more widely acclaimed than he is at this stage of his life. It was a remarkable program.

Entertainment & Life

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