

David Kadouch, piano in Review

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Laureate of the 2009 Leeds International Pianoforte Competition and the 2005 Beethoven Competition in Bonn, David Kadouch is poised for a healthy career that already includes many concerts in the coming year. Having heard his high auspicious New York recital debut this weekend, I was happy to discover that he is an artist of distinct individuality, not at all a typical contest prizewinner, but an engaging musician.

The first point that struck this reviewer as unusual was the programming, including works that are not heard often in a recital (with the exceptions of the much-loved opening Haydn F minor Variations, Hob XVII: 6 and closing Debussy Préludes). The second point was a style of playing that showed not a trace of the thundering bombast that is so common among the twenty-something crowd vying for a chance to be heard.

The first half, while including Schumann, centered on this composer's relatively seldom played Sonata in F Minor, Op. 14 ("Concert sans Orchestre"), an intriguing work with a patchwork history of revisions and performances. Mr. Kadouch played it with a wonderful sense of Schumann's quicksilver temperament. This pianist has an outstanding gift for delicacy, both in lyrical phrases and in rapid passagework. Incidentally, he chose to play the Scherzo originally composed by the composer (the "Allegro Vivacissimo," not the Scherzo "Molto Commodo" that is more often used), a choice that favored his natural lightness of touch. There were times (especially in the Schumann, but also in the Haydn) when he wanted a bit more melodic fullness and sustaining of the energy of phrases to the very end (especially when the harmonic intensity invited it), but these were personal quibbles.

Liszt's Spinning Chorus from Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* opened the second half in a jaunty interpretation that again emphasized the pianist's more delicate, playful side. Mr. Kadouch truly seemed to be enjoying himself here. Following were fifteen of Shostakovich's 24 Preludes, Op. 34 (which the pianist recently recorded), again not exactly the typical firebrand offering, though highly demanding in subtle interpretive ways. Kadouch reflected genuine feeling in each choice, showing plenty of wit, a kaleidoscope of colors, and a flexibility of phrasing that felt almost balletic. He played a slightly different arrangement of the Preludes than listed on the program, opting for a mix of 1-2, 5-6, 9-11, 13-16, 19-21, and 24, and it worked well. He ended with number 5, leaving a well-punctuated feeling and whetting the listener's appetite to hear his recording of all of them.

Two Debussy Préludes, "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses" and "Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest" closed. As stated before, the Debussy Préludes were not such an unusual choice, but their placement as the final works was. One grows accustomed to big pyrotechnics at a debut's close, and this was definitely not the case. Mr. Kadouch has a subtlety that will be an acquired taste for many, but it will undoubtedly be worth acquiring, especially in similar repertoire. His encore of Chopin's posthumous C-sharp minor Nocturne brought the evening to a gentle close.