



Jiayan Sun, pianist

Jiayan Sun, pianist

Praised for his “revelatory” (New York Times) and “technically flawless, poetically inspired and immensely assured playing” (Toronto Star), pianist Jiayan Sun performs extensively in the North America, Europe, and Asia. He has performed frequently with The Cleveland Orchestra, The Hallé, Chinese and RTÉ (Ireland) National Symphony Orchestras, Fort Worth and Toledo Symphony Orchestras, Toronto and Aspen Concert Orchestras, Suwon Philharmonic Orchestra, etc., and he has conducted Meininger Hofkapelle from the keyboard. He has collaborated with prominent conductors such as Sir Mark Elder, Michail Jurowski, Stefan Sanderling, Leon Fleisher, David Hayes, Thomas Crawford, Daejin Kim, Kerry Stratton, and Xincan Li. He has concertized at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, Severance Hall in Cleveland, Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, National Concert Hall in Dublin, Leeds Town Hall, Beethoven-Haus in Bonn, Royal Conservatory’s Koerner Hall in Toronto, Beijing Concert Hall, Taipei National Concert Hall, among many others. His performances have been broadcast on BBC, RTÉ, China Central Television, and classical music radio stations in North America.

Mr. Sun has been awarded many major prizes in international piano competitions, including the third prize in Leeds International Piano Competition, the second prize in Dublin International Piano Competition, the fourth and audience prize in Cleveland International Piano Competition, the first prize in the inaugural CCC Toronto International Piano Competition, among others. He was named a “Sylff Fellow” by The Tokyo Foundation. Under the mentorship of Sir András Schiff, he is invited to give multiple recitals in Europe as part of Schiff’s “Building Bridges” project in the 2017-2018 season.

Playing early keyboard instruments and studies on historical performance practice play a significant role in Mr. Sun's musical activities. Important engagements include critically acclaimed appearances with the American Classical Orchestra and The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and recitals at the Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies at the Cornell University and at The Juilliard School. In 2014, he performed a series of recitals commemorating the tricentennial of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's birth on clavichord, harpsichord, and fortepiano. He has studied harpsichord with Lionel Party and fortepiano with Malcolm Bilson and Audrey Axinn.

Born in Yantai, Shandong Province, China in 1990, Mr. Sun studied in the Central Conservatory in Beijing with Jin Zhang before moving to the United States in 2006 to study at The Juilliard School Pre-college Division with Victoria Mushkatkol, graduated with the achievement award in 2008. He received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from The Juilliard School in 2012 and 2014 respectively. He continues his studies at Juilliard as a doctoral candidate under the tutelage of Yoheved Kaplinsky and Stephen Hough, with additional studies with Richard Goode and Robert Levin. He performs frequently at Juilliard and has participated in the annual ChamberFest and Focus! Festival. He has performed and participated in Verbier Festival, Gstaad Menuhin Festival, Klavier-Festival Ruhr, Aspen Music Festival, Sarasota Music Festival, PianoTexas, etc. His devotion to the art of composition led him to study with the composer Philip Lasser. His works have been performed in concerts at Juilliard. He is the Iva Dee Hiatt Visiting Artist in Piano and Lecturer of Music at Smith College. For more information, please visit jiayansunpianist.com. (As of 2017/08)

Jiayan Sun

Pianist

29 Lyman Road, Apt. A
Northampton, MA 01060
917-770-1069
jiayansun1@gmail.com

EDUCATION

The Juilliard School, candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts, current. Projected date of completion: May 2019.

The Juilliard School, Master of Music, 2014.

The Juilliard School, Bachelor of Music, 2012.

The Juilliard School, Pre-college Division, 2006-2008.

The Middle School attached to the Central Conservatory, Beijing, China, 2002-2006.

PRINCIPAL TEACHERS

Yoheved Kaplinsky, 2008-2016.

Stephen Hough, 2014-2016.

Victoria Mushkatkol, 2006-2008.

Jin Zhang, 2002-2006.

Additional studies with Richard Goode and Robert Levin, piano; Lionel Party, harpsichord; Malcolm Bilson and Audrey Axinn, fortepiano; Philip Lasser, composition. Master classes: Alfred Brendel, Leon Fleisher, Byron Janis, Paul Badura-Skoda, Sir András Schiff.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

SOLIST WITH ORCHESTRAS

American Classical Orchestra conducted by Thomas Crawford, Mozart K. 41 and 107/2, 2017.

Suwon Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Daejin Kim, Brahms Concerto No. 1, 2016.

Sichuan Conservatory Orchestra conducted by Qiyuan Zhu, Brahms Concerto No. 1, 2016.

American Classical Orchestra conducted by Thomas Crawford, Beethoven Concerto No. 5, 2015.

Meininger Hofkapelle, conducting Mozart Concerto K. 466 from the keyboard, 2015.

Chagrin Falls Studio Orchestra conducted by Stephen Eva, Liszt Concertos Nos. 1 and 2, 2015.

Toledo Symphony Orchestra conducted by Stefan Sanderling, Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1, 2014.

The Cleveland Orchestra conducted by Stefan Sanderling, Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1, 2013.

The Orchestra of Opera North conducted by Michail Jurowski, Prokofiev Concerto No. 3, 2013.

The Hallé conducted by Sir Mark Elder, Prokofiev Concerto No. 2, 2012.

Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leon Fleisher, Beethoven Concerto No. 4, 2012.
RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (Ireland) conducted by James Cavanagh, Tchaikovsky
Concerto No. 1, 2012
Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leon Fleisher, Beethoven Concerto No. 1, 2011.
Toronto Concert Orchestra conducted by Kerry Stratton, Prokofiev Concerto No. 2, 2010.

SELECTED RECENT SOLO RECITALS

Seven-city recital tour in China: Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing, Oriental Arts Center in
Shanghai, concert halls in Shenyang, Wuhan, Changsha, Xiamen, and Yantai, 2016.
Natalie L. Haslam Music Center, University of Tennessee in Knoxville, 2016.
Athenaeum Music & Arts Library, La Jolla, CA, 2016.
The Depot Theater, Garrison, NY, 2016.
The Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies, Kiplinger Theater, Schwartz Center for
Performing Arts, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 2015.
Rutgers University, Schare Recital Hall, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 2015.
California Center for the Arts, Escondido, CA, 2015.
La Jolla Music Society, TSRI Auditorium, La Jolla, CA, 2015.
South Orange Performing Arts Center, South Orange, NJ, 2015.
German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases, Bonn, Germany, 2015.
Sandra G. Powell Recital Hall, Knoxville, TN, 2014.
Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, ON, Canada, 2014.

Regular solo recitals and chamber music performances at The Juilliard School. Organized and
performed multiple recitals celebrating the anniversaries of Ferruccio Busoni, 2016; C. P. E.
Bach, 2014; Claude Debussy, 2012; Wilhelm Furtwängler, 2009.

CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERTS

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Alice Tully Hall, New York, 2016.
Palazzo Ricci, Montepulciano, Italy, 2014.
Recital Hall at Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln, Germany, 2014.
Chamber Music Hall at the Beethoven House, Bonn, Germany, 2014.

MUSIC FESTIVALS

Gstaad Menuhin Festival, 2017.
Klavier-Festival Ruhr, 2017.
Verbier Festival Academy, 2015.
Sarasota Music Festival, FL, 2013.
Aspen Music Festival and School, Aspen, CO, 2010-2013.
PianoTexas, Fort Worth, TX, 2011-2012.

RECORDINGS and BROADCASTS

World premiere recording of two-piano and piano four-hand music by Paul Reale, MSR Classics, 2016.

Performance broadcasts on BBC, RTÉ, China Central Television, classical music radio stations in Cleveland, Toronto, Shanghai.

PUBLICATION

“Busoni Rethought,” *The Juilliard Journal*, December 2016/January 2017.

“Celebrating C. P. E. Bach’s 300th: Making a Case for Performing His Music,” *The Juilliard Journal*, December 2014/January 2015.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Iva Dee Hiatt Visiting Artist in Piano and Lecturer of Music at Smith College, MA, 2017-2019.

MASTERCLASS

Changsha Concert Hall and Yantai Grand Theater, China, 2016.

University of Tennessee in Knoxville, 2014 and 2016.

Peristyle Theater in the Toledo Museum of Art with students from the Bowling Green State University, OH, 2014.

PRESENTATION

"Fantasizing with Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven --- *Fantasieren*, or Improvisation, as the Focal Point of Their Music." The Juilliard School Piano Seminar, 2016.

HONORS and AWARDS

Fourth Prize and Audience Prize, Cleveland International Piano Competition, 2013.

Third Prize, Leeds International Piano Competition, 2012.

Second Prize, Dublin International Piano Competition, 2012.

Second Prize, International Fulbright Concerto Competition (Fayetteville, AR), 2011.

First Prize, the inaugural CCC Toronto International Piano Competition, 2010.

Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship, The Tokyo Foundation, 2011-2016.

Fellowship from the Bach-Archiv in Leipzig, 2014.

MUSIC

Review: All Beethoven, All Evening, on Period Instruments

By **JAMES R. OESTREICH** SEPT. 11, 2015

Critical acclaim for the vital performances and typically adventurous programming of the period-instrument American Classical Orchestra, founded and directed by Thomas Crawford, often comes with a sensible suggestion: It is high time that the ensemble scrap its longstanding motto, “Music as the masters heard it.” Past time, in fact.

We know enough about early music by now to realize how much we don’t and can’t know about the precise circumstances of original performances: the quality of the playing, for example, or the sounds of the halls. And, all that aside, the masters were listening with ears innocent of the two or three centuries’ worth of music to follow.

The motto seemed singularly ludicrous for the concert opening the orchestra’s 31st season on Thursday evening at Alice Tully Hall. The program consisted entirely of works Beethoven wrote as he was sinking into deafness: the “Leonore” Overture No. 3 (1806), the “Emperor” Piano Concerto (1809) and the Seventh Symphony (1813). He heard next to none of it.

An all-Beethoven concert is not exactly adventurous programming, of course, but the orchestra’s season also includes Telemann’s oratorio “Der Tag des Gerichts” (“The Day of Judgment”), Bach’s “St. John Passion” and,

semistaged, Haydn's opera "L'Isola Disabitata" ("The Deserted Island"). Nor is large-scale Beethoven on period instruments entirely routine yet in New York.

The overture immediately opened the ears with delightfully crunchy sounds from the treacherous old valveless brasses. And it was a nice idea by Mr. Crawford to relegate the work's distant trumpet call (heralding Florestan's liberation in the opera) to the rear balcony, where Timothy Will gave it a good go.

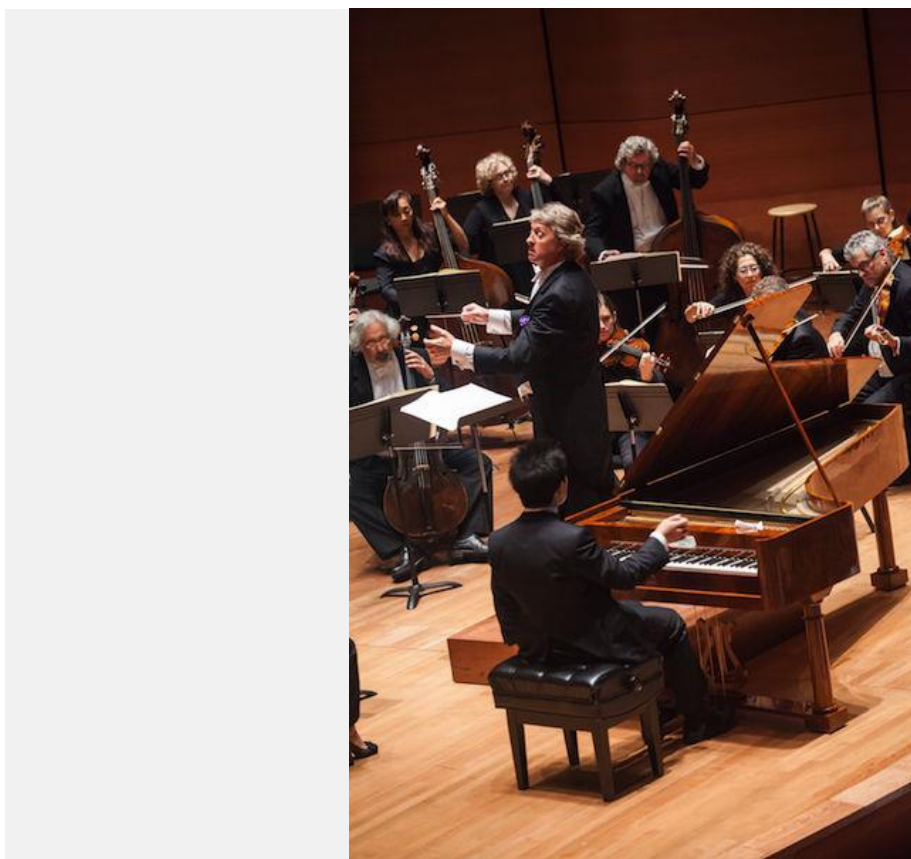
Even more revelatory was hearing the mighty "Emperor" Concerto, generally pounded out on heavy steel-frame pianos these days, played on a fortepiano, by the young Chinese-born Jiayan Sun. The instrument was a replica of an instrument built in Vienna by Johann Fritz in 1812; it was recently made by Paul McNulty, an American living in the Czech Republic, for the fortepianist Malcolm Bilson, one of Mr. Sun's teachers.

Mr. Sun exploited the instrument's delicate yet lush sonority with flowing legatos and characterful phrasing. The fortissimo low chords in the finale had a nice stringy twang rather than a metallic clang. Mr. Sun played along with orchestral passages where no piano was called for, duplicating the harmonies to little audible effect, but adding an energy that was palpable.

The orchestra's playing throughout the evening, driven hard by Mr. Crawford, was a little rough and ready, especially in the horns. But allowances can be made so early in the season, and this was, over all, an invigorating start.

Concert Review: American Classical Orchestra with Pianist Jiayan Sun – All-Beethoven Concert, NYC (September 10, 2015)

Posted by: Jon Sobel September 11, 2015 in Classical, Concert Reviews, Music, Music Genres, Reviews music



American Classical Orchestra conducted by Thomas Crawford with pianist Jiayan Sun. Photo by Arlette Landestoy

In the hands of the American Classical Orchestra under the direction of Thomas Crawford, period instruments are anything but stodgy and academic. While it's common to hear very old (baroque or "early") music played on instruments of its time – viols, sackbuts, theorbos and the like – there are fewer opportunities to hear the well-known orchestral music of the great classical composers like Beethoven on instruments of their own time.

How did Beethoven hear his own music (before he went deaf, that is)? Of course, we can't really know, as Maestro Crawford pointed out at Thursday night's concert at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. But we can hear it played using the same "tools" the musicians had in their hands –

in, say, 1813, at a benefit concert for Austrian and Bavarian soldiers wounded in the Napoleonic Wars. That's where Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 premiered. Or seven years earlier, in 1806, when the first revision of his only opera *Fidelio* (then called *Leonore*) was introduced by what is now known as the "Leonore Overture No. 3" – the work that also opened the ACO's concert, the first of its 31st season.

From the swelling opening chords of this famous piece, high drama and sublime beauty mingled with exquisite tonal balance and finely calibrated dynamics. Attuning one's ears to the different sound of the period instruments, particularly the winds (the flute purer and less airy, the oboe and bassoon less nasal than their modern counterparts), it was easy to get lost in the dense harmonies and sweet complexities of the score.

More eye-opening was the Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 73 ("Emperor"). The young pianist Jiayan Sun played a fortepiano recently made for Malcolm Bilson (who was in attendance), an elegant-looking replica of an 1812 Viennese instrument. From it Sun drew an expressive, liquid sound, muted and "small" compared with that of a modern piano. Clearly accustomed to period instruments, he applied an appropriately delicate, spidery touch to the keyboard.

The performance was quite revelatory. In the quietest upper-register passages, the fortepiano chimed almost like a celesta. In the mid-range it hummed like a harp. And when played hard in the lower register, it sounded plucky, like a harpsichord. Untraditionally, the audience applauded after the first movement. It just seemed the thing to do after the commanding performance by Sun and the orchestra, not to mention Maestro Crawford's animated conducting.

I've heard the concerto before, but I felt as if I hadn't. I can't say the same for the Seventh Symphony, with the timeless melodies of the second and third movements in particular. The performance was a joy from start to finish. Crawford accentuated the humor in the quiet, spacious lead-in to the main, fast section of the first movement, then played up the playfulness in the martial, galloping rhythms. His enthusiasm for this work, which he has memorized, translated to sheer fun for the audience.

I've always loved the second movement with its distinctive melodic hooks. The orchestra played with such sensitivity and such a warm, intimate sound that with eyes closed I easily imagined the strings were playing for me in my living room, in contrast to the joyful, ballet-like, crisply played third movement. And the finale, controlled bombast at its best, featured standout work from the strings, the tympani, and the natural (valveless) horns.

With rich harmonics, thrilling tension, and remarkable spatial awareness, the ACO made a thoroughly convincing case for how worthwhile it is to make the effort to present works like Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 with original instruments. The all-Beethoven program made a stellar start to the orchestra's new season. See the ACO's [full schedule](#).

Sun should shine in Discovery Series

Competition-tested pianist opens La Jolla Music Society series devoted to young artists

By [James Chute](#) [\(/staff/james-chute/\)](#) 4:33 p.m. Jan. 21, 2015



Pianist Jiayan Sun

Jiayan Sun hasn't exactly made a career out of piano competitions, but he's played a lot of them, winning medals at the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition, the Dublin International Piano Competition, the Fulbright Concerto Competition, the Cleveland International Piano Competition and the Toronto International Piano Competition.

The 24-year-old Chinese-born Juilliard student, who opens the La Jolla Music Society's Discovery Series on Jan. 25 and performs on the California Center for the Arts' Intimate Classics Series on Feb. 1, recently talked about competitions, the piano and his career.

Q: How do you approach competitions?

A: I treat them like opportunities for artistic development, to communicate with my audience. I don't think they are any different from the concert I'm going to give (in La Jolla). I'm not thinking of a competition as a place to compete, or a place to win, but actually it's a way for me to grow artistically.

Q: Your program in La Jolla has a number of smaller pieces (Chopin's 24 Preludes, selections from Chabrier's "Dix Pièces Pittoresque" and Debussy's Preludes Book II, and Bartok's "Out of Doors"). What is it you like about these smaller works?

A: Sometimes we have a tendency to value huge, gigantic, lengthy works, and surely they do express something significant. But I think also when we have such small pieces ... they could express something very profound and deeply philosophical.

Q: You have an interest in early instruments (like the harpsichord and the fortepiano). How does that inform your performances?

A: With the knowledge of these earlier instruments, I think I have better understanding of how to interpret these pieces on a modern Steinway, which is quite different, certainly, from the instrument of Mozart or Beethoven's time, but also from Chopin's piano.

Q: You are still a student, but also playing a lot of concerts. Are you in a kind of transition?

A: Maybe so. But on the other hand, always the most important thing is what we do with music. And my love of music, I think that's not something about career or profession; it's about how I can do my best to contribute to music.

Q: How do you develop your own voice as an artist?

A: It's very difficult. How do we nowadays play music by Chopin? Chopin died 150 years ago, more than that, and Beethoven and Mozart are even earlier. The connection between the performer and the composer, the old composers, is getting farther and farther. It's important I do as much as I can to look at history, the instruments, performance practice, everything I can — not for the sake of

knowledge, because I'm not interested in being a scholar for scholar's own sake, but for how we could then communicate this music much better, or more effectively, to our audience today.

© Copyright 2015 The San Diego Union-Tribune, LLC. An MLIM LLC Company. All rights reserved.

Toledo Symphony opens 2014-15 series with new talent

9/20/2014

BY SALLY VALLONGO
SPECIAL TO THE BLADE



The Toledo Symphony opened its marquee 2014-2015 Classics Series with an exciting new talent and a wonderfully refined revival of two favorites in the literature.

Principal conductor Stefan Sanderling was back on the podium for a well-filled Peristyle.

There was no doubt how the crowd felt about pianist Jianyan Sun after his debut performance of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. The entire house rose as one to offer thunderous applause with several repeat calls.

No surprise, this. (In fact, a few fans had stood to applaud after the first movement.)

Sun, a find by Principal Conductor Stefan Sanderling, who led the concert, lived up to the hype that has barely begun to spin around his exquisite playing.

But mark these words, this Chinese artist will score a major career if he turns in performances like the one last night – exacting and yet calm, as if his playing draws from a musical center that is rock solid. Sun had played the same work at the Cleveland International Piano Competition in 2013, but came in fourth – although also the audience favorite.

From the opening notes Sun played with assurance, placing each note in theme or melody in the place it needed to be. His was the big musical picture, a construct of impeccable timing into which artful phrases and rippling arpeggios received just the right amount of emphasis.

The first movement cadenza was a musical journey of its own, with Sun as the knowing guide. In the Andantino second movement, he received orchestral partnering that well matched his approach. And the final Allegro was really a compelling dance in which Sun's technique was flawless.

Hard to follow such a performance, but the second work, Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2, was a delightful demonstration of the TSO at its most congenial and expressive.

In the first of four movements the composer conjures powerful sonic turbulence, which the orchestra under Sanderling explored fully. Like the ocean at an inlet, the music bubbles up in insistent surges, then subsides, with a dark theme passed from section to soloist and back.

The second movement races like a sled across snowy Russian fields, with sharp strings and booming brass, generating big, brassy chords to a punchy ending.

Like the eye of a musical storm, the third movement, an Adagio, is tranquil, fervent, and reassuring. The long theme, played languidly by principal clarinet Georg Klaas, rises like vapor from hot cement after a summer storm.

Imbued with confidence, the fourth movement races off in a welter of rich sound that twists and turns on its way to the glorious finale.

This weekend's concerts were dedicated, at intermission by Maestro Sanderling, to major donors Fritz and Mary Wolfe, to longtime supporter, the late, Posey Huebner, and, with heartfelt sadness, to Sandra Clark, the TSO's outstanding principal horn, who died of cancer last summer.

The evening's performance bodes well for a busy and adventurous season.

So stay tuned. You know the TSO will.

This concert will repeat at 8 p.m. today in the Peristyle. Tickets are \$24-55 at 419-245-8000 or www.toledosymphony.com.

Copyright 2014 The Blade. All rights reserved. This material may not be copied or distributed without permission.

MUSIC | MUSIC REVIEW

A Soviet Composer's Circle of Friends

A Homage to Alfred Schnittke at Juilliard

By ZACHARY WOOLFE JAN. 29, 2014

It takes a village to raise some composers to prominence. That was the lesson to be learned from an onstage discussion on Tuesday evening at the Juilliard School that preceded one of the six free concerts in the school's remarkable Focus! festival.

This year the festival is observing the 80th anniversary of Alfred Schnittke's birth, juxtaposing him with composers in his circle like Arvo Pärt and Sofia Gubaidulina. Tuesday's panel brought together a group of people for whom "Arvo and Sofia and Alfred," as they were referred to at one point, remain personal touchstones, from the Russian pianist Vladimir Feltsman to the music publisher Hans-Ulrich Duffek.

Eleanor Sutter, a retired Foreign Service worker, spoke of living in Moscow in the 1970s as the wife of an American Embassy employee. She got to know these composers and brought some of their scores when she returned to the United States, where they found their way into the hands of an enterprising conductor, Joel Sachs. He gave them key early performances before later founding the New Juilliard Ensemble; he is now the Focus! festival's director.

In other words, this year's festival is a labor of love. Affection and respect were palpable in the evening's excellent performances, which culminated in a **bristling, incisive** rendition of Schnittke's vehemently eclectic Violin Sonata No. 2 (1968) by the violinist Siwoo Kim and the **pianist Jiayan Sun**.

Nearly as compelling, and even more unusual, was the cellist Branson Yeast and the organist Gregory Zelek's performance of Ms. Gubaidulina's "In Croce" for cello and organ (1979). The cello's line fitfully rises and the organ's falls, meeting in a passage of jubilant, anxious activity and slowly forming the cross of the title, a bit of Christian symbolism that went unmentioned when the work had its premiere in Soviet Russia.

The mezzo-soprano Naomi O'Connell and the violist Alexander Knecht were intensely focused in Giya Kancheli's "Caris Mere" (1994), to a brief text drawn from the New Testament and Hölderlin. (The musicologist Laurel Fay had suggested during the panel discussion that Mr. Kancheli's work would be more popular in the United States if he made personal appearances, but he apparently refuses to fly if he is unable to smoke on the plane.)

The pianist Yoshiaki Ko brought out resonant nuances in three of Mr. Part's short piano pieces, including "For Alina" (1976), the first outing for his then-new melodic and harmonic theory, which he called tintinnabulation. The theory has always seemed a bit like nonsense to me, but the works are serene and pleasing.

Far more interesting, though, are Schnittke's "Five Aphorisms" (1990), which the pianist Han Chen played with a sure, subtle touch, ending the fourth with a creepy low chord that hovered in the air like a dying sigh. The violist Jocelin Pan and the pianist Valeriya Polunina had lines that sometimes overlapped, to ghostly effect, in Valentin Silvestrov's brooding "Epitaph (L.B.)" (1999).

During the preconcert discussion, Mr. Sachs asked the panel whether younger artists were championing these composers. His festival is one answer to his question: he is helping create a new generation of advocates.

The Focus! festival concludes on Friday at the Juilliard School, Lincoln Center; 212-769-7406, juilliard.edu.

A version of this review appears in print on January 30, 2014, on page C4 of the New York edition with the headline: A Soviet Composer's Circle of Friends.

Former CIM student Khristenko wins Cleveland Int'l Piano Competition

KHRISTENKO.JPG

Pianist Stanislav Khristenko acknowledges applause Saturday night at Severance Hall following the announcement that he'd won the 2013 Cleveland International Piano Competition. At right is conductor Stefan Sanderling. *(Roger Mastroianni)*

Zachary Lewis, The Plain Dealer By **Zachary Lewis, The Plain Dealer**

Email the author

on August 10, 2013 at 11:00 PM, updated August 11, 2013 at 1:29 PM

Now we truly know them. Now, too, we have a winner.

After surviving two rounds of elimination and giving three solo recitals, the finalists in the 2013 Cleveland International Piano Competition laid bare one last side of themselves Friday and Saturday in concerto performances with the Cleveland Orchestra.

Ultimately, the jury selected one man, Russian Stanislav Khristenko, the winner. The 29-year-old former student of the Cleveland Institute of Music, who also placed third here in 2005, now lays claim to a prize package including \$50,000, three years of management, a compact disc recording, and a recital at Carnegie Hall.

It was the right decision. Khristenko's electrifying performance, the last of the four, of Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 Saturday evening at Severance Hall did indeed stand out on several key measures.

Truth is, however, all four pianists offered insightful, worthy and unique performances, and there was no predicting or even guessing who the victor would be until directors announced the rankings from the stage Saturday night.

Coming in behind Khristenko in second, third and fourth places, respectively, were Arseny Tarasevich-Nikolaev, 20, of Russia; Francois Dumont, 28, of France; and **Jiayan Sun**, 23, of China. They take home prizes of \$25,000, \$15,000 and \$10,000, respectively.

On Friday, Dumont kicked off the contest's most elite round with a brilliant but uneven account of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1.

In the work's tender slow movement, Dumont showed genuine grace, partnering closely with the orchestra under guest conductor Stefan Sanderling and laying out lines of transparent, melting beauty. But his performance of the famous opening Allegro, while tremendously hot-blooded and exciting in its own right, also wanted for clarity and balance. All too often, soloist and ensemble seemed to be at odds, competing

for dominance.

Where Dumont triumphed most assuredly was the Allegro con fuoco. In his determined, nimble hands, the music's sweeping passages were irresistible and its many explosive, rapid-fire displays popped like fireworks, offering non-stop thrills. That the audience responded by springing to its feet was wholly reasonable.

Altogether more sensitive and collaborative was Tarasevich-Nikolaev's performance of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2, also on Friday night. The music he made was done so with others, rather than against or above them.

Case in point: his reading of the Adagio. Rhapsodic and transcendent by turns, the performance reflected not only exquisite balance but also a real understanding of the soloist's place in the ensemble. It was if the pianist had been rehearsing the piece with Sanderling all week.

But Tarasevich-Nikolaev also proved capable of wowing by means of sheer virtuosity and strength. The giant chords of the Moderato he hammered out with volcanic intensity, only to turn around seconds later and flit over the keyboard with elfin lightness. In the final Allegro, the pianist held the audience firmly in his grip, keeping listeners on their toes with controlled torrents and pulling them along on waves of gradually surging emotion.

As for Sun, so dynamic was his performance of Tchaikovsky's Concerto No. 1 Saturday evening, one didn't mind hearing the work a second time. In fact, with him, it almost sounded like a different piece.

While Sun, a muscular player, had no trouble rising above the orchestra, he also fell just as naturally into organic, responsive dialogue with it. His also was a dramatically more lyrical, spacious reading, in which pauses figured prominently, and effectively.

Definition, too, was plentiful. Dark passages rumbled in perfect clarity, and fast-flowing runs twinkled brightly. All these factors combined for a robust, hard-hitting finale, one in which Sun evinced both stellar technique and a keen sense of drama.

But Khristenko's performance was the most distinctive by a wide margin. Give him credit not only for taking on a titanic work, Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1, but also for going out on the furthest limb, adopting a distinctively relaxed pace for much of his performance.

But it's how Khristenko used that time that really counted. Taking full advantage of his luxurious tempo, the pianist in the first movement was able to enunciate every line crisply, and generate great excitement by means of contrast.

Imagine, too, what Khristenko did with the Adagio. Time, in his reading, almost stood still, and he filled the void with shimmering filigree and phrases of exquisite tenderness, in which every note mattered.

Yet Khristenko wasn't stuck in slow motion. His virtuoso performance of the final Rondo was fully invigorating. From start to finish, the pianist had listeners on the edge of their seats.

Three years now remain until the next competition. However one feels about the results of 2013, surely all who heard these performances can agree the gap is going to seem long.

© 2014 cleveland.com. All rights reserved.

Review

Review of the Orchestra of Opera North



13/04/2013

Ilkley Gazette and Wharfedale & Aireborough Observer review of the Orchestra of Opera North concert at Leeds Town Hall on 13 April 2013.

Orchestra of Opera North

Leeds Town Hall, 13 April 2013

The mysterious chemistry between orchestra and conductor created a concert that was very special indeed - an extraordinary event which nearly has me running out of superlatives. Michail Jurowski presided over an all-Russian programme that we could have quite easily been hearing for the first time, so vividly expressed was the Moscow-born conductor's attention to instrumental colour and phrasing. Mussorgsky's *Night on a Bare Mountain* dripped with an atmosphere of the supernatural as Jurowski moulded the phrases and balanced stupendous climaxes with the softest pianissimos.

In Prokofiev's popular Third Piano Concerto, Jurowski and Leeds International Piano Competition prize winner, Jiayan Sun, proved to be a partnership made in Heaven. The 22 year-old Chinese pianist played with jaw-dropping brilliance; his mercurial command of the keyboard and the kaleidoscopic colours dusted onto every phrase seemed to reveal details never previously heard in this dazzling work.

After the interval, Jurowski's expressive baton carved out an electrifying interpretation of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. The dramatic impact of the final movement was delivered at a thrilling pace and with devastating force. Incandescent brass climaxes and the weight of the Orchestra of Opera North's opulent string section, built on eight double basses and ten cellos, set the seal on a performance that will surely be talked about for years to come. The prolonged roar of applause from an elated Leeds Town Hall audience spoke volumes.

Author : Geoffrey Mogridge

Review: Noble themes that stir the heart

Roger Bayley Wednesday, May 8, 2013 9:16:54 EDT PM

Pianist Jiayan Sun is an exciting performer to watch and hear, says reviewer Roger Bayley.

"My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for a king."

So says the psalmist, and so were hearts stirred by noble themes in Sunday afternoon's concert at the Sanderson Centre given by the Brantford Symphony Orchestra under the baton of conductor/music director, Philip Sarabura.

Special guest artist was the brilliant 23-year-old pianist, Jiayan Sun, born in China and currently a full scholarship student at the Juilliard School in New York.

"Nobility comes to town" was the title given to the program, second last of the 2012-13 concert season. It began fittingly with William Walton's Crown Imperial - Coronation March, originally performed in 1937 at the coronation of George VI. The Walton piece set the stage for a wonderful afternoon of music. Particularly impressive were the golden sounds of the cellos at the beginning.

All sections of the orchestra had their turns and the total effect was one of excitement and great majesty.

Next came Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto, nicknamed "The Emperor." Jiayan Sun is an exciting performer, exciting to watch and exciting to hear. He is totally absorbed in the music, even when not actually playing. His body expresses his feeling and one gets caught up in the emotion of the music as expressed by this young man in partnership with the orchestra and conductor. His playing is energetic and technically flawless; trills are clean and clear, with a pedalling technique to match. On occasion the middle and lower registers of the piano seemed to get lost in the sonorities of the orchestra. There was an unfortunate dissonance in the upper register of the piano, but that did not seem to distract Sun.

The performance of this piece conveyed emotion, lyricism, grandeur, majesty and even playfulness in the closing rondo movement. The audience of about 400 responded appropriately with a well deserved standing ovation for both orchestra and soloist.

Brahms' Symphony No. 1 in C minor followed the intermission. In a rather pleasing departure from tradition, Sarabura spoke briefly about Brahms writing this symphony and delaying its publication until some 20 years later, having had to follow Beethoven's nine symphonies. We were treated to a discussion of today's performance options regarding use of period and modern instruments. This was demonstrated by the tuning capabilities of the modern tympani versus those of Brahms' day, followed by an explanation of the development of a virtual fifth string on the Bass Viol so that it could play all the way down to a bottom C an octave below the bottom C of the Cello.

Before performing the complete symphony, Sarabura and the BSO gave two small excerpts from the fourth movement, allowing us to hear what leads to the great and noble theme of that last movement.

To hear this wonderful work in a live concert in its entirety is a rare treat. From the seemingly austere opening of the first movement, through to its majestic conclusion, Sarabura had the audience and the

orchestra in his hands. The audience was captivated and deeply attentive. The orchestra always responded to the very slightest gesture of its conductor.

The playing of the orchestra was inspired, perhaps by the nobility of the music itself, perhaps by the excellent leadership, and perhaps most of all by the rapt attention of the audience in that magical acoustic space of the Sanderson Centre. Their outstanding performance brought about a second standing ovation from the enthusiastic audience.

Sarabura, Jiayun Sun and the BSO are to be commended for bringing to us Sunday's excellent performance and programming concept. Truly, this writer's heart was stirred by such "noble themes."

Roger Bayley is a Brantford-based pianist, organist and choir director, serving as director of music at Greenbrier Presbyterian Church.

PianoTexas Wrap-Up

Posted July 3, 2012 by LEONARD EUREKA in Arts

www.fwweekly.com/2012/07/03/pianotexas-wrapup/ 2/7

TCU's annual festival featured some spellbinding performances.

Every summer TCU's PianoTexas Festival shows off brilliant young talent in two concerto programs in Ed Landreth Auditorium accompanied by the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. Six pianists, three per program, are selected by festival faculty as best of the year from the 24 musicians attending the four-week workshop. (Eighty-seven pianists from around the world originally applied for the 24 openings.)

This year's standout was a 22-year-old Chinese undergraduate from the Juilliard School, Jiayan Sun, who gave a captivating performance of the Beethoven Fourth Piano Concerto; beautiful sound from whispers to full-out forte, never overstepping the bounds of early-19th-century style, and filled with musical insights beyond his years. He seemed totally immersed in the music, giving a performance that would be at home on any international stage.

Sun appeared on a program that might have been subtitled "everyone's favorites" that included performances of the Schumann and Mendelssohn first piano concertos in addition to his Beethoven.

Cheng Zhang made his fourth appearance here in as many years. He has given memorable Beethoven performances in the past, and this year he tried his wings with the Schumann A minor Concerto. It was a personal, introspective look at the music that we've come to expect from the 23-year-old musician — he also burrows deeply into a piece to find its poetic depths, and there is a unique energy to his playing that carries everything before it.

Xuesha Hu, also from China and at 19 the youngest performer this year, played the Mendelssohn Concerto, and her youth did intrude. She didn't seem at home in the style — it's all nimble fingers and singing phrases, which she has, but I felt at times she was trying to take the music into a grander Romantic world in which it didn't fit.

The FWSO under guest conductor Leon Fleisher sounded brilliant in the Beethoven Concerto but under-rehearsed and at times undernourished in the Schumann and Mendelssohn concertos.

The second program featured the first three Prokofiev concertos, which was pretty heavy sledding all in one night, but the small audience seemed enthusiastic.

Outstanding was Russian pianist Anna Bulkina, at 25 one of the oldest performers (the cutoff age for the workshop is 27). She has given mature, compelling performances of the Schumann and Beethoven third concertos in previous appearances here, but nothing suggested the fierceness she would bring to the Prokofiev Second Concerto. She walked on stage in a handsome

silver gown sewn with crystals that glittered as she moved, sat down, and gave a muscular, in-your-face performance whose power lit up the hall. Even the insanely intense finale gave her no apparent problems.

She took second prize in last year's Ferruccio Busoni Competition in Italy playing the same work, which makes me wonder what could have topped it. Her sound was harsh at times, and some of the rapid repetitions sounded mechanical. However, one could argue this was the composer's intent. Prokofiev thumbed his nose at early-20th-century conventions and created his own rugged landscape filled with pounding, dissonant chords and runaway finger work.

This was particularly true of the First Concerto, played here by 25-year-old Evan Mitchell, who brought a playful feeling to the last movement, and handled the brutal octave passages with ease. His sound tended to be bright, even brittle at times, but the fingerwork was amazing. The composer's piano music had mellowed by the Third Concerto, and more lyricism crept in. (Wisps of melodies here showed up later in his ballet music for *Romeo and Juliet*.) Alan Woo, at 20 the youngest of the night's pianists, had the most attractive sound of the evening: fuller, mellower and more varied than that of his colleagues. His playing showed musical savvy, too, not usually found at this age, and made you want to hear him in some of the big Romantic works.

Miguel Harth-Bedoya, the Fort Worth Symphony's regular conductor, led the group in accompanying the Prokofiev concertos, and his sensitivity in working with young musicians was remarkable. There's no trickier music to hold together in the piano repertory than Prokofiev, and he was there for the soloists at every moment.

Next year Harth-Bedoya will join the ranks of successful conductors who serve in two posts, when he becomes chief conductor of the Oslo Radio Symphony. In a recent phone conversation he indicated it would be an eight-week assignment "but not as demanding as a music director," requiring only rehearsals and concerts and easily sandwiched into his regular schedule. This week Harth-Bedoya is taking part in the Music Festival at Tanglewood, Mass., coaching young conductors and leading the Boston Symphony, interestingly, in the Prokofiev ballet music for *Romeo and Juliet*.

The number of Chinese students in the workshop reflects TCU's Dr. Tamás Ungár's worldwide participation in similar workshops, including the Beijing International Piano Festival, which he founded in 2006 with the blessing of the Chinese government. Each summer he is part of festivals in Hungary and Italy and this year adds the Banff Festival in Canada and one in the southern seacoast city of Qindau, China. He has been director of TCU's PianoTexas since founding it 31 years ago.

Chinese pianist wins inaugural contest

Performer walks away with \$15,000 as Toronto finally on the world map of competition

JOHN TERAUDS
MUSIC CRITIC

Over the past week, Toronto witnessed how the classical music business is as globalized as any other enterprise in the 21st century.

Our concert halls brim with the finest talents the world has to offer, but the city has sat on the sidelines of the international music competition circuit.

That all changed when the Canadian Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto decided it was time to put us on the international map with its first piano competition, which concluded at the Royal Conservatory of Music's Koerner Hall on Monday night.

The first-prize winner, out of 21 contestants chosen from more than 100 video applications, was a boyish 20-year-old Chinese pianist, Jiayan Sun, who is currently perfecting his art in New York City.

Accompanied by the recently formed Toronto Concert Orchestra, led by veteran local conductor Kerry Stratton, Sun delivered a technically flawless, poetically inspired and immensely assured reading of the fiercely difficult Piano Concerto No. 2 by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev.

In taking away a \$15,000 (U.S.) cash prize, as well as a future engagement with the Brantford Symphony Orchestra, Sun showed all the pluck and promise of a young talent to watch.

The second and third prizes went to older, more experienced pianists: 27-year-old Ukrainian Kyrill Zvegintsov, currently studying in Swit-

Jiayan Sun, 20, is currently perfecting his art in New York City

zerland, took a second-place cheque for \$8,000; 32-year-old Vakhtang Kodanashvili took \$5,000 home with him to South Bend, Ind.

Zvegintsov gave a careful but unexceptional reading of Maurice Ravel's G-Major Piano Concerto. Kodanashvili soldiered through Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's warhorse Piano Concerto No. 1, surviving a hair-raising memory lapse in the final movement.

The prize-winners' concert came on the heels of three previous competition rounds, where the contestants were allowed to pick their own repertoire, leading in a wide variety of choices — many of which went refreshingly beyond the 19th century piano canon.

The two Canadian entrants, Wayne Weng and Su Jeon, did not make it to the semi-final round, which was held on Sunday at the P.C. Ho Theatre at the Chinese Cultural Centre in Scarborough. But they were fine competitors in a field where the bar had been set very high for everyone.

The overall mood on Monday night was positive, with all the competitors and adjudicators smiling at the results — at least in public view.

This new competition was the result of nearly two years' preparation and planning and, as they contemplate repeating the experience, organizers will hopefully look at how to make it stand out in a crowded market: There are currently about 750 international piano competitions in the world, many of them attracting the same competitors and adjudicators.

To stand out and really be counted, the Toronto competition needs to offer more than money, focusing on how it can help build and sustain a professional career, which is the mark of the world's most respected contests.

But this was a fine start.

Review by
Toronto Star
on Nov. 10, 2010