



## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Russian pianist Sudbin showstechnical excellence in recital

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KALAMAZOO -- In the cavalcade of splendid young pianists playing here each year in the Gilmore Rising Stars Recital Series, it is a challenge to discern significant qualitative differences -- they're all that good.

Still, every so often, a pianist arrives already the consummate performer, nearing the apex of his learning trajectory. Russian-born Yevgeny Sudbin, Sunday night's Rising Star, was just such an extraordinary artist. By brilliantly performing a program of Haydn, Medtner, Chopin and Scriabin, Sudbin, now based in London, gave persuasive evidence of technical perfection wedded to mature comprehension.

The result was dazzling, a recital characterized by secure playing that revealed hitherto hidden dimensions in the scores. Sudbin's own extensive and informed program notes likewise mirrored his astuteness.

Two Haydn works opened, Sonata No. 30 in B Minor, Hob. XVI:32, then, Sonata in C, Hob. XVI:50. Both exhibited the absolutely clean articulation required with Haydn. Sudbin's myriad trills and turns showed amazing clarity. Inner voices never blurred. Sudbin's brisk playing added more welcome dash to Haydn than usually heard.

The maturity of Sudbin's playing particularly stood out in Nikolai Medtner's Sonata in A Minor, Op. 38, No. 1, "Reminiscenza," a work that introduced many in the audience to a composer sadly neglected. A compatriot and close friend to Rachmaninoff, Medtner wrote music bearing a distinct Russian stamp (rumbling bass octaves) but retaining his individual voice. Sudbin performed Medtner as one obviously familiar with the composer's style.

With Chopin's Mazurkas Op.33, No. 2 in D major and No. 4 in B Minor, Sudbin offered greater firmness without losing Chopin's engaging romanticism. Passages of hand crossovers in No. 4 were wonderfully executed, and the composer's three-quarter rhythms were crystalline and delightful, as played by the 27-year-old pianist.

Sudbin's program notes acknowledged programming Alexander Scriabin's three pieces in an order that clarified the composer's development. Four Mazurkas from Op. 3, were early and accessible. They included romantic melodies projected through Scriabin's harmonic prism, as well as a playfulness reminiscent of Schumann's music for children.

Sonata No. 2, Op. 19, in G-Sharp Minor, derived from Scriabin's middle period, and a thickening complexity was discernible. Sudbin wonderfully conjured a dreamy, almost modern aura, emphasizing the score's rhapsodic elements.

But with Scriabin's late period, a blizzard of black notes darkened his scores, as in Sonata No. 9, Op. 68, known as the Black Mass. Sudbin miraculously controlled the rampant dissonances and menacing marches of this work, forcing into view a musical logic not readily perceived. The frenzied cacophony permeating No. 9 ultimately surpassed the tolerance of many in the audience, leaving earlier Scriabin the winner.

Without Sudbin's prowess, the full possibilities of this music would have stayed outside our reach.

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