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## Review | Fleisher's left-hand repertoire shines

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Pianist Leon Fleisher has had obstacles placed before him during his storied career, the main one being focal dystonia, a neurological affliction. His brain sent a signal to the fourth and fifth fingers of his right hand to curl under and to stay curled.

He was 36 and at the height of his career in 1964 when he developed a repertoire of left-hand pieces for the piano.

However, the 82-year-old pianist has regained the use of his right hand through treatments of Roling and Botox injections, and he has won acclaim for his 2004 recording, "Two Hands."

Still, Thursday night's concert at White Recital Hall was composed of pieces for the left hand. Fleisher recently had surgery on his right thumb, and his doctors told him it was "still not ready for professional use."

The concert was presented by Music Alliance, a collaboration of UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance and the Friends of Chamber Music.

After a screening of the short documentary "Two Hands: The Leon Fleisher Story," the man himself began his program with Toccata and Fugue for the Left Hand, Op. 56, by Jenö Takács. The 1950 composition has a modern-age sound with its strettis, for instance, notes quickly piling on top of one another, which Fleisher performed with clarity and precise pedaling.

Programming Alexander Scriabin's Prelude and Nocturne for the Left Hand, Op. 9, and a Bach Chaconne was appropriate. Scriabin wrote the Prelude and Nocturne for himself when he injured his right hand; Johannes Brahms arranged the Chaconne for the Left Hand from Violin Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004, for Clara Schumann when she injured her right hand.

Fleisher gave a lovely reading of the Scriabin, impressing the 340 or so audience members with narrative leaps between the bass and treble clefs and a pianissimo cadenza that would otherwise be taken by the right hand.

Then the Bach. One could hear the bowing of the violin as Fleisher sparingly used the sustain pedal to suggest string legato while including Bach's intricacies of the note-for-note arrangement.

Fleisher did play an encore — before the Bach — saying that afterward would cheapen the encore and the Bach. The encore: George Gershwin's "The Man I Love," arranged for the left hand by the late pianist Earl Wild.

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