

A homage to Scriabin

Piano recital evening with Pervez Mody

By Verena Naegele

Basel

The Hans Huber hall was absolutely full as Sigfried Schibli began his introduction at the concert commemorating the 100th death anniversary of Alexander Scriabin (1872 – 1915). Scriabin is seen to be one of the most eccentric personalities in music history and he was almost existentially connected to the piano. It is impossible to imagine the Russian genius without the piano and his comprehensive repertoire consists of piano works and just a few orchestral works of which only the “Poeme de l’Extase” is well known. An entire evening with piano works by Scriabin poses a challenge to both musician and the listeners. This evening however showed that the experiment was successful.

Schibli’s concise and coherent explanations about Scriabin’s life and works provided the listeners insights into the innovative creation of this composer. Pervez Mody displayed pianistic brilliance as he oscillated between convention and new expressive dimensions playing from memory and with subtle use of pedal. This is a pianist who identifies completely with Scriabin’s music without exaggerating the feelings. He can make the music soar in an impressionistic fashion while doing justice to the succinct large chords and he never loses the balance or his light touch.

Black Mass

From a chopinesque start to typical Scriabin Black Mass Sonata the first part presented a cross section of the development of Scriabin’s music as well as an escalation of expression. He began with pieces from the Mazurkas Op 3 reminiscent of Chopin. The jump to the Etudes op. 65, in which the tonality was stretched to the utmost was striking and paved the way for the one-movement Sonata No. 9 op 68 (1912/1913): Here Mody’s brilliant playing brought out the dark diabolic nature and during the march he seemed to suck in the listeners in Scriabin’s world of the “Black Mass”.

The second half was also dramatically interesting moving from the Tristan chord to the Prometheus chord. First came the Sonata No. 4 in F-sharp major op. 30 (1903) which is characterized by Wagner’s famous Tristan chord in the first part. Mody deftly and imperceptibly moved from the impressionistic soaring Andante into the Prestissimo volando. The Nocturne in D-flat major op. 9 for the left hand was almost romantic and delicate. The subsequent “Vers la flame” op. 72 (1914) developed from the 6 note mystical chord and which Scriabin presented quasi in nuce, was played by Mody with sizzling intensity