

# NEW YORK

## CONCERT REVIEW INC.

Colleen Ka-Ling Lee, piano  
Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall  
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The standard concert review generally begins with the first piece performed and ends with the final work on the program, but in the case of pianist Colleen Ka-Ling Lee, I'd like to start with a few comments on the remarkable capabilities of this extraordinarily talented young pianist, presented in her New York debut by Pro Musicis. Ms. Lee is diminutive. Seated in front of a big Steinway concert grand, the piano looks as if it could swallow her in one gulp. All the more remarkable then, is that when she plays, she commands an authority and power that need not make any apologies for her size. She has a big sound when the music demands it, with plenty of technical know-how and a tone which is uniformly supple and beautiful. Perhaps best of all, each piece she set forth had a single large climax with smaller ones placed in perfect proportion to it and always in the appropriate places. This sort of interpretative ability is rare in any pianist, the mark of a true artist and someone who has not only a command of the keys but of the poetry in the music she plays.

Ms. Lee began her program with the Piano Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 22 of Beethoven. I've kept a studio recording of this piece by Sviatoslav Richter for more than 30 years and I

enjoy it immensely, so Ms. Lee was up against a high standard. A slight blurring of the opening motif was literally the only mar on the smooth and polished surface of her performance. The beautiful E-flat slow movement, rather unusual in its bel canto song-like structure, was played with a minimum of pedal, and that simplicity of line that is so hard to achieve. Both the Scherzo and final Rondo came off with the right approach, and a warm sonority with the climaxes falling in just the right places. I can't hope to hear a better performance of this work, one of the handful of orphaned Beethoven Sonatas that rarely appears on concert programs. A very nice way to begin.

The Franck Prelude, Chorale and Fugue was played from an appropriately romantic point of view. Its many virtuosic requirements were met with a technical freedom and balance which overcame what often comes across in performances of this work as ungainly writing. Again Ms. Lee demonstrated her perfect sense of where the climaxes of the piece came and her performance was a model of control, nuance and balance.

The end of intermission brought us the four Op. 33 Mazurkas of Chopin. Ms. Lee played them as the small pieces



they are, never pushing them beyond their dancing gracefulness, but she also showed us the startling harmonies and the characteristic elongated rhythmic impetus in these pieces. They were simply delightful in every way.

The final piece was the Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op 58 of Chopin. As any honest pianist will admit, this work taxes the performer to a daunting technical and musical extent. She began in a fairly rapid tempo, but cleanly, beautifully and with that superb organization of the architecture of the piece that makes her performances so satisfying. The scherzo was light and airy, going against the general fashion of making an over-busy etude out of it. The slow movement, which often suffers from a dead-

ly lethargy, was taken at a true singing tempo, and the final movement began with the opening octaves played in an understated fashion – again a mature approach. This rondo, with its ever-changing left hand rumbling away under the main melody, had just the right rubato, avoiding breathlessness but still a thrilling headlong rush with pearly scales and figurations flying by. Zooming into the climactic final statement of the theme at full throttle, she brought the piece to a thundering close.

Her encore of Liszt's Sonetto del Petrarca, No. 104 was played so lyrically, it was as if it were sung by human voices. Ms. Lee should grace our stages for a long time to come.

—André Gauthier



## Romantik zur Vorweihnachtszeit

Am 3. Dezember fand das Adventskonzert im Kestner-Museum statt und die Saison 2006 ging damit zu Ende. Die junge Hong Kong-Chinesin **Ka-Ling Colleen Lee**, die sich in Hannover bei Arie Vardi den letzten Schliff holt, präsentierte uns Romantik vom Feinsten.

Mit den Klavierstücken op. 118 von Johannes Brahms schlug sie uns Zuhörer sogleich in ihren Bann. Die Ballade brachte sie herrlich bitter-süß, das zarte A-dur-Intermezzo spielte sie fast ein wenig chopinesk – das störte aber gar nicht. Im Gegenteil: immer ist Colleens Interpretation in sich schlüssig in ihrer romantischen Auffassung.

Dann spielte sie die ersten 12 Préludes von Frédéric Chopin. Dass sie diesen Komponisten besonders schätzt und liebt, hatte man schon bei ihrem letzten Auftritt bei uns im November 2005 gespürt. Wie leicht und klar sie Nr. 1 erklingen liess! Huschend-virtuos Nr. 3, unendlich trostlos h-moll Nr. 6, danach die Perle A-dur Nr. 7, nur 16 Takte lang und doch ein komplettes Meisterstück. In jedem kleinen Chopin steckt auch ein grosser Chopin. Fabelhaft ihr perlendes Leggiero in Nr. 10. Schade, dass sie nicht alle 24 Préludes brachte.

In der Pause sorgten die jugendlichen Helfer der Chopin-Gesellschaft für Advents-Stimmung. Sie boten Weihnachtsteller an mit leckerem Gebäck und Mandarinen, dazu Weißwein und Prosecco.

Robert Schumanns Fantasie C-dur ist eine Herausforderung an das technische Können des Interpreten, besonders der mittlere Satz. Strahlend, ritterlich begann sie ihn und steigerte sich am Ende in eine abenteuerliche Beschleunigung, in ein riesiges Tongewimmel, das sie aber immer bewundernswert unter Kontrolle hatte.

Colleen Lee bekam enthusiastischen Beifall für ihren Auftritt. Dafür spendierte sie uns noch zwei wunderbare Zugaben. Chopins ‚Andante spianato et Grande Polonaise Brillante‘ erklang als eine in sich stimmige, fein abgetönte Interpretation. Und als endgültigen Abschluss Tschaikowskys ‚Meditation‘, ein sehr schönes, nachdenkliches und träumerisches Stück, das den meisten Zuhörern wohl unbekannt war.

Herzlichen Dank dafür!