

# Talented pianist Solzhenitsyn likely has brilliant musical career ahead

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CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

Ignat Solzhenitsyn seems to have all the requisites for a musical career: a famous surname (his father is the writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn), a blue-ribbon pedigree (Curtis Institute of Music), an impressive shock of blond hair and a soulful gaze. He also happens to be an extraordinary pianist, as he demonstrated again and again in his Thursday recital at the Ordway.

Unlike so many products of American conservatories, the 22-year-old Solzhenitsyn is not a piano juggler, but an artist whose chosen instrument is the piano. The typical competition winner would have bored the audience blind with a performance of Schubert's late G-major Sonata (D. 894), especially at the magisterial tempos at which this pianist took most of it. Even when he erred on the side of spaciousness — as he did in the first movement — he

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never lost the musical pulse or his finely burnished sound.

This sonata is a mighty challenge for pianists two and three times his age. If he can play it with such ease and understanding at this point in his career, he has a gilded future ahead.

There was not one work on the program calculated simply to stun the listeners. In addition to the Schubert, he played the four Ballades, Op. 10, by Brahms, and Beethoven's craggy Sonata in C minor, Op. 111. Plenty of material for the fingers, the brain and the

heart in these, but one has to be a pianist or an extraordinarily attentive listener to fully appreciate their splendors.

He made as good a case as can be made for the Ballades, and his reading of the loose-jointed, narrative Ballade in D minor was a model of how to hide the faults of a less-than-perfect work. The swift little B minor was bewitching too, but for all the pianist's efforts, the final one, in B major, sounded garrulous and a bit befuddled.

Solzhenitsyn's unflinching poise stood him in good stead with the Beethoven Op. 111. Too many pianists poke and prod this sonata, as if to find some mystery under every rock. This performance, while giving the music's poetry its due, did not bog down in idle philosophical meandering.

**WHAT:** Ignat Solzhenitsyn, piano (presented by the Schubert Club)

**WHERE:** Ordway Music Theatre

**WHEN:** Thursday

**CAPSULE:** A gleaming star well above the horizon