

Another outstanding Solzhenitsyn

By Michael Manning
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To find the name Solzhenitsyn associated with Amnesty International should surprise no one. Nobel laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is an icon of 20th-century literary art, a writer whose works not only have helped to define the cause of human rights in our time but have had a palpable impact on them. But in Amnesty International's 40th year, it's his son, pianist Ignat Solzhenitsyn, who's lending his estimable gifts to celebrating the organization. Sunday night, he performed the 22d annual benefit concert for Amnesty International in Longy School of Music's Pickman Concert Hall.

Solzhenitsyn is a musician's musician and a pianist's pianist. This listener would characterize him as a superb musician who

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Ignat Solzhenitsyn, piano
At: Longy School of Music, Sunday
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happens to be only a splendid pianist, and while there's a hint of the pejorative in that pointed characterization, it's drawn to highlight the shades of excellence that distinguish great artists from the rest of the field. Were this pianist but a shade or two better, his name would be a household one.

Among the defining characteristics of a "musician's musician" is the makeup of his or her program. It must be dominated by the great composers but not by the overly worn repertoire. In this respect, Solzhenitsyn's choices could scarcely have been better: He played one of the seldom heard sonatas of Schubert; the last, most concentrated of Scriabin's 10 sonatas; and the lesser-known of

Mozart's two great F major sonatas. The Piano Sonata of Bela Bartok was the closest thing to a pianistic staple on the program.

Solzhenitsyn's performance of the Bartok was rhythmically incisive, clean, and contrapuntally well defined. The finale was tame for this listener's taste, and the dual character of "sostenuto e pesante" never seemed quite to find the right proportion of weights.

However, his rendering of Schubert's early Sonata in B Major was particularly felicitous, especially the inner movements. Throughout, he struck the most delicate rubatos, coupled with the subtlest stress to inner voices, and his rhythm was fastidious.

The Scriabin was exceptional. Solzhenitsyn's ability to change dynamic quickly and seamlessly served the dreamy music superbly, and his relaxed technique lent a calm to the somnambulant trance.



PHOTO/J. HENRY FAIR

Solzhenitsyn's performance of a Mozart F major sonata was breathtaking.

But the Mozart was breathtaking. This work, like the D Major String Quintet, astonishes with inventiveness, imagination, and skill that is superhuman even by Mozart's standards. The performance was immaculately detailed, with beautiful tone, utterly transparent in voicing. It was some of the most beautiful and intelligent Mozart this listener has heard.