

# Solzhenitsyn delivers Schubert at Barre Opera House: Times Argus Online

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Pianist Ignat Solzhenitsyn

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By [Jim Lowe](#) Times Argus Staff - Published: March 10, 2010

BARRE – Franz Schubert's music is often elusive in the sense one is never sure where it will go, making him the first real Romantic. Vermont-bred pianist Ignat Solzhenitsyn went a long way in showing how this music is among the greatest in the literature with a performance that was introspective and lyrically beautiful.

And Sunday's recital at the Barre Opera House, part of its Celebration Series, also went a long way in revealing that Solzhenitsyn has become an artist to reckon with – with something important to say and the ability to say it.

Solzhenitsyn, who moved from the Soviet Union to Vermont at the age of 4, has successfully established himself on the world stage as a conductor as well as a pianist. His early training was in Vermont; then it was on to Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music. At 37, Solzhenitsyn lives in New York City and is conductor laureate of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia and principal guest conductor of the Moscow Symphony. As a pianist, he remains a regular participant in Vermont's Marlboro Music Festival and has joined Soovin Kim's new Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival in Colchester.

Despite his Russian heritage, Solzhenitsyn is a very American pianist. His technique, like that of most Americans, is a mix of the major schools of piano – French, German and Russian. His playing is very straightforward, not so much refined as sensitive. There is plenty of power when demanded, as well as tenderness.

All this came into play in Sunday's all-Schubert recital. The Sonata in D Major, D. 850, is one of the composer's big sonatas encompassing a broad spectrum of emotions. As usual, the form is sometimes hard to define, but it is there. There is drama in the opening Allegro, delicacy and tenderness in the slow movement, Con moto, more drama as well as introspection in the Scherzo, and playfulness in the final Rondo: Allegro moderato.

Solzhenitsyn played with clarity and finesse. Overdoing the drama in Schubert actually has the opposite effect, detracting from the power. Solzhenitsyn, however, controlled the power building it effectively and making it truly dramatic. Most importantly, he made the music sing – a hallmark of Schubert.

Despite these qualities, the Sonata in C Major, D. 850, was difficult to comprehend on a first listening. Actually an unfinished sonata, this two-movement work is terribly introspective, what Solzhenitsyn calls "philosophical," and full of ideas, but it's hard to know where the composer is going. Still, sitting back and letting Solzhenitsyn "sing" his way through it was pure pleasure.

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