
SECTIONS

Friday, September 15, 2017

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Simply superb

By **Jordan Buchholtz** Mon, Sep 11, 2017

Park University's very own 2017 Van Cliburn Silver Medalist Kenny Broberg gave a stunning recital at the Folly Theater on Sunday afternoon, playing some of his repertoire from the competition including the Liszt Sonata, the Barber Sonata, Franck's Prelude, Fugue and Variations in B Minor, and Bach's Toccata in C Minor.



Kenny Broberg is a current graduate student at Park University International Center for Music. At only 23 years old, he has already shown his spark for success at international competitions such as winning first prize

at both the Hastings (England) and Dallas, as well as medals at other competitions including New Orleans, Seattle, and Sydney. Broberg is an extremely talented pianist and is certain to have a prosperous career as an artist. His strong and satisfying sound at the piano along with clear and sensible phrasing, made for an exquisite concert Sunday afternoon at the Folly Theater.

Broberg began the concert with César Franck's *Prelude, Fugue, and Variations in B Minor, Op. 18*. This piece is not necessarily known to all pianists because it is originally for organ; Harold Bauer transcribed it for piano. Broberg's performance of the piece was astounding! I have not heard a better rendition. Because it was to be played on the organ, there are a lot of leaps and jumps in the music to try and imitate the wide range of powerful sounds the organ can make. This was not an issue for Broberg; his careful timing and full resonant sound at the piano made it look effortless. He was always attentive to the singing melody in the *Prelude* and was distinct with the subject in the *Fugue* and *Variations*. Not only did he give the necessary attention to the melody at all times, but his awareness and treatment of the inner voices, or the counterpoint, was amazing. Even the smallest of details in the music were observed.

His intricate artistry continued in the *Toccata in C Minor, BWV 911* by Bach. There are many interpretations of how to play Bach at the piano; I think every pianist comes up with their own idea and execution of the "correct style." What matters most is that the performance was convincing. Broberg's interpretation was unquestionably conclusive. His strong technical agility showed in this piece, especially for the virtuosic

writing of Bach. The way he treated each voice throughout the piece showed his true mastery at the piano. He achieved a variety of sounds and colors in the *Toccata*, which made for a compelling performance.

The Barber Piano Sonata is a beast of a piece. This virtuosic showpiece in four movements includes extended chromaticism, tone rows, highly dissonant chords, and other many twentieth-century musical ideas that Barber incorporated. In lighter terms, it is a very difficult piece! Broberg had no trouble with these features of the music. It is easy to get bogged down with the opening motive of the first movement, this did not happen. He played with such purpose and direction in the music, it just made sense. Broberg's strong presentation of the various characteristics throughout the piece brought out the unique soundscapes and colors in the music. The fourth movement is probably the hardest part of the piece because of the four-voice fugue and the devilishly demanding ending: but we could hear every note and chord.

Describing the Liszt Piano Sonata as a 'difficult' piece is an understatement. It demands virtuosity, drama, and a high emotional connection to the music. Some scholars suggest this sonata has four movements, but the piece is through-composed and doesn't stop in-between sections. Broberg's approach to this piece was bold and fearless in the fast and fervent sections, and sensitive in the middle, more introverted parts. We heard the same attentiveness to details throughout this sonata as we did in the Barber. He channeled Liszt's audacious personality in his playing. Despite an odd, random ringing in the hall during the middle portion of the sonata, Broberg retained his unwavering focus and his playing did not falter.

The program Broberg played represented some large forms of piano composition, and so for his encores, we got to experience two short pieces of a smaller scale, Chopin's Mazurka in F-sharp Minor from the Op. 59 set of Mazurkas and Gershwin's Virtuoso Etude No. 3 "Embraceable You." Just like the rest of the program, Broberg had the audience at his fingertips during these two pieces. Not only did they showcase his virtuosity, but his sense of romantic passion in the music, his understanding of musical timing and the superb simplicity of his sound.

REVIEW:

Park University International Center for Music

Kenny Broberg, piano

Sunday, September 10th, 2017

Folly Theater

300 W 12th St, Kansas City, MO

For more information, visit: www.park.edu/icm

By Jordan Buchholtz

Classical Contributor

Jordan Buchholtz is a pianist, accompanist, and teacher. As an active performer, she regularly plays in solo piano and chamber music recitals and collaborates with both vocalists and instrumentalists. She



enjoys being involved in chamber music ensembles, serving as an opera rehearsal and production accompanist, and playing piano and organ for church. She has been a participant in various piano master classes with Christopher Taylor, Stacey Barelos, and Paul Wirth. During her undergraduate studies, she played piano and celesta in the Luther College Symphony Orchestra and performed with them on tour in Vienna, Austria in January of 2011.

A native of Spring Valley, Minnesota, Jordan is currently pursuing an Artist Certificate in Piano Performance at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and is studying with Karen Kushner. She previously obtained a MM at UMKC and a BA in Music Performance from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, studying piano with John F. Strauss. Along with her graduate studies, she is the opera accompanist at UMKC and writes music reviews for KCMetropolis.org.
