

KATIA SKANA VI
Piano

The West Australian
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Pianist equal to three-sonata challenge

RECITAL

Katia Skanavi (piano)
Perth Concert Hall
Review: Neville Cohn

This recital was no small challenge for the soloist: three of the toughest imaginable keyboard sonatas in a single evening. Each of the three works requires sustained physical strength and an ability to evoke a wide emotional range.

Any soloist worth their stripes also would have needed the pianistic equivalent of, say, a Turner or a Rubens to present the sonatas' myriad notes clothed in tone colours needed to allow the listener to experience these pieces to maximum advantage.

On each count, young Russian pianist Katia Skanavi came through with flying colours, especially in Schubert's massive Sonata in A minor, D784. Here, I marvelled at Skanavi's sound painting that ranged from pianissimi through mellow, limpid, biting or brazen colourings.



Masterful: Katia Skanavi.

This was a tour de force. I particularly admired the conviction with which Skanavi evoked the bleakness of the sonata's opening statement and, in the finale, the impeccable flowing note streams which eerily anticipate Smetana's The Moldau.

We also heard Carl Vine's Sonata No. 3. Here was a performance that glittered and gleamed with fine detail. Vine's sonata makes cruel demands of the soloist and Skanavi

made light of them all in a frankly thrilling engagement with the music, not least its often powerful rhythmic ideas. The score is dotted with moments that call tolling bells to mind. And in the presto finale, wave after wave of pulsing notes came across as an obeisance to Debussy's Mouvement.

In Chopin's Sonata in B flat minor, Skanavi was at her persuasive best in the two last movements. After unbotting the raging genie that lurks behind the printed note in the first two movements, she brought freshness to familiar notes in the hackneyed Funeral March, especially the nocturnal central section which was given a beautifully considered performance.

The finale sounded like a convocation of whispering phantoms; it was a marvel of tone control.

In Chopin's Andante Spianato and Polonaise, the Moscow-born virtuoso did wonders with its intricate note patterns, a reading that deservedly brought the house down.