



from
Young Concert Artists, Inc.

RAN DANK, pianist

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Wide-Ranging Program For Prizewinning Pianist

Ran Dank, an Israeli pianist who studied at the Juilliard School with Emanuel Ax and Joseph Kalichstein, won the Young Concert Artists auditions last season and on Monday evening, as part of his prize, the organization presented his New York debut recital at Merkin Concert Hall.

ALLAN
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MUSIC
REVIEW

Mr. Dank is a strong player with the technique and imagination demanded by his wide-ranging program, which ran from a stylishly transparent account of Bach's French Suite No. 2 in C minor (BWV 813) to assertive, sharp-edged and overtly virtuosic performances of Scriabin and Bartok sonatas.

Mr. Dank's Bach, which opened the program, immediately revealed a fascination with textural clarity that turned out to be a consistent hallmark of his style. Ornaments were crisply articulated and contrapuntal lines were strikingly independent and gracefully turned. Only his Menuet raised an eyebrow for its rhythmic rigidity within an otherwise freely flowing account.

The leap from Bach to Ives is huge, but Mr. Dank accomplished it deftly. His Ives was also an unusual choice — the "Five Take-Offs," a rarely heard collection of short character pieces published in 1985, three decades after Ives died. These pieces may not be for the ages: they seem to be crystallized improvisations that capture Ives experimenting with his language, particularly the relationship between consonance and dissonance, and between different kinds of dissonances (the descriptive and, it often seems, the merely provocative).

Ran Dank
Merkin Concert Hall

A Granados piece, "La Maja y el Ruiseñor," from "Goyescas," gave Mr. Dank an opportunity to show that he was as comfortable with gentle, hazy textures as with powerhouse pianism. But he is clearly more captivated by the possibilities of bigger, more aggressive music, and his muscular but finely sculptured reading of the Bartok Sonata was the highlight of his program, with his dark-hued performance of Scriabin's "Black Mass" Sonata No. 9 (Op. 68) coming close.

Mr. Dank also offered deeply personalized views of three Cho-

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pin works — two Mazurkas (Op. 67, No. 4 and Op. 68, No. 1), in which his idiosyncratic phrasing slowly became persuasive, and the Waltz in A flat (Op. 42), which benefited from a natural rubato and a sparkling tone.

His finale was Liszt's "Reminiscences of 'Norma,'" a virtuosic gloss on themes from that Bellini opera. In Bellini-Liszt, there is ample shallowness on either side of the hyphen, but no one plays this as an exercise in deep thought. If you like a grand display of technique for its own sake — a guilty pleasure for many — this is for you. I'll remember Mr. Dank's Bach, Bartok and Scriabin instead.