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Young Concert Artists, Inc.

GLEB IVANOV, *pianist*

Michaels Award recital at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, December 1, 2010

The New York Times

Ivanov Plays at Alice Tully Hall

By Allan Kozinn

Published December 2, 2010

It was not so long ago that when the Russian piano style was mentioned, what came to mind was a huge, steely, aggressive sound with a dynamic range that ran from fortissimo to quadruple fortissimo. Things are different now. Power remains a hallmark of Russian pianism, but young players have made gracefulness, precision and subtlety parts of the equation too.

Gleb Ivanov, a Moscow-trained pianist who won the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in 2005, demonstrated that combination of qualities in his recital at Alice Tully Hall on Wednesday evening. His program was split between Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev, almost as if to show that his immunity to the old approach could withstand the greatest temptations.

Prokofiev's Sonata No. 6, after all, is a piece that would have had an explosive reading a couple of generations ago, and not only from Russian players. Mr. Ivanov's account was by no means timid. He produced a huge sound without much apparent effort, but even in the work's most insistent, tension-radiating moments — the passages in the Allegro moderato supported by insistently pounding bass figures, and the sizzling Vivace finale — he kept the music's energy tightly focused and maintained an impressive clarity of texture.

The sonata, which closed the program, was preceded by an evocative rendering of "Romeo and Juliet Before Parting" from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet." Here, as in Rachmaninoff's A minor Étude-Tableau (Op. 39, No. 2) in the first half of the program, Mr. Ivanov's thumbprint was a ringing top line that sounded as if it were floating freely over a dark-hued, often gauzy accompaniment. Mr. Ivanov also brought a charming lightness of touch to Rachmaninoff's Melodie in E (Op. 3, No. 3), and he emphasized the almost jazzy chromaticism in the Humoresque (Op. 10, No. 5).

Mr. Ivanov was also joined by Carter Brey, the principal cellist of the New York Philharmonic — himself an alumnus of Young Concert Artists, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this season — for a beautifully integrated account of Rachmaninoff's Sonata in G minor for Cello and Piano. Mr. Brey's tone is luxurious and supple, and he used it to particularly glowing effect in the Andante. But this was a full collaboration, and throughout the four-movement work the interplay between Mr. Brey and Mr. Ivanov had an enlivening conversational free-spiritedness.