



from
Young Concert Artists, Inc.

WONNY SONG, *pianist*

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RACHEL PAFO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Wonny Song, who won the Young Concert Artists auditions in 2005, at Zankel Hall on Monday.

Flexing Muscles in a Sonic Tug of War

If Wonny Song's piano recital at Zankel Hall on Monday evening left one thing certain, it was that Mr. Song has a big, solid technique and the assurance to use it at full power for long stretches, whatever the music's demands. It was as if he were betting that listeners, given the choice between fireworks and suppleness, would go for the sparks and the adrenalin rush that comes with them.

But if his recital yielded a second certainty, it was that Mr. Song was at his most communicative when he kept some of that power in reserve. He opened his program with an appealingly transparent, crisply articulated account of Bach's Keyboard Partita No. 1 (BWV 825), and if a few of the movements — the Bourrée and the Menuets — sounded unusually muscular, Mr. Song sacrificed nothing in clarity or in the

The next Young Concert Artists program is a marimba recital by Pius Cheung on March 3 at Zankel Hall, (212) 247-7800, carnegiehall.org.

Wonny Song
Zankel Hall

kind of musical topography that lets a Bach melody dart in and out of its surrounding counterpoint.

Chopin's "Barcarolle" (Op. 60) began where the Bach ended, with a large, lush timbre that

Fireworks emerge in pieces by Bach and Mendelssohn.

morphed into a huge wall of sound. Perhaps that should have been alarming. The Barcarolle is meant to be a comparatively gentle boatman's song, not a ride on the crest of a tsunami. But Mr. Song offset this unnatural magnification with a free-wheeling yet very musical rubato: a sense of give and take that kept the performance organic.

A similar tug of war occurred in Mendelssohn's Rondo Capriccioso (Op. 14), a forceful performance that nevertheless preserved the work's youthful sprightliness.

Mr. Song showed that delicacy was not beyond him in the premiere of "Lost Time," a new work by Andrew Norman, a composer in residence with Young Concert Artists, whose auditions Mr. Song won in 2005. Mr. Norman focused on the piano's upper reaches, where notes can sound music boxy or percussive or simply sparkling. Mr. Norman requires all three sounds, and a good deal of speedy swirling, which Mr. Song reveled in.

After the intermission Mr. Song reconfigured his approach, going for explosiveness and not much else in works that are richer than that. That isn't to say it was all bad. A listener had to admire the sheer rambunctiousness he brought to Schumann's "Fantasiestücke" (Op. 12), but the work has a gentler side as well.

And having mastered the passionate side of Debussy's "Isle Joyeuse," Mr. Song overlooked the sensuality that is equally crucial.