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## Piano soloist Daniel Levy enchants audience with intimate Romantic recital 01/09/2011



**Katalin Fekete is mesmerised by the music and the beautiful setting of the Ascona Music Festival.**

A world-class pianist, a picturesque lakeside resort and a pleasant evening is all it takes to turn a musical experience into a midsummer night's dream.

It was still light when the audience started arriving at the 15<sup>th</sup> century church of Collegio Papio at the Ascona Music Festival to hear the Argentinian pianist Daniel Levy play works by Frédéric Chopin and Franz

Liszt.

The late Romanesque church with a caisson ceiling and beautiful frescoes by Seregnesi and Antonio de Tradate provided the perfect setting for a Romantic piano recital.

As the audience was seated, eagerly awaiting the pianist, the lights dimmed and the spotlights came on showing the grand piano in its full splendour.

Finally, the long-awaited pianist made his entrance: elegantly dressed in a dark suit and tie, he entered the church and strode to the piano with a look of concentration on his face -- a faint smile played around the corners of his mouth as if he was amused by all the faces looking at him expectantly.

As he sat down at the piano, he paused for a moment as if to put himself in the right mood before launching off with seven mazurkas by Chopin. The artfully crafted compositions vary in style and give pianists the opportunity to show their technical mastery, finesse and artistic accomplishment. Levy played the pieces with a precision and clarity, yet lightness and richness of tone that brought the music to life and made the listener experience the beauty of the mazurkas.

The audience listened spellbound as the first few soft and gentle notes of the Mazurka Op. 63 No. 2 in F minor were heard. Levy rendered the slow, melancholic piece with an upbeat middle part in A flat major major with a calmness and gentle grace and the tone he elicited from the piano was beautifully rounded.

His versatility and ability to express changes in mood with great subtlety, and his brilliant tonal quality became evident during the concert. The beginning of Mazurka Op. 17 No. 4 in A minor was calm and rendered with a lyrical sensitivity and expressiveness, creating a magical atmosphere, before sparkling runs spun forward the melody.

Next were the nocturnes Op. 9 in B-flat Major, Op. 62 in B major and Op. 55 in F minor with a dreamlike quality suiting the atmosphere of the mellow summer night. Levy's tranquil and lyrical interpretation was impressive and his use of the rubato technique brought out the emotions beautifully. He played with an expressiveness and intensity that was balanced by rhythmic precision and a certain soberness of tone.

The second half of the concert was dedicated Franz Liszt, a piano virtuoso known for making great demands on the pianist's dexterity. Levy mastered those technical challenges with bravura without losing any of his sublime and expressive style. He sat at the piano majestically while his fingers glided gracefully over the piano keys barely touching them.

Liszt's Consolations - six short poetic thoughts in harmonious major keys and with a Chopinesque quality - were rendered with calmness and musical lightness, yet an intensity and passion that captivated the audience.

Two pieces from the first Year of the *Années de Pèlerinage* (Switzerland) followed that give soloists the opportunity to display their technical and musical accomplishments. Levy's technical brilliance was once more evident when he played *Chapelle de*



Guillaume Tell (No 1), a majestic piece that starts out calm before the storm breaks loose and fast runs take over. The dramatic emotions evoked by his powerful playing and intensified by the excellent acoustics of the church was in stark contrast to the quiet evening outside.

The Romantic recital ended with a bravura performance of the Funérailles from the cycle Poetic and Religious Harmonies: Levy played with the dynamics, letting thunderous chords follow dazzlingly fast runs and gentle passages.

Hearing Levy perform brought the Romantics alive and made for a delightful evening of pure listening pleasure. The audience - mesmerised by the music and the beautiful setting - thanked him with a long round of applause.

#### **Fact file: Ascona Music Festival**

The piano recital by Daniel Levy was part of the Ascona Music Festival, held for the second time through July and August.

The festival featured works by Beethoven - Trio and Sonata cycles - Chopin, Liszt, Schubert and Dvorak and attracted such internationally renowned musicians as Daniel Levy, Robert Zimansky, Alin Velian and Franco Ormezowski.

The Ascona Music Festival was established in 2009 on the initiative of pianist Daniel Levy and a small circle of friends who wished to offer the young, the old and families the opportunity to experience classical music in a charming setting.

*Katalin Fekete / Expatica*



Katalin Fekete is a freelance journalist based in Switzerland. She has also worked in magazine and book publishing and has co-authored three books about Switzerland and cross-cultural issues.

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