

Pianist Barry Hannigan completed busy schedule while in Bedford

Noted pianist Barry Hannigan was a very busy fellow for the three days he was in residency in Bedford and Johnstown on November 16-18. He gave one school concert, two master classes, and two evening concerts, and all of them were enthralling. The whole effort was supported by a grant from Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour.

I can speak firsthand about his concert/lecture for the seventh graders at Chestnut Ridge Middle School. Mr. Hannigan introduced the students to both classical and ragtime styles of

Concert Review

composition and gave them hints about how to listen for themes and repetition. The students were remarkably attentive and peppered him with questions when he asked if they had any. From all accounts, the master piano class on Saturday morning was a great success, giving our student players a unique opportunity to learn from a master.

The Saturday evening concert, part of our Guest Artist Series, was the jewel in the

crown. The program ranged from Mozart through the romantics and on to Gershwin and the 20th century. The program began, improbably, with a piece of contemporary ragtime by Bolcom; it was lively and fun. Two composers, William Bolcom and William Albright, decided that it would be jolly to write pieces in the ragtime style of Scott Joplin, and they certainly succeeded in capturing the spirit of that earlier time. One of Bolcom's pieces was in the first half of the program, and one of Albright's was in the second. Both were a treat.

A Mozart sonata was a graceful and melodious contrast to the ragtime works. It is easy to see why, according to the program notes, the Sonata in C Major was a favorite of Vladimir Horowitz.

The highlight of the evening was a dazzling rendition of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue", an all-time favorite that is stunning to watch being performed live. Mr. Hannigan's playing was technically perfect and beautifully interpreted. The solo version includes both the piano parts and orchestral music whenever feasible, mak-

ing it even more challenging to play. He pulled it off with energy and aplomb, and brought the audience to its feet at the end.

The second part of the program began with the Sleepwalker's Shuffle, the Albright contemporary ragtime piece. It is a clever piece, with its syncopation mimicking a sleepwalker's loopy gait. It was followed by a lovely Chopin Ballade and the very romantic Liszt work, "Liebestraum." Mr. Hannigan clearly appreciated this familiar work, giving it a fresh and sensitive rendering.

The evening ended with

selected compositions from a little-known composer named Zez Confrey, who was a contemporary of Gershwin and even received top billing over Gershwin at the premiere of the "Rhapsody in Blue." The Confrey pieces were fast and jazzy and great fun to listen to. It was an upbeat ending to a delightful evening, and the most amazing aspect to me was the total absence of a sheet of music. Mr. Hannigan performed the entire program from memory.

—Nancy MacRae,
Schellsburg