

Freddy Kempf pianist

Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra

Freddy Kempf (piano & conductor) - November 12, 2018 by Andrew Connal

Dome Concert Hall, 11 November 2018

Rating: 

When the soloist is pleased to conduct, we get to experience so much more of his musical imagination. Many in the audience have keenly followed Kempf's career since he was a boy wonder. Now the fully-fledged maestro teased us with the tentative opening of Rossini's 'Semiramide Overture' before gradually building up the tremendous crescendo.

Then as soloist his still youthful energy and great talent shone in Beethoven's 3rd Piano Concerto, especially during the cadenza and the sublime Slow Movement, clearly his showpiece.

Dvorak's 7th Symphony is full of Czech folk tunes and dance rhythms that repeatedly build to exciting climaxes. **Kempf's vigorous interpretation earned long applause for him and this fine orchestra.**

The Straitstimes **Review: Concert**

FREDDY KEMPF LIVE IN SINGAPORE by Chang Tou Liang

Published Aug 2, 2018

Esplanade Concert Hall

SINGAPORE - The etude, or study, is a short piece written to train digital and motor technique, thus honing agility in students of the instrument.

Piano etudes have often struck fear and dread, especially those dry and didactic finger-twisters by Czerny and Hanon which barely pass as listenable music.

British pianist **Freddy Kempf** served up a coup with a recital of 24 etudes, fortunately those written by Chopin, Rachmaninov and living Ukrainian composer Nikolai Kapustin.

Quite uncharacteristically, he opened with three Concert Etudes from Op. 40 by Kapustin, jazz-inspired numbers which are usually performed as encores.

Getting off to a thunderous start, **he immediately had the audience eating from his hand.** The central Etude No. 7, entitled Intermezzo, opened with smokey and night-clubby insouciance before working to a tipsied frenzy that was hard not to wholeheartedly applaud at its conclusion.

That was exactly what the audience did, clapping through short breaks between the 12 Etudes Op. 10 by Frederic Chopin, mostly after those which ended with a big bang. One wondered whether Kempf was distracted by the inappropriately timed and intrusive accolade, but he more than held his nerve.

Scintillating bravura was the order of the day, beginning with the wide arpeggio stretches in the C major Etude (No. 1) and concluding with the **coruscating passion** of the C minor Revolutionary Etude (No. 12). In between, his razor-keen reflexes and hyper-acute synapses fired, tossing off such treacherous pieces like the A minor Chromatic Etude (No. 2) and G flat major Black Key Etude (No. 5) without so much as breaking a sweat.

There was none of that mindless playing-by-the-numbers pianism so often encountered in keyboard automatons churned out by the dozen. Instead these were **very nuanced readings**, where purring pianissimos and furious fortissimos were mixed in with deliciously timed rubatos, that inimitable soul of musical Romanticism.

Kempf's performances of the 9 Etudes-Tableaux Op. 39 by Rachmaninov that followed after the interval were arguably even better. Moving away from mere virtuoso display, these are little tone poems which seem

to tell stories from deep within the Russian soul. The first two were obsessed with the Dies Irae (the mediaeval plainchant of Judgement Day), first angry rumbling followed by calming placidity.

Then there was that astonishing sequence of etudes that relived bells of all nature and kind. The E flat minor (No. 5) tolling variety was vividly contrasted with the heavier-laden pealing in C minor (No. 7). In between was wild scampering in A minor (No. 6), which will readily remind listeners of Little Red Riding Hood And The Wolf.

Gentle swirling eddies in D minor (No. 8) soon gave way to the triumphal procession in D major (No. 9), where a marching band's parade closed with a thrilling and sonorous carillon. Kempf's journey through the geography of piano etudes had come to an end, and there was one encore. That was a complete antithesis to the mighty study: Chopin's simple little waltz called L'Adieu, or Farewell.

BACHTRACK

Staples of the Romantic repertoire from Freddy Kempf and the NCO at Stoller Hall

By Aaron Davies, 30 September 2018

....Next, an appearance from maestro Freddy Kempf, renewing his acquaintance with the NCO having first collaborated with them shortly after winning BBC Young Musician of the Year in 1992. Beethoven's piano concertos can all be regarded as majestic in their own ways and his C minor Third is no exception. There is a lengthy exposition before the piano finally enters the fray, taking up the previous established thematic material and quickly establishing his voice.

Kempf's playing was **assertive and confident** throughout. He has always possessed an **impeccable technique** and has never been afraid to take risks – here he changed gears and employed occasionally daring tempi which served to showcase **his outstanding pianism**. The cadenza was dashed off with aplomb, almost made to look easy.

The change of key at the start of the second movement must have seemed shocking to contemporary audiences; indeed, even here in 2018 it still sounds rather bold. An altogether different tone was required and the orchestra answered the call and employed a far lighter touch and softer volumes. At times, the **interplay and balance between soloist and orchestra was exquisite**, almost Mozartian. The music took on a sighing feel with the rising and falling of its many beautiful phrases. **Kempf executed all of the difficult ornamentations (the many trills especially) flawlessly**. The strings weaved together like a shimmering tapestry of sound in the finale. Kempf turned to the leader at regular intervals for purposes of synchronisation. A suitably triumphant and thunderous close, although the audience were not quite ready to let him go just yet. A delicate Chopin Waltz served as the olive branch.