

Chopin Notes

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Inside:

Exclusive Interview	1
Quiz: "Who said that?"	2
Fundraising Dinner	3

Upcoming Events:

Eduard Kunz, piano

September 28, 2013
7:00 PM

Roswell Cultural Arts Center

See our website for
information about the
After-Concert Essay Contest

CSA Fundraiser
November 17, 2013
5:00 PM

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South*

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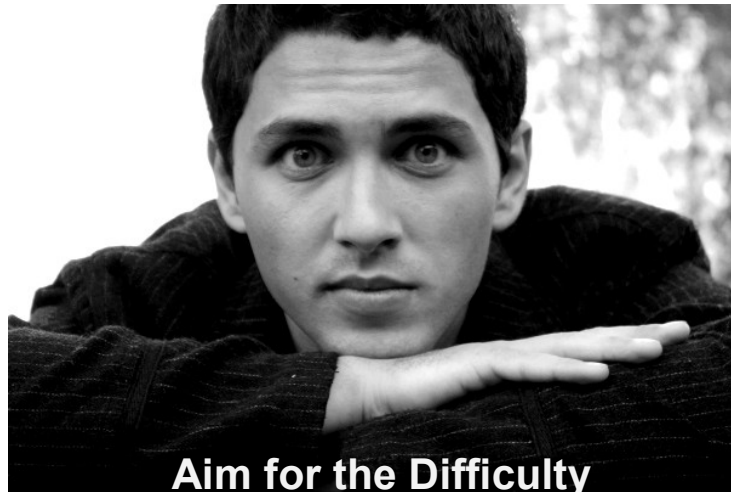


Photo: Dmitry Yaroslavtsev

Aim for the Difficulty

Exclusive Interview with Eduard Kunz

By Bożena U. Zaremba

In today's music world, where a pianist hops on a plane to give a recital in Moscow one day, in New York the next day, then in London, he or she can live practically anywhere, as long as a big enough airport is close by. But in Bucharest? Why? Yes, it's a capital city, but let's face it, for most of us, it is quite unfamiliar. It is not considered Europe's cultural heart, it is not a prime tourist destination, nor does it host political summits of great magnitude. On the other hand, why not? After all, this number one Romanian city has a lot to offer: eclectic architecture including medieval, neoclassical, art nouveau and bravely modern buildings (did you know that its Palace of the Parliament, with its imposing 3.55 million square feet, is the largest parliament building in the world?); a rich cultural life, with plentiful museums, art galleries, at least three symphonic orchestras, a national opera, wide-ranging theaters, and an abundance of further attractions. Definitely, it has a lot to offer to a receptive mind, to someone who dares to explore the unwalked paths. And artists do. Quite often they are also restless and leave their hometowns in pursuit of a perfect place, which time and again is determined by sheer coincidence. Sometimes they fall in love with its vibrant atmosphere or with the landscape, or with a person.

Eduard Kunz, who was born in Siberia, educated in Moscow and lived in England for some time, made his home in Bucharest, Romania, for personal reasons: Bucharest is his wife's hometown and has become his haven and a base for extensive international travels. Kunz made news in the music world in 2011, when, despite the enthusiastic reception from the audience, who admired his charm and imaginative powers, he was eliminated in the third round of the International Tchaikovsky Competition. This music competition is one of the most glamorous and definitely most prestigious of all; its list of laureates includes such household names as Van Cliburn, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Mikhail Pletnev. This elimination created a huge controversy and drew criticism toward the jurors and the entire competition system. I asked Eduard Kunz about this experience.

Eduard Kunz: It seems like it was some 100 years ago. I was sad when I got eliminated, but, on the other hand, I had not expected anything. I wanted to participate just because, for me, it was the only chance to perform. I had already participated in 15 competitions (14 of which

Continued on page 2

Chopin Society of Atlanta has grown a cult following among local piano mavens.

– Pierre Ruhe, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, November 2007

Memorable Recital by Christopher O'Riley

March 24, 2013



Photos: Elżbieta Gürtler-Krawczyńska
and Paweł Łoj

Who said that?

A quiz on remarks about Fryderyk Chopin made by his famous contemporaries

1. "There is something fundamentally personal and at the same time so very masterly in his playing that he may be called a really perfect virtuoso."
2. "Hats off, gentlemen: A genius!"
3. "He would lock himself up in his room for whole days, weeping, pacing back and forth, breaking his pens, repeating or changing one bar a hundred times, writing and erasing as many times, and beginning again the next day with an infinite and desperate perseverance. He sometimes spent six weeks on one page, only in the end to write it exactly as he had sketched at the first draft."
4. "Music was his language, the divine tongue through which he expressed a whole realm of sentiments that only the select few can appreciate.... The muse of his homeland dictates his songs, and the anguished cries of Poland lend to his art a mysterious, indefinable poetry which, for all those who have truly experienced it, cannot be compared to anything else.... In short, he is a most remarkable individual who commands our highest degree of devotion."
5. "Chopin had the fortunate idea of playing the Adagio... from his last concerto. Placed between two orchestral compositions maintained in a turbulent style, this enchanting work, in which irresistible charm is combined with most profound religious thoughts, submerged the listeners into a specific joy—serene and ecstatic—to which we have not become accustomed in a similar situation.... There is so much simplicity used with such freshness of imagination that when the last note was heard, in the manner of a pearl cast into a golden vase, the audience, immersed in contemplation, continued to listen, and for a few moments restrained itself from applauding. In the same way, while observing the harmonious descent of twilight semi-shadows, we remain motionless in the darkness, with our eyes still focused on that point of the horizon where the light has just faded."

Answers on page 4

Exclusive Interview—Continued from page 1

I had won) and know that winning a competition does not guarantee big earnings. It does not guarantee anything.

Bożena U. Zaremba: The audience loved you.

Yes, the reception from the audience was overwhelming. I got around 500 e-mails and hundreds of Facebook messages. It was unbelievable.

Why do we so often see a big discrepancy between what the audience likes and what the jurors look for?

The problem is that on a given day the jurors have to listen to, let's say, 30 pianists, and sometimes it is easy for them to miss a major talent. Anyway, I have put this chapter behind me. I am grateful that I have an opportunity to play, and now I am concentrating on my tour. I have 80 concerts this season, so there is a lot to focus on.

Besides graduating from the renowned Moscow Conservatory, you

also studied in England. How do you compare those two learning experiences?

They are hard to compare because I was there at a different time of my life and was pursuing different goals. The Moscow Conservatory was great for musical discipline, but when you get to a certain age, you need to know how to perform. I did not have that opportunity in Russia, and that is why I left for England.

Now you are an instructor yourself, mainly as a master class teacher. What can a young pianist learn at your master class that he or she won't learn at a conservatory or at a regular piano lesson?

The nature of a master class is that I don't have the student from the beginning to an end, so it has to be a quick injection of some principles that the student can use later. I get a chance to share some secrets and give the students extra energy.

So it is more inspiration than techni-

cal instruction?

It's a little bit of both. In the short time I have with students, I try to tell them what they should not be concentrating on.

Apart from being a solo pianist, you play some chamber music.

Not too much, actually. It is this season that I started to play more. The problem is that I do not like the way orchestras work these days, and I don't like how the conductors work. I don't like to have to compromise. The relationship with the musician is as important as the relationship with the music, and in order to play chamber music well, you need to spend a lot of time with your partners to get to understand them. When I find the right person to work with, I do enjoy it very much.

What kind of a pianist do you, yourself, aspire to be?

There are some great pianists out there. I enjoy some recordings; some, I don't. I don't have an ideal, although I do admire

CHOPIN SOCIETY OF ATLANTA'S 2013 FUNDRAISER

NOVEMBER 17, 5:00 PM

We invite everyone to a

Gala Evening with Chopin

Sunday, November 17, 2013

5:00 PM

The Country Club of the South

4100 Old Alabama Road
Johns Creek, GA 30022

Guest of Honor:

Monica Kaufman Pearson, former news anchor for WSB-TV, Channel 2, the ABC affiliate in Atlanta.

Monica Kaufman Pearson is the first African-American and the first woman to become news anchor on the Atlanta market, and held that position with WSB-TV for 37 years from 1975 until her retirement in 2012.



Photo: WSB-TV



Photo: Pawel Loj

From the 2012 CSA Fundraiser

In the program:

- Welcoming glass of champagne*
- Piano recital by young artists*
- Dinner prepared by the Club's famous chef*
- Exciting door prizes*
- A live auction*
- And much more*

Hosted by WABE radio personality John Lemley

Please purchase tickets at www.chopinatlanta.com

(deadline to buy tickets online: October 31)

Exclusive Interview—Continued from page 2

some artists, not only pianists and not necessarily from a classical field.

What is the message you want to convey in your music?

In the last 10 years or so we have been experiencing this sensationalism in pianism. It is true for violinism and other artistic genres as well. This is what I call creative rubbish. People spend so much money and time on creating something—let’s say on special effects in a movie. Then you get two minutes on the screen and immediately forget what it was all about. Nowadays, people concentrate on a quick hit and on a quick return. This has nothing to do with the real thing.

What is the real thing?

To aim for the difficulty. We are under constant pressure to make our art more popular, but this is simply a route to an end. This is a path to lose yourself. As Tolstoy said, if you ever row across a river you know you should aim higher to reach your destination on the other shore, as the current will put you downstream. Same in life: You should always aim higher because life will pull you down anyway. These days you make more money selling beer than selling books. You get more hits on YouTube by cheap

***Ignacy Jan Paderewski** (1860–1941) was a Polish pianist and composer whose virtuosity and vivid personality were admired across the globe. He was also a politician, a statesman and a great patriot. In 1919 he was appointed by the president of newly independent Poland as prime minister and minister of foreign affairs. Later he became Polish ambassador to the League of Nations. Early in his life, he was discouraged by his teacher from becoming a pianist, but through his own determination, hard work and self-discipline, he launched a musical career and became a successful and highly popular pianist. His compositions include two operas and a symphony, as well as several pieces for the piano, the violin and the voice and piano. His *Sonata, Op. 21* and the *Variations and Fugue, Op. 23* are considered to be among the most powerful, innovative and technically challenging pieces for the piano.

sensation than by playing Bach.

What place does Chopin have in your repertoire?

In fact, at the beginning, Chopin did not come to me naturally. For me it is important to play music I can relate to. But I “warmed up” to him, and now I do relate to his music 100%. I feel very comfortable playing Chopin, and he has become a permanent part of my repertoire.

What quality in his music do you relate to?

The sadness and the silence. Not the bravura. His music is very intimate. His mazurkas, for example, bring quiet and tranquility. It’s this intimacy and “tiredness” that I feel connection with.

At your Atlanta recital, besides pieces by Chopin, you are going to play a composition by another Polish composer, Ignacy Jan Paderewski*. Why him?

I am the winner of the Ignacy Paderewski competition, so his music has a special place in my repertoire and is close to my heart. I will perform his *Nocturne in B-flat, Op. 16, No. 4*. I have recently heard a wonderful recording by Piotr Paleczny of Paderewski’s *Polish Fantasy* and *Piano*

Concerto in A minor and was really inspired.

Don’t you think Paderewski’s music is a bit underestimated?

Definitely. Internationally you don’t see his name at all. This is unfortunate because he is a fantastic composer. He is very intellectual and has great sense of humor. There is nothing artificial in his music. It’s like with Tchaikovsky’s *Concerto No. 2*. Everybody knows his *Concerto No. 1*, but not *No. 2*, which is equally grand, but this is how the market works.

Someone has to introduce the public to the gem, whether it is Tchaikovsky or Paderewski. But the truth is that people prefer to listen to music they already know.

Yes, maybe. We just need to put it in front of them, and then they will start to like it. For me the most important thing is to get pleasure from what you do. Of course, we change constantly and we discover beauty in new things. With time, your palette becomes wider and your experiences grow, but it is very important to keep your mind clear about what is real and what is less so.♪

The artist’s website: www.eduardkunz.eu

Answers to quiz on page 2:

1. **Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy** (1809–1847), a German composer, pianist, organist and conductor, Chopin’s friend.
2. **Robert Schumann** (1810–1856), a German composer and influential music critic.
3. **George Sand** (1804–1876), born Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, a French novelist and Chopin’s longtime companion.
4. **Franz Liszt** (1811–1886), a Hungarian composer, virtuoso pianist, conductor and teacher, one of Chopin’s closest friends in Paris.
5. **Hector Berlioz** (1803–1869), a French composer.



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