

Winner's concert of a sound magician at the piano

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The 25-year-old Georgian pianist Irma Gigani as a guest at the Brucknerhaus

Photo: Erenyi

Irma Gigani wins the Bechstein-Bruckner Prize.

With the 25-year-old Georgian pianist Irma Gigani, the jury of the inaugural Bechstein-Bruckner Competition selected an outstanding artist as its prizewinner. On Thursday, she performed the winners' concert at the Brucknerhaus, captivating the audience with her stupendous technique, but even more so with her carefully considered tonal balance and her ability to conjure up beautiful melodies.

This was already evident in Mozart's Sonata in F major, K. 332, in which she demonstrated not merely the composer's subtly deployed virtuosity, but above all a finely nuanced shaping of the phrases, making them virtually sing. The expressive Adagio was richly sonorous, while the finale, with its almost perpetuum-mobile character, was no less accomplished. A contrast, yet in many respects not entirely dissimilar to Mozart, is Sergei Prokofiev's Second Piano Sonata. Prokofiev composed the work at the age of seventeen during his studies in St. Petersburg.

Irma Gigani gave an ideal interpretation of its refined world of sophisticated humour as well as its profound melancholy, distinguished by extreme precision of touch and, consequently, by exceptional clarity in the unfolding of the individual lines.

The Second Half with a Focus on Chopin

In the second half, she turned her attention to Chopin, performing the Nocturnes Op. 48 No. 1 and Op. 72 No. 1, the Polonaise-Fantasy Op. 61, and the Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31. Here, too, she impressed with her crystal-clear articulation and skillfully drew from the Bechstein grand piano a warm, richly coloured and noble sonority. However, the formal conception of the works was not always kept clearly in focus. (wruess)

Conclusion: A successful debut by a worthy prizewinner of the inaugural competition jointly organised by the Berlin piano manufacturer Bechstein and the Brucknerhaus

Translation from German text