

On May 26, I heard a wonderful all-Chopin concert by one of my favorite pianists, Maurizio Pollini. Almost perfect, with just a few minor quibbles.

The program:

- 2 Nocturnes, Op. 27
- Ballade No. 3, A-flat major
- Ballade No. 4, F minor
- Berceuse, D-flat major
- Scherzo No. 1, F minor
- 2 Nocturnes, Op. 55
- Sonata No. 3, B minor

The 4 Nocturnes were done very well, although I would have liked more delicacy in the intonation.

The two Ballades were played in a somewhat subdued fashion, lacking the " Sturm und Drang" of Pollini's mid-20thC contemporaries. Still, they were a refreshing alternative to what is usually heard, and that was quite a revelation.

The Scherzo's outer sections were done with the requisite fire, but the "Lulajze Jezuniu" trio was played a little too fast. Perhaps Pollini never heard it sung, because he didn't pause between phrases where a singer would take a breath.

The B minor sonata is my no. 1 favorite Chopin work, and here it was done to perfection. The first movement is so full of musical motifs that it is difficult to follow the more-or-less (mostly less) structure of classic sonata form. The several times I have Pollini perform this, the overlong Largo movement is made quite enjoyable in his playing. Here, the monumental final movement was taken at a furious tempo, but every note was perfectly audible and clearly articulated.

For encores, never mind Mazurkas or Waltzes or other miniatures – he played Scherzo No. 3 C-sharp minor, and Ballade No. 1, G minor. The former was done perfectly; the latter, unlike the 2 Ballades in the main program, was played with great intensity and "con fuoco" – with fire.

All in all, an unforgettable experience.

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WashPost review:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/music/a-pianist-offers-the-shape-of-emotion-and-brilliance/2017/05/17/da1c8974-3b28-11e7-9e48-c4f199710b69_story.html
