

**Piers Lane Chopin****Kenneth A. Clifford | Tuesday, October 02, 2007****Chopin**

Piers Lane (piano)

Ballade in G minor, Op.23

Nocturnes, Op.48 – in C minor and F sharp minor

Sonata No.2 in B flat minor, Op.35 (Funeral March)

Barcarolle, Op.60

Sonata No.3 in B minor, Op.58

Wigmore Hall, London



Piers Lane offered a magnificent Chopin recital to a capacity audience at the Wigmore Hall. The performances were notable for eschewing empty display in favour of richness and exploring. The first, moderato, theme in Chopin's G minor Ballade was accompanied, as it should be, by detached second, third, fifth and sixth beats as the composer dictates. Many pianists ignore the staccato marking and leave the pedal down throughout but Lane gave appropriate acknowledgement to the composer's directions.

The qualities that make Lane's approach to Chopin so successful are the same regardless of whether he's playing a Nocturne, the Barcarolle or the Sonatas. In the pair of Nocturnes, Lane demonstrated marvellous quality of tone, tremendous precision and muscle control regarding the whispering inner voices of the pianissimo passages. Contrasted phrases were brought out in a balanced and beautifully shaped way.

There have been flashier performances of Chopin's 'Funeral March' Sonata, but what Lane missed in finger athleticism he made up for with substance of approach. In particular, he brought a sense of grandeur, repose and enigma to this over-familiar work and made it a fresh discovery.



The Barcarolle enjoyed perfect lilt in the opening theme's bass line. There was also a delicate handling of melody that was often ravishing and the sense of structure that Lane gave to each work was most apparent in the B minor Sonata. He was careful not to over-indulge at every climax – something always kept in reserve with tension sustained and giving an increased sense of expectancy.

Lane uses such subtle, organic *rubato* and often understates in order to give himself room to grow in sound and emotional expansiveness. There is no question that he puts the composer first, exposing the music's nobility. This was an evening of sophisticated and penetrating music-making by a pianist of refined musical taste. This generous (in every sense) recital was completed by two Waltzes, one probably not by Chopin, as Lane intimated in his spoken introduction, and both were played with cultured relish.

- Wigmore Hall