

CORAL GABLES GAZETTE

Miami International Piano Festival of Discovery

"Discovery Series" 04.09-12.02

Italian pianist Emanuele Arciuli performed the closing concert of the Festival on April 12th with an extremely demanding and fascinating program of music by Szymanowski, Beethoven, Debussy, and Rzewski. Arciuli's first piece was Szymanowski's "Sheherazade (from Masques)." **Difficult both technically and musically, Arciuli navigated this work as if it held no difficulties for him. From the outset, Arciuli produced a solid and big sound with an impressive dynamic range, and excellent projection, articulation, and tonal color.** He then went on to adroitly capture the quality of maniacal quirkiness in this music while simultaneously building up layer upon layer of Sheherazade's story. Beethoven's late "Sonata in C minor, Op. 111" proved equally impressive. In this piece Arciuli displayed a breathlessly fast and powerful left hand and very strong and propulsive fugal playing. The opening section of the second movement was taken at a very slow, but effective, tempo and was laden with fresh ideas that grabbed and held the listener's attention. Arciuli's was a deeply considered and powerfully moving performance. Debussy's "Preludes, Book I" was astonishingly beautiful, lyrical, and introspective. The probing nature of Arciuli's playing seemed almost like conjuring, and repeatedly revealed layers in the music that usually go undiscovered. Emotionally, intellectually, aesthetically, spiritually-this performance was engulfing. The final work, save for three short and delicately beautiful encores, was Frederick Rzewski's mind bogglingly difficult composition titled "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues." Although very rarely played in concert, I have heard this work performed several times live, but never with the expressive musicality Arciuli imbued it with. The work requires the pianist to maintain a complicated, driving, and powerful thrusting bass rhythm that is meant to remind the listener of a surging steam locomotive and which requires the use of both hands to play. Then, simultaneously, the pianist must add in tone clusters to be played with the right-hand palm, hand, fist, forearm, and elbow. Never have I heard this section of the composition played so musically. **Arciuli performed it with such ease, expressiveness, and accuracy that he made it seem like he was playing nothing more difficult than chopsticks! The middle blues section was excellent too: sexy, seductive, sensual, and coy. Arciuli is a remarkable artist. I hope he returns regularly to South Florida.**

By PAT LEITCH