

Emanuel Ax Concert Review

Benjamin Pritchard

I went to the opening concert of the Tuesday Musical Association last week. The program was a solo recital by the famous American concert pianist Emanuel Ax. I attended with my own piano teacher, and we had front row seats!

Ax played two Beethoven sonatas: the youthful No. 2 in A major, and the famous No. 8 in C minor, known as the Pathétique. Comprising the second half of the program was Schubert's monumental Posthumous B-Flat Major Sonata.

One thing I really enjoyed about this concert was how my close proximity to the stage really allowed some of Ax's personality to come across. He seemed like a very humble and gentle man: a man almost completely devoid of ego. Additionally there seemed to be a child-like innocence about him, as though he was slightly embarrassed by his own fame.

Ax's playing was effortless and flawless, and really seemed to completely transcend technique all-together. His rendition of the early Beethoven Sonata was quick and light, and very enjoyable. Ax seemed less at home with the bang-and-clatter of the Pathétique, and ironically much of the pathos seemed to be lost because of Ax's effortless execution of the piece.

The artist chose to make a few opening comments regarding the Schubert Sonata before beginning the second half of the concert. He seemed to want to convey his thoughts on how deeply music can touch us, but his subject matter proved mostly ineffable, and Ax eventually trailed off. Visibly flustered, he instead just sat down and started playing, and proceeded to deliver the most poetically moving rendition I've ever heard of Schubert's masterpiece.

For the next 30 minutes, the audience seemed transfixed, and no sound was heard until finally thunderous applause drew Ax back to the stage more than 3 times. As an encore, he then performed more Schubert, this time the A Flat Major Impromptu. Interestingly, the piece's abnormally quick tempo seemed to belie Ax's rush for the concert to finally come to a close.

After the final chord, as Ax left the stage I could see a look of relief on his face. It was the look of one who had just poured his soul out to a room of complete strangers... and after that, what more is there to say, or to do?