

# NEW YORK

CONCERT REVIEW INC.

## **New York Concert Artists and Associates presents Viviana Lasaracina, pianist in Review**

*Winner of 2013 Carnegie Debut Recital-Viviana Lasaracina, piano  
Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall; New York, NY  
March 5, 2014*

Viviana Lasaracina, a young Italian pianist currently studying in London, made an auspicious debut on March 5 in Weill Recital at Carnegie Hall in a program of works by Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann, Scriabin, and Rachmaninoff. Ms. Lasaracina was presented by the New York Concert Artists and Associates as a winner of their 2013 competition.



From the first velvety chord of the first *Romance* by Clara Schumann, I knew the music and the audience were in good hands. Let me enumerate the admirable qualities in Ms. Lasaracina's playing: beautiful liquid tone, never a harsh or unmusical sound, exquisite phrasing and phrase shape, generous breathing, a personal sense of poetry and exploration, color and superb pedaling mixtures, contrapuntal awareness, and ability to clarify even the most dense textures and still respond passionately to the music. That's quite a list of virtues. Ms. Lasaracina did well to open with the *Three Romances*, Op. 21, by Clara Schumann. They were among her last published compositions, written shortly after the death of her husband Robert. Clara endured the grueling life of a traveling virtuoso in the mid-nineteenth century as breadwinner for her family, which contained eight children as well as her manic-depressive, albeit genius, husband. She would outlive her husband for forty years, a pioneering female in the "boys club" of the virtuosi. The first *Romance* is truly the gem of the set. Brahms, who played solo piano infrequently, was said to have programmed it. It is imbued with a seriousness that the rest of Clara Schumann's output often avoids. As rendered by Ms. Lasaracina, one heard the elegiac strains, sounding almost like pointers to the heavier Russian sentiments she would

explore on the second half of the program. She followed with the complete *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 12, by Robert Schumann. They are often heard excerpted, but here the set gained by its integrality. Ms. Lasaracina lived each of the frequent mercurial mood shifts completely, making us feel as though the music was emanating directly from her and composed on the spot, which was no small achievement. The middle section of the fifth Fantasy “In der Nacht” was absolutely heartbreaking in its songful simplicity, a result that concealed the great art behind it. Also wonderful was the “question” piece “Warum?” and the conclusion “Ende vom Lied.”

After intermission, she began with Two Poèmes, Op. 32, by Alexander Scriabin, the Russian mystical composer who many believe had synesthesia, a mixing of sensory input that caused him to hear sounds as colors. These two pieces stand on the cusp of his post-Chopin manner and his outright mystical explorations that many listeners did not understand, and that are still being mined for their content. If there was anything negative I could say, it would be that in the second of the Poems, Ms. Lasaracina did not quite “take flight” to the ecstatic manic degree that truly makes Scriabin work.

She finished with the entire set of *Six Moments musicaux* by Sergei Rachmaninoff. The title indicates the spiritual inheritance of Schubert, who also wrote a set of six same-titled pieces, but the scale and virtuosity of these leave Schubert far, far behind. Needless to say, Ms. Lasaracina had every bit of the virtuosity required to negotiate this richly ornamented score, but what was even more remarkable was that the line, the musical thought itself, was never obscured or lost amid the welter of flying notes. She has played in a master class by Lazar Berman, the great Russian pianist who was the first I ever heard play these works, so she spoke the idiom very well. For this listener, the fifth, the somewhat more introspective D-flat major *Adagio Sostenuto*, was the absolute pinnacle of the set. The colors and intimacy were breathtaking.

Ms. Lasaracina favored her enthusiastic and large audience with an encore: the Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 1, by Rachmaninoff, dispatched with clarity and ferocity.

by Frank Daykin for New York Concert Review; New York, NY