

Ivan Ilić, pianist



A rising star on the Parisian music scene, 28 year old American pianist Ivan Ilić is gaining international recognition for his "unique blend of a Gallic touch, a Slavic soul and a mathematician's precision."

A disciple of the legendary François-René Duchâble, Ivan is supported by the American Foundation in Paris, the University of Illinois, the Karić Foundation, and the Helen von Ammon Fund for Emerging Artists. Ivan recently completed a one-year residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts; this season he is supported by the Nadia Boulanger Foundation in Paris.

Ivan started musical studies at age 6 and gave his recital debut at 11. He went on to take degrees in music and mathematics at UC Berkeley. After capturing all of Berkeley's music awards, including First Prize in the Concerto Competition, an Eisner Prize, First Prize in the Senior Recital Competition, and a Mary J. Nunes travel grant to the Aspen Festival, he left for Paris with a Hertz Traveling Fellowship from the University.

A few months later Ivan was admitted to the esteemed Conservatoire Supérieur de Paris, where he took a Premier Prix (First Prize) in piano performance, followed by a Diplôme à l'Unanimité from the École Normale in Paris. At age 20 he launched a solo recital career that has taken him to Belgium, Ireland, Serbia, the Czech Republic, America, and throughout France and the United Kingdom. Ivan's playing is often broadcast on television and radio stations in the US, the UK, France, and Serbia. The City of Paris sponsored his last recording.

Projects for 2007 include new works written for Ivan by Reynold Tharp, Fernando Benadon, and Keeril Makan, a recording of the music of Lucien Durosoir, and multiple tours of France, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

Over 50 solo engagements for 2007 include the Phillips Collection (Washington DC), Princeton University, St George's Bristol, the John Field Room (Dublin), the Barber Institute (Birmingham), the Great Hall of the University of Aberystwyth, the Wales Millennium Centre (Cardiff), the Invalides Concert Hall (Paris), and festivals throughout Europe.

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Reviews and Recommendations

"Ivan Ilić is one of the most talented young musicians I have ever met. He has a formidable pianistic technique, a deep understanding of music, and a rare commitment to contemporary composers. [There is a] fiery, passionate quality of Ivan's playing. Listening to his music you are immediately gripped with the knowledge that this is a man who feels deeply."

Dmitri Tymoczko - Princeton University Professor of Composition

"In the sixty-plus years I have been teaching piano I have been fortunate in having some very talented students. Among these, I would place Ivan in the top ten. He will succeed, I feel. Also, he loves and is really interested in MUSIC – including, thank heaven, 20th century and beyond."

Robert Helps - Composer and Concert Pianist (1928 – 2001)

He has gotten to know Debussy's music at the source and captured the elusive pianistic and poetic weaving with Gallic refinement. He navigated the Mozart Sonata completely differently, highlighting the supernatural, subtle tenderness with tasteful doses of pedaling and wonderfully beautiful singing melodic lines.

Gordana Krajačić - Naša Borba (Serbia)

"One was especially appreciative of the great respect of melodic lines...an astonishing performance of the Intermezzi opus 117 #1 and #2 of Johannes Brahms, both of a highly beautiful expressive quality, almost Debussy-like...a very beautiful dynamic."

Marc Develey - Anaclase (France)

"... Ivan had the sagacity and élan to make fresh what we'd assumed would be familiar territory. The aural colouring of the Liszt and Brahms was handled particularly well, with a broad range of rich, warm and woody hues, setting those works firmly in their period, yet sounding – on this occasion – alive and new. And then came the explosion of prismatic, fugitive tones of the Debussy."

Mark Smith - Lyth Arts (Scotland)

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The Inverness Courier

At the heart of the Highlands

“Recital proves worthy of new piano”

Published: 27 October, 2006 by Kenny Mathieson

This recital by the Paris-based American pianist Ivan Illic marked the first public performance by a professional pianist on the new Bosendorfer piano at the Town House, Inverness, and the instrument emerged triumphant from the searching examination it received.

Illic's diverse and well-balanced programme - played entirely from memory - took us chronologically from a "Suite" by Handel all the way through to the world premiere of a testing new work by young American composer John L. King, and added Haydn, Schubert, Debussy and Liszt to its stylistic span.

The instrument scored highly for the rich colours and sheer depth and luxuriance of sound which the pianist drew from it, and it augured well for the expanded programme of piano music planned for Highland 2007 (and, we trust, well beyond). A piano of this quality has long been needed at the Town House, and if little can be done about the obtrusive traffic sound leaking into the hall, at least the artists now have an instrument worthy of their talents.

Illic introduced each piece he played, having altered the programme significantly from its printed version. The initial two pieces in F major, a crisply played and cleanly articulated "Suite" by Handel and Haydn's "Sonata No 47", full of characteristic ingenuity and wit, paved the way for King's "Sonata", and provided both a context and a contrast with the new piece.

Its darkly resonant opening phrases and agitated, pulsating figures were developed and expanded in skilful fashion, and the short piece moved through various changes of mood and extremes of high and low register as it unfolded.

By way of contrast, Illic closed the first half with three of Debussy's "Preludes", which received a robust reading that avoided the diaphanous veil that can sometimes be thrown over Debussy's music, but lost a little in atmosphere as a result, notably in "La Cathedrale Engloutie".

Four of Schubert's "Moments Musicaux", intelligently sequenced to give a satisfying overall shape, preceded Liszt's virtuoso "Variations On A Theme By Bach" in the second half. Liszt took the full Romantic sledgehammer to Bach's elegant theme (drawn from the Cantata "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen") in this work, calling for a full Lisztian technique.

The pianist removed his jacket in recognition of the task ahead, and emerged with great credit from the challenge, before returning to add two more of Debussy's "Preludes" as encores.

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Two Programme Suggestions

Programme 1 : Händel, Brahms, Liszt and Debussy

Georg Friedrich Händel

Second Suite in F Major

Johannes Brahms

Six Fantasies, Opus 116

Franz Liszt

Variations on a Theme by Bach : Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen

intermission

Claude Debussy

12 Préludes, Book Two

Programme 2 : Scriabin, Rachmaninoff and Chopin

Alexander Scriabin

Préludes, Opus 11

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Préludes, Opus 32

intermission

Frédéric Chopin

24 Préludes, Opus 28

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