

Following Fialkowska



The Janina Fialkowska Newsletter

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Fall 2009

An artist of rare distinction

Beethoven in Montreal and a recital tour in Ontario

There is always extra pressure when one plays at home. And so it is always with mixed feelings that Janina returns to her native Montreal. The loyalty and enthusiasm of fans, family and friends is undeniable, but throughout her life there have been issues with certain Montreal music critics. This time however the praise was unanimous. And more importantly the performance of Beethoven's 4th piano concerto was quite simply beautiful.

It was a great start to a Southern Ontario tour (Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, London) which consisted of recitals, master classes and ending with a performance of the Chopin f-minor concerto and the almost unknown "Fantasy on Polish airs" by Chopin with Orchestra London under the exceptional Grzegorz Nowak. Even a ferocious blizzard couldn't keep the die-hard fans from filling London's Centennial Hall.



A great match celebrating Polish music: Janina Fialkowska with one of her favorite conductors, Grzegorz Nowak, in London's Centennial Hall

Still speaking of Beethoven, his fourth concerto brought back to us the ex-Montreal pianist Janina Fialkowska. At 57, Fialkowska has become an artist of rare distinction as well as retaining all the virtuosity of her youth. Accompanied almost perfectly by the conductor, she brought to the concerto all the concentration and lyricism that one could wish for.

La Presse, Montreal,
February 13, 2009

A welcome return – Janina Fialkowska performs with poetic insight. An infrequent flier to her hometown, Janina Fialkowska made a memorable appearance Wednesday in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.4.

It is one thing to play the scampering runs of the first movement of this masterpiece with perfect evenness, another to invest them with soft and natural poetry. The anguish of the Andante was all the stronger for Fialkowska's understated legato, and the finale was enlivened by a joyous sense of collaboration with the orchestra. Much as I admired Anne-Sophie Mutter in Mendelssohn the night before, it was good to hear an equally personal performance by a soloist who does not go postal over dynamics and tempos.

Montreal Gazette,
February 13th, 2009

PRESS



The rehearsal in Montreal's „Place des Arts” took place in the hall named after Janina's early piano teacher: Yvonne Hubert.

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Hot off the press:
Janina's latest CD just released!

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„Fialkowska has become an artist of rare distinction as well as retaining all the virtuosity of her youth“

Bears in the Backyard

Janina relates her latest Piano Plus adventure



Welcome to Snow Lake, Janina and the "man behind it all": David Hart



Concert in David Hart's living room



Everyone was invited to the concert except the shoes ...



The next generation of concert goers: Janina makes friends with her new fans



Unusual after-concert dinner at Dennis Hart's



May in Northern Canada: Pisew Falls close to Thompson, Manitoba



Janina expected winter and found Spring in magical Gore Bay



One of the most attentive audiences ever. One could hear the proverbial needle drop ...



Bridal Falls on Manitoulin Island



Wonderful hosts on Manitoulin Island: Ursula Hettmann, Nicole Weppeler and Johanna Herzog

"Bears?" I gasped "well, yes," replied my host. "So don't wander off too far; they're hungry at this time of the year. Mind you, one was in the backyard the other day, so you never know ... although, no one has ever been killed so far." And as an afterthought he added nonchalantly, "and there are wolves as well." No, I wasn't on a wilderness survival expedition, but just another Piano Plus tour which had started on the spellbinding Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron and was now ending in the remote little mining town of Snow Lake, Manitoba. "How did you ever find us? We aren't even on a map" a youngster had gleefully asked me at the special recital I had given for the children of Snow Lake. There were forty of them and most probably not one of them had ever heard a classical piano recital before. I played for them Mozart, Grieg, Ravel, Chopin, Mendelssohn and Schumann and did a little commentary between pieces. Having been warned that three of the children had behavioral problems, I was prepared for a difficult afternoon. In

fact, they were one of the most attentive and quietest audiences with whom I have ever dealt and their post-recital questions about the music were pertinent, amusing and intelligent. The great composers had once again worked their magic and these children, ranging from four years old to young adults, who live in the middle of the Canadian North hundreds of kilometers from the next community, were enthralled and completely hooked. The goal of the Piano Six project (which I had founded 16 years previously) and its newer version, Piano Plus, was to make classical music "live" recitals available to all Canadians, whatever their age, financial status or geographical location. To achieve this, I had called upon the best of the best of Canadian musicians to donate their services for a certain period of time every year. Hundreds of communities like Snow Lake or Jonquières or Squamish or Wolfville benefited from their altruism and have been thrilled by performances of such superstars as Angela Hewitt, James Eh-

nes, Russell Braun and Jon Kimura Parker – to name but a few. The project is an extraordinary success story, proving that the power of "live" classical music is still undeniable, relevant and strong. It is a force for good and it brings beauty into an otherwise not so lovely world.

Summer Festival Hopping

Janina does the rounds of Ontario's summer festivals

Janina began in Parry Sound (Festival of the Sound) with a recital, a chamber music concert, a lecture and a Mozart concerto with the Festival Orchestra. Amazingly there was time for a short cruise on Lake Huron and a master class where she passed on to young pianist Jan Lisiecki some valuable information about Chopin performance.

From there she traveled across the province to the Westben Arts Festival Theatre in Campbellford run by Janina's friend and colleague Brian Finley and his charming wife, soprano Donna Bennett. She played a recital and gave some master classes.



Outside (above) and inside (right) the spectacular Stockey Centre for the Performing Arts in Parry Sound (Georgian Bay, Lake Huron)



A new fan: Jazz-legend Gene Dinovi came to all of Janina's concerts.

Then South to the magical Amherst Island (Waterside Concerts) where she shared a recital with another friend, Canada's beloved radio commentator Eric Friesen. Niagara-on-the-Lake

(Music Niagara) was the final stop of the tour and couldn't have been more delightful – from the luxurious Harbor Inn Hotel to the wonderfully enthusiastic audience.



Music in the fields: "The Barn" at Westben, Campbellford



Brian Finley, the Artistic Director of Westben



One of Canada's most recognizable voices: radio personality Eric Friesen



Sunset included: during intermission in Parry Sound

Janina Fialkowska's recital was a spectacular example of how one individual can captivate and move an audience...

Happily, Fialkowska demonstrated her innate understanding and insight at nearly every turn, leaving the large crowd completely satisfied. Would that every concert come close to this level of artistry.

The first half was a marvel of tone, touch and balance. Now that Alfred Brendel has retired ... it's encouraging to say that Mozart has yet another able champion for his divine Fantasy...

The "Twinkle" variations were delivered in a compellingly innocent fashion,

breathing easily in their chameleon-like skins and featured superlative contrapuntal conversations and breathtaking passagework that belied their creation as études for his predominantly female pupils.

Schumann's engaging Fäschingsschwank aus Wien captured and maintained interest with its ideally festive Allegro, marvellously controlled legato (in the Romance), jaunty Scherzino, melody-rich Intermezzo and a Finale that was a model of ebb-and-flow as well as unerring cross-hand technique...

The aural palette changed considerably after the interval. Ravel's "little" ... So-

natine became a showcase for Fialkowska's magically delicate touch and ability to find the perfect tempo to suit the music, the acoustics and relationship of the parts to the whole... Chopin concluded the program. ... The opening B Major Nocturne became a personal examination of cause and introspective effect, while the closing Scherzo brilliantly rang its stratospheric top even as the arpeggiated middle ground was dank with atmosphere...

Mendelssohn's Spinning Song was the welcome extra guest.

PRESS

www.jamesweggreview.com



A remarkable concert venue: St. Mark's Church (1805) in Niagara-on-the-Lake



Gloomy thoughts about competitions



Festival Director Peter-Paul Kainrath announces the winners. The jury: H. Sermet, L. Zilberstein (President), J.-K. Chen, Janina, Ch. Elton, C. Ortiz, B. Davidovich, J. Kalichstein, E. Pace, S. Sciarrino and O. Kern

experience of mixed emotions.

On the plus side the city of Bolzano and its environs is delightful and the local restaurants serve typically delicious food. Also the organization of the competition was first-rate and Janina served with a very distinguished and pleasant jury.

It must also be said that the eventual winner, a young German – Michail Lifits – was a very accomplished pianist. But, as with all competitions, there

was a dark negative side. Three highly gifted young pianists who were among Janina’s favorites (Christopher Devine from Scotland, Scipione Sangiovanni from Italy and Bruno Vlahsek from Croatia) inexplicably never reached the semi finals. This resulted in uninteresting and frustrating final rounds.

Janina, exhausted and depressed after it was all over has decided to give international competitions a miss, at least for the foreseeable future.

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In August Janina judged the International Busoni Piano Competition in Italy. This turned out to be an

Janina’s Photo Album



Above: Janina hiking in Germany’s Black Forest. Left below: One of nature’s wonders: Natural Bridge, Virginia. Right below: One of the man-made wonders of the world: the Isenheim Altar in Colmar, France



The Big Nickel in Sudbury, Ontario



The latest

Just released: Janina’s latest recording. It’s her third collaboration with the excellent people at ATMA classique, the thriving Canadian CD company.

“A Chopin Recital” features some of Janina’s favorite Chopin works including the 3rd Ballade, the “Barcarolle”, the 1st Scherzo as well as some waltzes, mazurkas and preludes, a polonaise and a nocturne – the whole spectrum of Chopin’s genius. A recording not to be missed!

