

Review of World Premiere, Sunday December 11th, 2005 for "Latest" magazine.

Rachel Fryer is no stranger to the classical concert-goer, being very active as both a soloist and as an accompanist. Her musical background is impressive having studied at York University; Kharkov Conservatoire, Ukraine; The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and at the Royal College of Music under Professor John Blakely where she was awarded many prizes. She has received guidance from many prestigious pianists including John Lill, Barry Douglas, Joanne MacGregor, Steven Kovacevich and Bernard Roberts.

Sunday's concert was a special event in that it was in aid of the Brighton and Hove Neighbourhood Care Scheme and was hosted by them. It was made possible for many people that were not usually able to make such events to be able to be there and to enjoy the concert. Sean de Podesta, the Brighton and Neighbourhood Care Scheme Coordinator introduced the concert outlining the Care scheme. The concert included pieces by Scarlatti, Haydn, Beethoven, Debussy, Chopin, carols arranged by Laura Schur and a specially commissioned work 'Light in the Dark' by Samuel Becker.

Rachel's interpretation of the very different musical genres was as refreshing as it was always appropriate. Her playing was crisp, clear and articulate throughout, allowing the listener to be in no doubt as to the composers design for each piece. Overall Rachel brought a 'freshness' and new perspective to the music played, which was particularly pleasing in the case of Beethoven's very often hackneyed Für Elise. Rachel's reading of Debussy's Clair de Lune and L'Isle Joyeuse was a sheer delight. Often the content of these pieces gets lost in a smudge of enthusiastic sustain pedalling! Rachel employed minimal pedalling to maximum effect exploring, savouring the rich resonances whilst allowing lines and phrases to sing freely and with contrast. Indeed Rachel's use of the sustain pedal throughout the concert was aesthetically judicious allowing the music to breathe and for the forms to emerge without being swamped and muddled into the unrecognisable by too much sustain.

Chopin's Scherzo no.2 op. 31 was another good example of Rachel's controlled use of sustain. In this piece the usual stretching of time for effect (rubato) part and parcel of playing Chopin was minimalised creating a pleasing new aspect to the piece. The Scarlatti's Sonata in C was crisp, dry, simple and light as if being played on the harpsichord it was originally intended for. Haydn's Sonata in C positively sparkled along with some delicate line drawing and shrewd attention to dynamic

shading. The choice of Laura Schur's carol arrangements were seasonally apt and moved at least one member of the audience to sing along!!

Samuels Becker's excellent, specially commissioned 'Light in the Dark' became instantly accessible due to the combination of a brief introduction to the work by the composer and by Rachel's sensitive and explicit playing. One listener fittingly described the work as a journey. The start of the journey opened with a beautiful and haunting carol like theme reminiscent of The Coventry Carol. Soon this tranquillity and ethereal beauty is overlaid and disrupted with new material appearing in the bass register. Tension mounts realised by the skilful use of dissonance and juxtaposition until finally there is a return to the opening idea this time expressed more boldly. Rachel's playing conveyed the journey perfectly. Light in the Dark is very orchestral in nature and Rachel's interpretation made it possible for the listener not only to enjoy on first hearing a beautiful new work but to imagine it orchestrally, for example one moment delicate woodwinds and then strident full tutti! The concert closed with Chopin's Fantasie-Impromptu, which displayed Rachel's virtuosity, passion and sheer musicality to the full. Rachel has a CD Maiden Voyage and will be giving her debut solo performance at the Fairfield Hall Croydon in July. For more information visit her website www.rachelfryer.co.uk