

Young, Virtuoso, and Wanderlust

by Christa Dietrich



Aaron Pilsan with "Music and Poetry"

Photo: Bregenz Festival/Anja Köhler

The 18-year-old pianist Aaron Pilsan turned empathic in Tchaikowsky's service.

BREGENZ. A series of concerts called "Music and Poetry" may sound a bit offbeat, but these concerts consistently offer terrific programs and always fill the concert hall. This was guaranteed once again this past Sunday evening when the young Vorarlberg pianist Aaron Pilsan revitalized the Bregenz Festival with the music by the composer and musician André Tchaikowsky (1935-1982), which lay sovereign between works by Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) and Frédéric Chopin (1810 -1849). The effect was to leave the audience completely fascinated and spellbound.

With the first performance of the opera, "The Merchant of Venice," in Bregenz, and knowing opera will move to the Wielki Theatre in Warsaw, and maybe to London as well, it is very likely that other compositions by Tchaikowsky will be taken for granted and appear in concert halls. This alone is a great achievement by festival artistic director David Pountney.

Filigree Flourish

Aaron Pilsan chose well by incorporating the Austrian premiere of the Tango and Mazurka that were to be part of "Six Dances for Piano" by Tchaikowsky. Compositional issues presented by these pieces brought forth a delightful and "peppy" effect by the young pianist. The piano cycle *Métopes* Opus 29 by Szymanowski was a rarity at the Bregenz Festival and gave one a good idea what this

Polish composer might have been trying to accomplish with his opera, "King Roger," that was performed in Bregenz a few years ago. Pilsan provided us with a great interpretation of these colorful and expressive pieces, and despite the freedom Szymanowski gives a pianist, Pilsan remained true to the music and never left us with any kind of sour aftertaste. In the same way, his Chopin playing was true to the music, and was enjoyable throughout.

Finally, the well-known German writer, Michael Krüger, provided the "Poetry" and his choices perfectly complemented the "Music" portion, making for an unforgettable evening.