

Review**Tri-C Classical Piano Series:
Angelin Chang at Gartner Auditorium (March 24)**

by Daniel Hathaway



Angelin Chang brought a lot of technology to her recital at Gartner Auditorium of the Cleveland Museum of Art on Sunday afternoon, March 24. A Yamaha concert grand piano wired for midi held conversations with three laptop computers and projected the results onto a large screen for some of the works on the program, and Chang used an iPad instead of sheet music during one selection. The recital was the third and final concert of the Tri-C Classical Piano Series for this season and attracted a good-sized audience.

The images, generated first during Chang's performance of Liszt's transcription of J.S. Bach's organ prelude and fugue in a minor, were the work of Cleveland State University faculty artist Qian Li — a set of slides ordered and superimposed at the behest of Chang's fingers as channelled into the laptops and translated by computer software.

Chang, who appeared in a red gown with billowing cape (reminiscent of a purple number her mentor Yvonne Loriod wore back in 1978 in this same hall when she played works by her husband, Olivier Messiaen), played the prelude and fugue with clarity and authority while the screen displayed aqueous images reminiscent of protozoa and other single-celled creatures.

If you like images with your music, you would have found this fascinating even if musical events didn't seem to precisely inspire parallel imagery. If you prefer monomedia art, you might have found the images distracting (simple fix: close your eyes!)

The screen was blank for Chang's performance of Beethoven's "Grand" Sonata in E-flat, op. 7, a sensitive reading of a beautiful, classically-proportioned work that respected the composer's lyrical intentions and graceful musical gestures.

After intermission, Chang jettisoned the cape for a brilliant reading of Robert Schumann's *Papillons*, which inspired the computers to show images celebrating the ambiguity of Schumann's title — butterflies of course, but also hazy scenes of a masked ball (with guests wearing "papillons", or masks in the shape of butterflies).

The pianist then launched into a lecture on Messiaen and birdsongs accompanied by views of webpages and sound files to illuminate the next piece on the program, *l'Alouette Lulu* from *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*, accompanied by images of ponds, birds in flight (a loop) and natural scenes. Chang's playing was perfectly evocative of the sounds of the bird in question and her contrasting voicings of the high and low registers in Messiaen's rather lengthy avian portrait were lovely.

The concert ended with Chang's fluent performance of Chopin's virtuosic *Ballade in f, op. 52*, this time for unenhanced piano, and the crowd happily extended the already two-hour and fifteen minute concert by calling for two encores: Debussy's *Fireworks* and Liszt's transcription of Schubert's *Serenade*.

With this performance, Angelin Chang introduced the audience to some of the possibilities digital technology holds for creating real time multimedia performances. Setup complications interfered with the flow of Sunday afternoon's concert and the software needs some tweaking to better coordinate visuals with musical events, but the combination suggests fascinating developments to come.

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