

Review**Cleveland International Piano Competition:
Round Two, Session Six (August 5)**

by Daniel Hathaway



The final four contestants rolled around for a second hearing on Monday evening, beginning with a clever program devised and played by Cahill Smith, who followed a beautifully shaped reading of Scarlatti's K. 466 sonata — in which he pointed up important harmonic details — with Sebastian Currier's 1996 *Scarlatti Cadences*, a series of dreamy riffs on snippets of the composer's works. The competition's 'first sighting of Chopin's *Winter Wind* etude (op. 25/11) was well organized in Smith's hands but perhaps not as wild as the composer had in mind. The left-hand themes rang out handsomely. In Brahms's *Vier Klavierstücke, op. 11*, Smith created stylistically true performances on a Brahmsian scale that would in some cases have benefited from longer melodic lines. One tiny glitch and one more noticeable memory flub were minor blemishes on the surface of a satisfying set.

Kwan Yi also led with Scarlatti — one sonata in D Major, one in d minor (K. 482 & 32), imitating guitars in the first — a highly fluent performance — and creating a lovely slow aria in the second. Amazingly even right-hand runs characterized his reading of Chopin's a minor Etude (op. 10/2). The poltergeists of live performance crept in near the end of the first movement of Beethoven's Op. 111 sonata when he suddenly lost focus, left out a few bars of the left hand part and had to bring the movement to an end before its time. He recovered for the *Arietta* but seemed distracted; its nattering trills came into the foreground instead of the thematic line.

François Dumont proposed Tanguy's jazzy *Intermezzo* for an opener, stylishly playing its all-over-the-keyboard chords. The second *Winter Wind* etude of the evening found Dumont fully in control of balances; he revealed left-hand details that usually get buried and his bass line at the end was magnificent. A clear-textured performance of Chopin's third sonata was full of beautiful tone in the first movement and fluent and rhythmic in the Scherzo. The recitative in the *Largo* was strong and declamatory and Dumont crowned the sonata with a bright, bold finale.

After an even and nuanced Bach prelude and fugue (g-sharp minor, WTC I), Miao Huang put forth her own take on the Chopin a minor sonata, a performance which made complete sense in its own way. Dramatic on a small scale and full of expressive surges in the

first movement, initially frothy then eventful in the second, the third-movement aria was beautifully-paced and the finale clear and decisive.

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