

Impressive duo from German master Glemser

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT 23 SEP 10 @ 11:27AM BY STEVE MOFFATT



German pianist Bernd Glemser gave a recital in Sydney as well as playing Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto.

You don't usually finish a concert with an overture, but English conductor Mark Wigglesworth had a good reason to turn convention on its head when he was a guest of the Sydney Symphony.

The program started with Shostakovich's enigmatic 15th and final symphony which, in its first movement, quotes Tchaikovsky, some of the composer's own earlier works and - for some reason which has kept musicologists arguing over for decades - Rossini's *William Tell* overture.

So these two diverse works - one of them long, brooding and ultimately mysterious, the other short, episodic, melodic and embedded in our collective memory bank - made a clever pair of bookends to the star piece of the evening, Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto.

For movie fans of a certain age the first movement of "Rach 2" is difficult to separate from Tom Ewell's unlikely attempts to seduce Marilyn Monroe in Billy Wilder's *The Seven Year Itch*. That German pianist Bernd Glemser's performance dispelled such distracting images for this listener is testimony to his skill and intelligence.

He somehow managed to bring out the muscle behind the rhapsody and in the dramatic finale, with its long-awaited cadenza, he laid out his pianistic portfolio for all to admire.

Immensely impressive.

The SSO were also impressive under Wigglesworth's keen eye and meticulous baton. Principal cellist Catherine Hewgill shone in both her solos - in the second movement of the Shostakovich and at the start of the Rossini - and the flute of Jane Webb and piccolo of Rosamund Plummer never faltered.

The percussion section under Rebecca Lago also excelled on a busy night.

On Monday night Glemser gave a recital at the City Recital Hall in Angel Place.

Part of the Sydney Symphony's international pianists series which this year celebrates the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth, it was, however, the work of that composer's friend Liszt which took the audience's breath away.

The Sonata in B minor - 30 minutes of continuous music which veers from the thunderingly dramatic to the ethereal - is one of the mainstays of any piano virtuoso.

Glemser's performance was blistering and deserved the four curtain calls he received. There was no encore - none was necessary, for how could you follow such a richly diverse and complex work played with such freedom and assurance?

The recital got under way with Glemser's selection of eight of his favourite *Songs Without Words*. These gemlike works of Mendelssohn got more beautiful as they progressed, from the lilting *Venetian Gondola Song*, to the quicksilver *Spinning Song* and the majestic Op 62 No.3.

These led into a Mendelssohn in a more substantial mood, the fantasie Op 28, popularly known as the "Scottish sonata", before two of Chopin's Nocturnes and the virtuoso Scherzo No.4 Op 54 closed the first half.

Glemser will be performing Rachmaninoff's 2nd piano concerto on Thursday, September 23, at 1.30pm and on Friday, September 24, and Saturday at 8pm.

CONCERTS: Bernd Glemser recital; SSO Rachmaninoff 2

WHERE: City Recital Hall; Opera House

WHEN: Monday, September 20; Wednesday, September 22

<http://www.wherelive.com.au>

