

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

PIANO

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 5 "Emperor" with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood:

FROM *The Boston Globe*

From out of the piano wilderness, an overdue BSO debut

By Jeremy Eichler, Globe Staff | July 25, 2007

"Most big orchestras feel they need their glittery star soloists to add luster and sell tickets, yet the star system can also muddle the pipelines and keep certain talent waiting far too long. The Canadian pianist Marc-André Hamelin is a highly impressive musician who should have been debuting with major orchestras years ago, but his career appears to be heating up only recently, at age 45. Sunday afternoon he made his BSO debut, filling in on short notice for an injured Leon Fleisher.

To be fair, there is a more complicated story behind Hamelin's late arrival to center-stage. He has spent years blazing trails and lighting fires in the remote regions of the piano wilderness, indulging his passion for obscure and fiendishly difficult late 19th- and early 20th-century music. He has recorded armfuls of this virtuoso repertoire for the British label Hyperion, which apparently had the wisdom to give Hamelin carte blanche .

It would be a pleasure to report that Hamelin is gaining his newfound exposure without compromising his distinctive tastes, and that his BSO debut was made with a concerto by Ferruccio Busoni, or Anton Rubinstein, or Franz Xaver Scharwenka. But alas, this was an all-Beethoven weekend at Tanglewood, so Hamelin performed the "Emperor" Concerto, in keeping with the original program.

His performance was fleet, lucid, and coolly probing, dazzling when necessary but not excessively flashy. He seemed very grateful to be there, and for a brief tantalizing moment it looked as though he might play an encore -- bring on the Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji! -- but it was not to be. The substitution was a special case , but let's hope that Hamelin is reengaged, and that next time the BSO takes the bold step of encouraging him to bring a piece that showcases his individuality rather than shoehorning him into the mold of a more conventional pianist. The concertos of Beethoven, Brahms, and Mozart will be happy for the week off, and they'll sound fresher when they return."

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Pianist Marc-André Hamelin performs at Tanglewood Sunday with the BSO, conducted by Jens Georg Bachmann. (Hilary Scott)



FROM *The Berkshire Eagle*, July 23, 2007

by Andrew L. Pincus, special to the Eagle

"A highlight was to have been pianist Leon Fleisher's return in a large-scale concerto, Beethoven's "Emperor," for the first time since he regained use of his right hand through Botox treatments. When he canceled because of inflamed tendons in both hands, the BSO called in the Canadian Marc-Andre Hamelin (not to be confused with Jean-Philippe Collard or Pierre-Laurent Aimard, already on the summer's schedule) as a replacement.

And a good one, it turned out. This was a somewhat lighter than usual "Emperor," but Hamelin had the muscle for Beethoven's scale passages going two ways at once and other such technical demands. Seconded by the BSO, he also commanded the fire, grandeur and poetry. He was especially good at illuminating the quieter passages, such as the transition between the last two movements"

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