

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

PIANIST

KANSAS CITY STAR

Pianist gives astounding performance

By JOHN HEUERTZ, Feb. 21, 2010

Canadian Marc-André Hamelin showed about 700 people at the Folly Theater why he's one of the world's greatest pianists.

People didn't just applaud at the end of his program. They stood up and clapped and yelled and whistled and took pictures.

Hamelin opened his concert Friday with Haydn's 1793 Andante and Variations in F minor, a work of two variations on two melodies. Hamelin said after the concert that some of its repeating passages had opened up for him in a whole new way during the performance.

Mozart's A minor Piano Sonata followed the Haydn variations. Both pieces are moving because of their powerful but restrained emotions. They made excellent vehicles for Hamelin's creamy, beautifully controlled touch.

Franz Liszt's "Venice and Naples" showcased Hamelin's fearsome technique in another way. Playing Liszt so fast is beyond nearly every pianist. But Hamelin's splendid articulation of Liszt's trademark clouds of trills, and his execution of the work's famously difficult prestissimo finale, made it sound not only easy but fun to play.

The second half opened with Gabriel Fauré's 1894 D-flat Nocturne. Hamelin's sensitive touch and pedaling brought forth the best qualities in this sweet, gentle and oddly masculine music.

Most astounding of all was Hamelin's performance of Charles-Valentin Alkan's devilishly complicated 1857 Symphony for Solo Piano. Its nearly insoluble technical problems were dispatched by Hamelin at top speed with tremendous power and élan.

Listening to Hamelin play Alkan is a strange experience because Hamelin is a greater artist than Alkan. Hamelin plays from the heart and writes from the heart, as his delightful 2006 Nocturne encore showed.

Alkan's music is curiously bloodless, but he influenced great composers after his death. It is to Hamelin's credit that he has done so much to help rescue Alkan from obscurity.

Colbert Artists Management

111 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019
www.colbertartists.com ~ 212-757-0782