

URSULA OPPENS

PIANIST

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A Teacher's Legacy, Celebrated at the Piano

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The International Keyboard Institute & Festival at Mannes College the New School for Music devoted Saturday to commemorating the centenary of Leonard Shure, a pianist who made sterling recordings well into his 70s, and who died in 1995, at 84. Some of Saturday's activities looked at Shure's work directly, through a videotape of a master class, for example, or an examination of his recordings.

But Shure was more of a pianist's pianist than a household name, even at the height of his career, and his greatest legacy was probably his teaching. Having studied with Artur Schnabel, he passed along Schnabel's tradition of Austrian classicism and intellectual clarity to several generations of American pianists: among them, Jerome Rose, who directs the institute; Ursula Oppens; Beth Levin; and the composer David Del Tredici.

Those pianists, along with Victor Rosenbaum, Edward Arthur Shure (one of Leonard's sons), Neal Stulberg and Phillip Moll, played a recital in tribute to their teacher on Saturday evening, and the Mannes auditorium was packed for the occasion.

It was not always easy to tell what Shure's influence on these pianists was. It has been decades since they studied with him, and they have each found a distinctive interpretive path. The two most memorable performances were of works composed after Shure's death.

Ms. Oppens extended her Elliott Carter franchise with "Tri-Tribute" (2007-8), a set of three short, sparkling works that she played with consummate clarity and zest. The third, "Matribute," was composed in time for Ms. Oppens's 2008 recording of all Mr. Carter's piano music at the time, as well as a Tanglewood premiere that summer. Since then Mr. Carter has added the meditative "Fratribute" and the bright, swirling "Sistribute" — hardly enough for another disc, perhaps, but Mr. Carter is only 101.

Ms. Oppens also gave a dark-hued account of Mendelssohn's F sharp minor Fantasy (Op. 28), which was closer in spirit to the other pianists' performances. But Mr. Del Tredici exercised a composer's prerogative of playing only his own music, the innocently melodic, light-textured "Three Gymnopedies" (2003).

Mr. Del Tredici and Ms. Oppens performed in the second half of the program. Earlier Ms. Levin gave a performance of Beethoven's 32 Variations in C minor that concentrated on Beethoven's gruff, muscular side. Mr. Rosenbaum played the four pieces of Brahms's Opus 119 with a courtly, poetic elegance, and Edward Shure offered an interpretation of Schumann's Fantasy in C (Op. 17) in which storminess and subtlety mingled.

For a slight change in texture, and a hint of the spirit of salon performances of times past, Mr. Stulberg and Mr. Moll closed the first part of the program with vibrant accounts of Dvorak's Slavonic dances in their original duet versions: those in C minor (Op. 46, No. 7), A flat (Op. 46, No. 6) and C (Op. 72, No. 7). And Mr. Rose, ending the concert, brought his characteristically large but concentrated sound to Chopin's A minor Waltz (Op. 34, No. 1) and a beautifully phrased reading of the Ballade No. 3 (Op. 47).

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