

A real musician in the making

Especially for those of us who spend most of their concert time in North America, the Lucerne Festival in Summer's Début series is a much-appreciated way of hearing the next generation of musicians in person rather than the far less-revealing first CDs or radio broadcasts.

Judging from the 2010 crop, there should be no shortage of excellent practitioners and, hopefully, a true artist in the years to come.

Cellist David Pia is undoubtedly vying for a place in the latter category.

How fortunate indeed to have veteran pianist Gérard Wyss as his partner (the word "accompanist" doesn't begin to do justice to the attentive support, understanding and insights that informed nearly every measure of the recital).

From the first bow of Schumann's *Adagio and Allegro*, Pia's carefully crafted, tawny tone, burned into consciousness with admirable ease and deft understatement. While he knows where the bridge is (and how to use it when extra intensity is required) it is only employed as just another colour from the rich palette of hues available rather than succumbing to the siren call of brilliance that many others prefer to add, giving constant gleam to their sound.

The "*Allegro*" was wonderfully balanced as cellist and pianist held everyone's attention with a conversational manner—clearly amongst equals—only surpassed by an ideally contrasting second subject.

In the Brahms—the heart of the program even as its "*Allegro passionato*" was rightfully approached and left as the core of the sonata—Pia was technically assured without dipping into the shallow end of flashy bravura. Still, make no mistake, when power was wanted (the closing of the "*Allegro molto*"), dry, yet rhythmically pulsating motion required (the "*Scherzo*") or a pizzicato just a nickel short of brutal to prepare the calmer sections to come (the opening of the "*Adagio affettuoso*" was unforgettable) Pia never faltered. In particular, his C-string interventions were infused with a marvellous quality that immediately rekindled the stellar work of Pierre Fournier.

One wished that the Debussy had another dozen minutes than its succinct length. The "*Prologue*" with its beguiling, dreamy texture that gradually sought confidence (in the writing) and found it, was at one with the artist. The pluck and somewhat *Beast and the Beauty* scenario of the "*Sérénade*" was especially captivating.

The "Finale" was a bundle of nervous energy never far from a felling of exuberance—and wasn't that a hint of *Prélude de l'après midi d'une faune* flitting by?

With so much of the closing *Suite Italienne* "lifted" from *Pulcinella*, hearing it this way was like meeting an old friend wearing a new wardrobe. It was the only place where pitch vagaries blemished the result—with so many thumb positions required in what often amounts to a one-man band transcription, there are bound to be a few extra-exciting moments.

The justly deserved encore went immediately back to the sublime, with a deeply felt performance of the "*Largo*" from Chopin's G Minor Sonata.

Nothing more be said, except “Merci mille fois!”

Further developments in Pia’s career are eagerly awaited. **JWR**

(James Wegg Review: jamesweggreview.org)