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UCLA faculty and grad perform rare Schwarenka piano quintet



Review: A stunning USA premier: P. Scharwenka's Piano Quintet a re-discovered masterworks

by Ahdda Shur, [Examiner.com](http://examiner.com/) (<http://examiner.com/>)

Not many in the USA can say that they've heard of the romantic 19th century music of German composer, Phillip Scharwenka. Scharwenka, (1847 -1917) wrote an enormous amount of chamber music, that is on par with the great German composers of his day. But for the most part, his music has been largely forgotten. However, this past Sunday, Jan. 14, 2013 at 4 pm, at the 5th floor of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Le Salon de Musiques, now in their 3rd season in Los Angeles, gave a stunning USA premier of Phillip Scharwenka's Piano Quintet in B Minor, Op. 118, revealing a composer of great worth.

Scharwenka's musical works and in particular this piece, were re-discovered by the founder and director of Le Salon de Musiques, French pianist, Francois Chouchan. Chouchan spent two years researching this composer, and personally located the only existing score of this piece, along with the assistance and support the German Consulate of Los

Angeles. The opening remarks given by Julius Reder Carlson, musicologist and master of ceremonies of Le Salon de Musiques, focused on the lives of brothers Phillip Scharwenka and Xavier (who established the noted Scharwenka Music Conservatory in Berlin) and offered theories as to why Phillip's music has been neglected.

The Sunday afternoon concert began with two works for Piano and Cello, starting with with J.S. Bach's Sonata in D Major, for Cello and Piano in 4 movements, and Schumann's Fantasiestucke, for Cello and Piano, Op. 73, in 3 movements. Antonio Lysy, internationally celebrated cellist and teacher at UCLA, performed with impeccable elegance and total commitment. Partnered with equal grace on the piano by Steven Vanhauwaert, both artists created a mood, enunciating the austere and spiritual essence of Bach's work, before changing over to the robust and romantic style of the Schumann piece.

The capacity filled audience (tripled in size from last month) then prepared for the USA premier of Scharwenka's Piano Quintet in B minor. Francois Chouchan brought together a first-rate ensemble for this work, consisting of international and nationally recognized musicians: Gullaume Sutre, 1st violin, Searmi Park, 2nd violin, Helen S. Callus, viola, along with Antonio Lysy, cello, with Steven Vanhauwaert on Piano. These great artists gave an impassioned, committed and flawless performance of Scharwenka's gorgeous music. Written towards the end of Scharwenka's life in 1910, his Piano Quintet evokes the great music of Brahms, Schumann, Cesar Frank, and Beethoven. Though a traditional 19th century composer, Scharwenka dispensed of the usual four movements, employing only three movements to express several contrasting themes and ideas. The piano's role was mainly supportive, with some beautiful solo moments in the Adagio of the 2nd movement, played with consummate musicianship by pianist, Steven Vanhauwart. The thematic materials and melodies primarily stayed with the first violin. From France, guest violinist, Gullaume Sutre (1st violin) took charge from the opening down beat. With his sweet, yet thrilling tones and phrasing, he directed the flow of the music with effortless passion. The plangent cello-like sound of the violist, Helen S. Callus combined with the cello playing of Antonio Lysy, provided a rich tonal balance for the ensemble.

Chouchan hopes to change Phillip Scharwenka's neglected status, and judging from the response of the audience, who gave a rousing standing ovation at the conclusion of the performance, this remarkable composer's music won't remain hidden for much longer. After the music, Le Salon de Musiques continued with a lively question and answer period between audience and performers, as French champagne was served. The afternoon concluded with a gourmet buffet of light refreshments prepared by the Patina restaurant of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. On February 10, Le Salon de Musiques performs another USA premiere, of music by the 19th century composer, Zarebsky.

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