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Selections highlight Feinberg's brilliance
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CLASSICAL MUSIC
REVIEW

Alan Feinberg

American pianist Alan Feinberg always has been drawn to music that places monumental challenges on mind and body. In his appearances with the Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall and on tour, he performed demanding works by Ives, Brahms and Shulamit Ran.

His recital Monday at Cleveland State University's Drinko Recital Hall was a typical Feinberg festival of difficult but eminently intriguing music. Presented by the **Cleveland Contemporary Players**, the concert abounded in works that run the gamut of 20th century styles.

The night's blockbuster came at the end, a performance of Charles Wuorinen's Sonata No. 3 that seized the ears and never let go. The piece, written for Feinberg, is a study in manic Modernism full of bold, lucid acrobatics and brooding lyricism. The first and third movements are notable for an almost buoyant ferocity, while the middle movement is mysteriously anxious and poetic.

Feinberg termed the score "very New York music," but what Wuorinen created is an amalgam of sonic gestures that vividly reflect the tensions of contemporary society. It is a riveting work that found Feinberg at the height of his powers in drama, shading and sheer muscle.

In Olivier Messiaen's "Le Chocard des Alpes," the pianist reveled in the French composer's distinctive cragginess and mysticism, its eruptive images depicting formidable Alpine peaks. Mauricio Kagel's "An Tasten" emerged as a mesmerizing foray into Minimalism through repeated motives that evolve in harmony and design.

Feinberg ventured back a century to play four Debussy preludes, to which he brought a heightened sense of color and atmosphere, especially in the Spanish-influenced miniatures. He switched gears on a dime for Conlon Nancarrow's Three Two- Part Studies, motoric and coy activity he handled with virtuosic aplomb.

Before diving boldly into Wuorinen, Feinberg paid tribute to his teacher, Robert Helps, in two works of divergent character. "Music for the Left Hand" ranges from dreamy, Debussylike writing to darting episodes. Helps' richly embroidered transcriptions of songs by Ireland, Chabrier and Duparc allowed Feinberg to exult in tonal splendor and ecstasy.

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Section: Arts & Life

Page: E6

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