

An unaffected poet

An unaffected nobility is what characterizes the playing of Bernard d'Ascoli. At 32, this former pupil of Pierre Barbizet amazes us as much by his masterfully subdued impetuosity as by his technical command which is never self-seeking.

At his piano, like an artist at his easel, he depicted magnificent landscapes throughout the pages of Liszt's Ballade No 2 and Funérailles, which appeared as if illuminated from within. In all this there was no trace of romantic self-indulgence: his scrupulous respect of the text serves as guard-rail. After this grand, imposing opening, Bernard d'Ascoli delighted us with a 'Pour le piano' of Debussy which was wonderfully playful and natural, thanks to his sublime touch.

The large form was back in the second half, with the Ballade No 3 and Sonata No 3 of Chopin. Perhaps a little too restrained? In any case, his playing has acquired a remarkable breadth in the space of one year. It has quite simply taken off. It is now clear that Bernard d'Ascoli is a pianist to be reckoned with. The great Parisian institutions should not ignore this genuine musician on account of his reticence to pull off mediatic coups!

Jacques Doucellin