



# CHARLES RICHARD-HAMELIN

SILVER MEDALIST 2015

INTERNATIONAL FRYDERYK CHOPIN PIANO COMPETITION

**PRESS KIT**

# the WholeNote

Volume 29 No 4 | February & March 2024

**Mozart – Piano Concertos Nos.20 & 23**  
**Charles Richard-Hamelin; Les Violons du**  
**Roy; Jonathan Cohen**  
**Analekta AN 2 9026 ([outhere-music.com/](https://www.outhere-music.com/en/labels/analekta)**  
**[en/labels/analekta](https://www.outhere-music.com/en/labels/analekta))**



► In February 1785, Mozart's father wrote to his daughter from Vienna referring to "an excellent new piano concerto by Wolfgang, on which the copyist

was still at work when we got here, and your brother didn't even have time to play through the rondo because he had to revise the copy." The work in question was the renowned *Concerto No.20 in D Minor K466*, the first of only two concertos Mozart wrote in a minor key. Its premiere proved to be a great success and is presented together with the *Concerto in A Major K488* on this fine Analekta recording with pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin and Les Violons du Roi conducted by Jonathan Cohen.

Richard-Hamelin was silver medalist at the International Frederic Chopin Piano Competition and winner of the Krystian Zimerman Prize for best performance of a sonata, so it should come as no surprise that this recording is a joy. Richard-Hamelin delivers a polished and elegant performance, the phrasing clearly articulated, while under Cohen's skilful baton, Les Violons de Roy prove a formidable and sensitive partner. The second movement *Romance* is perhaps a little brisker than we're used to, but the exuberant third movement – with the cheeky D Major ending – is undertaken with great panache.

Compared to the dramatic mood of K466, K488 is all serenity. Completed almost a year later it was premiered at a subscription concert with Mozart as soloist. Again, the ensemble offers a spirited and well-controlled sound with the melding of soloist and orchestra truly a fortuitous one. An added bonus is the *Adagio and Fugue in C Minor K546* which brings the program to a most satisfying conclusion.

**Richard Haskell**

## Mozart

### Piano Concertos Nos 20 & 23

Charles Richard-Hamelin; Les Violins  
du Roy/Jonathan Cohen

*Analekta AN29026*



This second Mozart collaboration between Charles Richard-Hamelin and Les Violons du

Roy is a thoroughly joyful listen. The soloist is elegant in two of the composer's best-loved concertos. His delicate touch draws out a golden, bell-like resonance that contrasts beautifully with the chamber strings, whose period bows ensure the texture is never too rich or Romantic. (CS) ★★★★★

## Editor's Choice: December 2023 | The best new classical recordings

Friday, December 1, 2023



### Mozart Piano Concertos Nos 20 & 23

**Charles Richard-Hamelin *pf* Les Violons du Roy /  
Jonathan Cohen**

*Analekta*

From the intense opening of No 20 to the joyful arrival of No 23, Charles Richard-Hamelin and Jonathan Cohen form a compelling Mozart partnership.

[Read the review](#)





## MOZART Piano Concertos Nos 20 & 23 (Charles Richard-Hamelin)

[▶ View record and artist details](#)

Author: Rob Cowan



### MOZART Piano Concertos Nos 20 & 23 (Charles Richard-Hamelin)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 20

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 23

Adagio and Fugue

[Listen on Apple Music](#)

Jonathan Cohen and Les Violons du Roy brook no compromises at the dramatic start of the great D minor Concerto, K466, a palpable call to arms that Charles Richard-Hamelin responds to with flair and considerable elegance. He shapes and phrases the music with a keen eye (or ear) on its dialogic potential, driving forwards energetically without bullying or indulging in display for its own sake. This performance is of a piece, intense and finely detailed, and come the first-movement cadenza at 10'48" – Richard-Hamelin's own – we're presented with a brilliant array of motifs from the movement rearranged with ingenuity and recreative cunning that would have been worthy of Horowitz.



Richard-Hamelin also does 'simplicity' in Mozart, the start of the D minor's Romance (in B flat) being a perfect example of this 'less is more' approach, playing that is at once sculpted and coolly expressive. The turbulent fast minor-key middle section is a furrowed brow following on from the sublime smile at the movement's opening, though Richard-Hamelin works his way back to sublimity as if unruffled by the central storm.

When it comes to the A major Concerto, K488, the inclement weather has passed and we're confronted with one of the most exquisitely elaborate passages in Mozart's entire output: at 4'31" into the first movement the strings intone an especially beautiful theme, then, a few seconds later, Richard-Hamelin trippingly dispatches Mozart's decorated version of the same theme. Pure magic! The central *Adagio*, a perfectly paced siciliano, soft in texture, unfolds gracefully, with the odd added but subtle ornamentation (after the brighter middle section).

We're additionally given an orchestral 'encore' in the guise of the austere C minor *Adagio and Fugue*, the characteristic string tone of Les Violons du Roy more conspicuous here than elsewhere on the disc, the growling basses at the beginning ominous to a fault, the fugue nudged forwards at a relatively brisk tempo. This Mozart inhabits the ill-boding world of the Requiem, or seems to, and makes for an effective if unexpected close to an excellent, well-engineered programme.

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## BEETHOVEN Violin Sonatas Nos 1, 2, 3 & 5 (Andrew Wan)

► [View record and artist details](#)

Violinist Andrew Wan and pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin began their Analekta recording of the complete Beethoven sonatas for violin and piano (or piano and violin, as originally marked) in 2018 with Nos 6-8, Op 30. On this second volume, they head back to the first three sonatas (Op 12), composed in 1797-98, and the Fifth Sonata (Op 24), known as the *Spring*, from 1801.

The Canadian musicians treat the Op 12 and Op 24 sonatas with bountiful finesse and discernment, bringing vibrancy to the light-hearted interplay and poetic elegance to passages in which lyricism is paramount. Wan, concertmaster of the Montreal Symphony, plays with a discreet combination of soloistic flair and chamber-music sensitivity, his phrasing always shapely and articulate, his connection with his colleague closely gauged.

Richard-Hamelin, who has recorded several Chopin albums for Analekta, confirms the implications of the sonatas' piano-violin designation while maintaining sure balances and seamless interaction. In the piano-writing of the Third Sonata that reflects Beethoven's instrumental virtuosity, Richard-Hamelin fields the lavishly embroidered figures with sophisticated ease.

The *Spring*, along with the Fourth Sonata, represents a major advance in compositional maturity for Beethoven, both in terms of expressive depth and structural innovation. It is the first of these sonatas with four rather than three movements, and it contains a noble slow movement and ever-so-brief Scherzo showing Beethoven in witty frame of mind. Wan and Richard-Hamelin savour the charm, drama and high spirits that give the *Spring* a special place among the sonatas.

Throughout the album, the engineering and fine acoustical space, Église St-Augustin in Mirabel, Quebec, enable the musicians' keen partnership to emerge with crystalline clarity. Based on this release, their final Beethoven instalment will be more than welcome.

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Author: Donald Rosenberg



### BEETHOVEN Violin Sonatas Nos 1, 2, 3 & 5 (Andrew Wan)

Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1

Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2

Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 3

Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 5, 'Spring'

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## Classical You Must Hear This Month

### Apple Music Classical

UPDATED THURSDAY

Get caught up on all the best Classical music out now with this teaser of selections from our 10 Classical albums you must hear this month. Our editors update this playlist regularly. If you hear something you like **MORE**

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Song	Artist	Album
The Arts and the Hours (Arr. for Guitar by Michael Lewin)	Miloš Karadaglić	Baroque
Goldberg Variations, BWV 988: Var. 13	Víkingur Ólafsson	J. S. Bach: Goldberg Variations
The Village: Morning	James Newton Howard, Hilary Hahn, Jean-Yve...	Night after Night
Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488: I. Allegro	Charles Richard-Hamelin, Les Violons du Roy, J...	Mozart: Piano Concertos Nos. 20 & 23
Noche	Sofiane Pamart	NOCHE
Rosary Sonatas: XVI. Passacaglia for Solo Violin in G Minor "...	Isabelle Faust	Solo: Matteis - Pisen del - Biber - Guillemain - ...
Études latines: No. 2, Néère	Lea Desandre, Thomas Dunford	Idylle
Largo in C Minor (Grand Piano)	Alice Sara Ott	Echoes Of Life (Deluxe Edition)
Noches en los jardines de España: I. En el Generalife	Alexandre Tharaud, Orchestre National de Fran...	Ravel: Concertos - Falla: Noches en los jardin...
Keyboard Sonata in D Minor, K. 32: Aria	Tim Allhoff	Silence Is Something You Can Actually Hear

10 Songs, 52 minutes



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**NEW** **Schumann: The Three Violin Sonatas** 

Andrew Wan (violin), Charles Richard-Hamelin (piano)

**Release Date:** 11th Nov 2022

**Label:** Analekta

**Catalogue No:** AN29003

**Length:** 71 minutes

**About** **Explore**

After recording the sonatas for violin and piano by Ludwig van Beethoven, a triptych that won numerous awards, including the Juno for Classical Album of the Year - Small Ensemble (2022) and an ADISQ award, Andrew Wan and Charles Richard-Hamelin continue their fruitful collaboration by performing the complete sonatas for violin and piano by Robert Schumann (1810-1856). A perfect work to highlight the complicity that has developed between the concertmaster of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and the pianist who won the silver medal at the 2015 Frédéric Chopin International Piano Competition.



## MOZART Piano Concertos Nos 22 & 24 (Richard-Hamelin)



**Author:** Harriet Smith

In these unworldly times of enforced social lockdown it's interesting what gives emotional succour. I'd been revelling in the discovery of Mozart's K488 with Radu Lupu live in Vienna in 1991 with a beaming Sándor Végh on YouTube when this disc arrived. For his first disc of Mozart, Charles Richard-Hamelin is joined by his fellow Quebeckers Les Violons du Roy, under their inspirational music director Jonathan Cohen.

There's a simplicity to Richard-Hamelin's approach that is beguiling (and far from simple to achieve): this is apparent from his very first entry in K482, following a *tutti* full of colour and imagination. The soloist's passagework is lithe and shapely, eschewing the cool virtuosity of some. And, as with all the best readings of these concertos, there's a lively sense of dialogue between soloist and individual instruments. Though Les Violons are not a period-instrument band, they have thoroughly absorbed the movement's ethos and use modern string instruments with period bows. This is vividly illustrated in the variation-form *Andante* of K482, where vibrato is reduced to a minimum and Cohen sets up a slow pace for the theme itself that creates an almost sacred aura; Mackerras for Brendel flows at a faster tempo but both are very effective and there are many wonderful instances of piano duetting with wind, not least a wonderfully creamy-toned bassoon on this new set. The fleeting turn to the major (8'24") is duly heart-rending too. The sense of emotional release in the genial finale also comes across very winningly and the *Andante cantabile* section

is movingly done, with the clarinets, bassoon and horns creating a chorale-like texture. The cadenzas in the outer movements of the concerto are Richard-Hamelin's own and they fit well – basically Mozartian in style but with the occasional foray into more Beethovenian harmonies. Prior to listening to this new disc I'd been reacquainting myself with Edwin Fischer's readings – which sound remarkably fresh and new even though they were made in the 1930s; in spirit they're not so far from Richard-Hamelin and his cohorts. Jonathan Cohen conjures a sense of dark unease in the opening of K491, with the brass and timpani given due prominence, to which the soloist responds with restraint and simplicity of phrasing. Others are more focused on colour, particularly Anderszewski and Uchida in her newer recording with the Cleveland Orchestra, while Edwin Fischer brings a compelling intensity that drives the music forwards. But Richard-Hamelin holds his own by creating a sense of intense dialogue with his fellow instrumentalists. His cadenza offers a guided tour of the music's main motifs; and when the orchestra returns there's a blazing power to the wind and brass-playing.

That intimacy and sense of detail is just as apparent in the remaining two movements, for instance in the way the strings emulate the piano's opening phrases in the *Larghetto*. The finale's variations are brought alive in the manner of a set of character pieces, from the lean string theme itself, to the piano's fizzing response in Var 1, the wind-band sonorities conjured in Var 4 or the *opera buffa* ish élan of Var 6. As the darkness returns for the concerto's close, it sets the seal on a very fine new recording.



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**The Listening Room: Episode 92 (03.03.20)**

## The Listening Room: Episode 92 (03.03.20)

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

**James Jolly's latest playlist includes a quartet of concertos – Chopin from Benjamin Grosvenor, Mozart from Charles Richard-Hamelin, Tjcknavorian Snr from Tjcknavorian Jnr, and Adès from Kirill Gerstein plus Lili Boulanger songs with Cyrille Dubois, and Walton sung by Carolyn Sampson – plus pre-release tracks by Matthias Goerne and Jan Lisiecki, Seong-Jin Cho, and the Czech Philharmonic**

A bumper concerto playlist this week, with the piano dominating. **Thomas Adès's** Piano Concerto is played by Kirill Gerstein and with the composer conducting the Boston Symphony this is a major addition to the repertoire – a bold, dramatic and showy concerto that sounds somehow both Romantic and wonderfully modern.

**A more traditional piano concerto comes courtesy of Mozart - his delicious E flat work, K482, with its wonderful finale. Charles Richard-Hamelin is the stylish soloist and Jonathan Cohen draws some flavoursome playing from Les Violons du Roi**

A new violin concerto comes from **Loris Tjcknavorian**, a prolific conductor when I was first becoming interested in recordings, and clearly also a composer with a distinctive voice, here infused with the atmosphere of Iran where he now lives. And to play it, his highly accomplished son, Emmanuel, who has a slew of awards to his name.

Our current Recording of the Month is Benjamin Grosvenor's outstanding album of the two **Chopin** piano concertos with Elim Chan conducting the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. As Harriet Smith wrote 'On every hearing new details seem to emerge – the most delicate trilling here, a wonderful snippet of clarinet theme there – but always with a sense of storytelling, Chopin's ever-shifting moods lustrously caught.' It's a wonderful recording and offers up new perceptions on every listening.

I've pounced on a new recording of songs by Nadia and **Lili Boulanger** from a French tenor whose voice I adore, Cyrille Dubois. Do explore the remainder of the album; it's terrific. And from another favourite singer, the soprano Carolyn Sampson, I've a trio of **Walton** songs drawn from *Façade*, Joseph Middleton the attentive partner at the piano.

Eric Lu, winner of the last Leeds Piano Competition, has just released his first debut solo album - I've included **Schumann** strange *Ghost* Variations, the programme's culmination, for this week's playlist.

Another impressive release comes from BIS - the three **Grieg** violin sonatas with Eldbjørg Hemsing and Simon Trpčeski forming a really impressive musical partnership.

Plus a trio of appealing pre-release tracks ...

Listen on

Mozart Piano Concerto No 22 in E flat, K482

Charles Richard-Hamelin; Les Violons du Roi / Jonathan Cohen (Analekta)



## Our 20 favourite Canadian classical albums of 2019

[Robert Rowat](#) · CBC Music · Posted: Dec 03, 2019 6:00 AM ET | Last Updated: December 3, 2019



### # 6. Charles Richard-Hamelin, [Chopin: Ballades & Impromptus](#) (Analekta)

For a young pianist (he turned 30 in July), Richard-Hamelin already has deep experience with Chopin's Ballades and Impromptus, having played them the world over since winning the silver medal and Krystian Zimerman Prize at the 2015 International Chopin Piano Competition. "It's really a blessing," he explained to CBC Music when this album appeared. "This way I get to continue my lifelong exploration of his music, which still fascinates me so much." His engagement — intellectual and emotional — with these pieces is palpable, and while he covers a huge dynamic range, his interpretation is never exaggerated or flamboyant. Some of the credit goes to producer/recording engineer Carl Talbot, who found the perfect balance between proximity and space to allow Richard-Hamelin's pristine, bell-like tone to ring out.

### # 2. Charles-Richard Hamelin, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Kent Nagano, [Chopin: Concertos Nos. 1 & 2](#) (Analekta)

The OSM's catalogue now contains two outstanding recordings of Chopin's piano concertos, with this recent one by Richard-Hamelin and Nagano taking its rightful place alongside Martha Argerich and Charles Dutoit's much-lauded rendition from 1999. In fact, those who like their Chopin performed with humility, pathos and reverence for the score will likely favour Richard-Hamelin's take. After the E minor concerto's long introduction, Richard-Hamelin bursts in with perfectly voiced chords before putting that bell-like tone (see No. 6, above) to use on the impossibly beautiful second theme. The Larghetto of the F minor concerto seems to suspend time, with pianist and orchestra locked in one of those amorous "No, you hang up first" dialogues. The rondos of both concertos sparkle with precise articulation and orchestral propulsion. Plus, the recording captures all the excitement of a live recording with next to no extraneous noise to distract you from this exquisite musical utterance.

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## Chopin



BBC Music Magazine 10 Jul 2019 John Allison

Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2; Nocturne in C sharp minor Charles Richard-hamelin (piano); Montréal Symphony Orchestra/

Kent Nagano

Analekta AN 2 9146 75:33 mins

Anyone approaching such oft-recorded repertoire as this great pair of Chopin concertos really needs to bring some special credentials to the enterprise, and Charles Richard-hamelin certainly has them. The Quebec-born pianist was placed second in the 2015 International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition, and many in that Warsaw audience had expected him to win. Nerves eventually got the better of him in the finale of his concerto, but one thing had already marked him out as a different sort of artist: he was the only one of the ten finalists who elected to play

the Concerto No. 2 in F minor. Happily, there is no sign of nerves assailing him here in live recordings made last year with the Montréal Symphony Orchestra under Kent Nagano.

The recording opens with the Concerto No. 2, logically since it was the first to be written, and its subtle interpretative challenges seem well suited to Richard-hamelin's musical persona. The ruminative qualities of the opening movement come across well, and he finds room in an elastically flowing picture for all the detail of this piece. Perhaps encouraged by the solid accompaniments that characterise the whole enterprise, he gives a bigger-boned account of the finale than the music necessarily implies, but the approach works well in his enjoyable and virtuosic performance of the E minor work.

Both works could dazzle more with the youthful spirit of the composer who wrote them before his departure from Warsaw, but

these are highly accomplished performances.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

RECORDING ★★★★★

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[Home](#) » [Reviews](#) » CHOPIN Piano Concertos (Richard-Hamelin)

## CHOPIN Piano Concertos (Richard-Hamelin)

Author: Patrick Rucker

In the wake of Charles Richard-Hamelin's second prize at the 2015 competition in Warsaw, the Chopin Institute released an impressive two-disc set, demonstrating the breadth and depth of his interpretations of the Polish master. This new Analekta release affords us the pleasure of hearing Richard-Hamelin in both Chopin concertos with the expert collaboration of Kent Nagano and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, recorded live in concert last October.

Richard-Hamelin's overriding concern is the life of the phrase, achieved by replicating Chopin's expressive gestures through precise observance of every detail in the score. His playing never sounds routine or exhibitionistic. In his hands, Chopin's bravura passagework is imbued with meaning, its purpose the preparation or embellishment of a lyrical moment. High-flown *fioritura* seems informed by what a great singer could accomplish with the utmost taste and refinement. Unusually for a musician with Richard-Hamelin's focus on detail, his imaginative grasp of the larger musical architecture remains secure. Supported at every juncture by Nagano and the Montreal musicians, and beautifully captured by the Analekta engineers, these are Chopin concertos of extraordinary originality and distinction.



CHOPIN Piano Concertos (Richard-Hamelin)

### CHOPIN Piano Concertos (Richard-Hamelin)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1

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Both rondos suggest a festive celebration of the dance. Neither is especially fast, yet both describe movement with the grace and precision of an expert corps de ballet. The Romanze of the E minor Concerto speaks with delectable sweetness, poised and restrained, creating a genuine dialogue between soloist and orchestra. Liszt described the incomparable *Larghetto* of the F minor Concerto as 'of an ideal perfection, its feeling radiant and passionate by turn', in which 'joy is tempered and sorrow is sweetened'. Here it evokes an eloquence of the sort with which one imagines Talma and Bocage held Parisian audiences in thrall nearly 200 years ago.

I would suggest that, even if you have a dozen recordings of the Chopin concertos on your shelf, you won't regret adding this one.

## Chopin

### Ballades Nos 1-4; Impromptus Nos 1-3; Fantaisie-Impromptu in C sharp minor

Charles Richard-Hamelin (piano)

Analekta AN29145 58:18 mins



Unprecedentedly in the history of Warsaw's great Chopin Piano Competition, the most recent edition (2015) saw North American players making up four of the six prize-winners. Top among these was the Canadian Charles Richard-Hamelin, placed second and already then clearly a Chopin interpreter to watch. He confirms that further in cultivated performances here, focusing on the beauty of Chopin's music while finding deep meaning within it. Sophisticated in his approach to the four Ballades, he sets the tone in the G minor work with playing of great introspection, but for all the poetry – even the *zł*, that uniquely Polish soulfulness – he also commands plenty of virtuosity.

Seemingly mindful of the literary associations attached to the Ballades, he brings out their narrative qualities; this is felt particularly in the storytelling sense with which he opens the F major piece.

But it is perhaps the approach of the Quebec-born musician to the often-overlooked Impromptu that really marks him out. It takes an outstanding pianist to make the most of these, often dismissed in comparison with Chopin's greater music yet also seen by some as a series of musical landscapes prefiguring impressionism. Paying tribute in their title to Schubert and belonging to the *bel canto* thread in Chopin, they share with the Nocturnes their A-B-A structure. Even Chopin himself called the G flat major Impromptu an 'occasional piece', yet Richard-Hamelin makes it spellbinding, and to round off the disc he captures the pianistic glitter of the *Fantaisie-Impromptu*. An exemplary Chopin recital. *John Allison*

**PERFORMANCE**

★★★★★

**RECORDING**

★★★★★

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## What's the top of the "Classical Chartz"? If you missed it, here's the highlight.

Station Blog 2019-10-24 By: Classical Staff



According to "Classical Chartz", host Mike Duncan has declared the recording "Chopin: Ballades & Impromptus" by pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin to be the top of the charts.

What is a "ballade"? Well, in this context, it's not a vocal piece in the style of Celine Dion. Chopin either borrowed the term from the interludes during a ballet – ongoing music in between dance sets, or it was borrowed from a long-ago era of the "heroic ballad", in which a story is being told, full of adventures and experiences.

Chopin wrote four ballades for piano, and every one of them is attractive, lyrical, and full of technical show-offery. Canadian pianist, Charles Richard-Hamelin, released "Chopin: Ballades & Impromptus" and here's the fourth, considered the most difficult. I love English pianist John Ogden's quote about this ballade: "It is the most exalted, intense, and sublimely powerful of all Chopin's compositions ... It is unbelievable that it lasts only twelve minutes, for it contains the experience of a lifetime."



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## Charles Richard-Hamelin's Chopin: Concentration and Purposefulness

Review by: Jed Distler      2020 March



Artistic Quality: 8  
Sound Quality: 9

The clear, singing tone and technical refinement distinguishing Charles Richard-Hamelin's 2015 International Chopin Competition performances issued by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute, along with his previous (2015) solo-Chopin Analekta release, make themselves felt throughout the Ballades and Impromptus. At times the calculation behind his carefully meted-out rubatos prevents climactic moments from achieving optimum dramatic fulfillment, as in the First and Fourth Ballade codas. On the other hand, the deliberation with which he enters into the Second Ballade's agitated episodes enables the cascading right-hand patterns and ascending bass octaves to intermingle without spilling

over into monochromatic banging. I am reminded of Krystian Zimerman's similarly conceived yet arguably less episodic interpretations.

In contrast to the winged directness of the 88-year-old Earl Wild's miraculous interpretations of the Impromptus, Richard-Hamelin allows himself plenty of rhetorical leeway, imbuing the filigree and rapid passagework with vocally informed phrasings and accentuations. To my ears, the pianist's time stretching causes the A-flat Impromptu and Fantasie-Impromptu trio sections to ramble, while the massive insistence he brings to the F-sharp Impromptu's march-like trio seems more appropriate for Brahms. Still, one cannot deny that Richard-Hamelin approaches this repertoire with thought, concentration, and purposefulness, and that he's clearly an artist to watch.

Recording Details: CHOPIN, FRÉDÉRIC:  
Four Ballades; Four Impromptus  
Charles Richard-Hamelin (piano)  
Analekta - 2 9145 CD

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# New Releases: Chopin Concertos Nos. 1 & 2 – Charles Richard-Hamelin; Schumann Symphonies Nos. 1-4 – Christian Thielemann & Staatskapelle Dresden

15 April 2019, 10:00 | Updated: 15 April 2019, 10:01



New Releases: Chopin Concertos Nos. 1 & 2 – Charles Richard-Hamelin; Schumann Symphonies Nos. 1-4 – Christian Thielemann & Staatskapelle Dresden. Picture: Analekta / Sony Classical



Throughout the week Classic FM's presenters bring you the best new recordings, including world exclusives and premiere broadcasts of latest releases.



Picture: Classic FM

John Suchet plays a track from his featured Album of the Week at 10.15am every weekday.

### **Chopin Concertos Nos. 1 & 2 – Charles Richard-Hamelin**

**Analekta**



Picture: Analekta

Charles Richard-Hamelin delights us with a recording of **Chopin's** two concertos for piano and orchestra, with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and conductor Kent Nagano.

These vibrant concertos were written when Chopin was in his early 20s, and Charles Richard-Hamelin brings the vibrancy from the paper to the piano in this energetic recording of the two works.



## EARLY, CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

### Keyed In - April 2019

Written by Alex Baran Category: [Early, Classical and Beyond](#) 📅 Published: 27 March 2019



**Charles Richard-Hamelin's** recent recording **Chopin: Concertos Nos. 1 & 2**

**(Analekta, AN 2 9146, [analekta.com/en](http://analekta.com/en))** is an exhilarating encounter with these

two items of standard repertoire. There is a freshness in this performance that owes everything to its collaborators. Kent Nagano and the OSM are deeply aware of how much Chopin has vested in the piano's role. Their ability to morph into something purely ethereal for the slow movement of *Concerto No.2* is magical. The balance and

unity across the ensemble, in this and similar passages, support the piano exquisitely. So much of the piano part in this movement is in simple octaves, albeit often very ornamented and fast. Richard-Hamelin performs it with absolute fluidity, as if it were an extended keyboard recitative. The time signature seems to dissolve, leaving only a hint of anything resembling a beat as the soloist and orchestra flow toward some distant ending.

The essence of dance that is inherent in Chopin's writing saves the pianist from a conflictual role with the orchestra. The two are instead a pair of dancers elevating the solo instrument above the ensemble. While historical criticism of these works has focused on Chopin's weak orchestral writing, Hamelin and Nagano have delivered such a transcendent experience that the criticism seems somehow lost if not irrelevant in the overwhelming beauty of this performance.

February 4, 2019

<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/music/review/2019/02/04/quebec-pianist-charles-richard-hamelin-charms-koerner-hall.html>

## Quebec pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin charms Koerner Hall

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By John Terauds



Charles Richard-Hamelin has abilities to rival the world's finest and most experienced pianists, writes John Terauds. (ANTOINE SAITO)

### *Piano recital at Koerner Hall, Feb. 3*

When Charles Richard-Hamelin won the silver medal at the International Chopin Piano Competition in 2015, it was the first time a Canadian had reached the winners' podium. He was immediately booked for concerts around the world.

His solo recital at Koerner Hall on Sunday afternoon confirmed beyond the shadow of a doubt that this 29-year-old native of Lanaudière, Quebec, has abilities to rival the world's finest and most experienced pianists.

To all appearances, this was a classic recital. The young, slightly ruffled-looking pianist, dressed in black, strode out to the big, shiny, black Steinway concert grand. He sat down without fanfare and played for 90 minutes in front of a full house of attentive listeners.



Recitals like this are commonplace. In a city like Toronto, they happen several times a week at the height of the season. But few artists render music with such finesse.

Richard-Hamelin's program was limited in historical scope but rich in musical possibilities. He dove into the heart of the Romantic-era repertoire with two pieces by Robert Schumann and four by Fryderyk Chopin — all of them written between 1831 and 1841.

Schumann's music is the more difficult of the two composers. It demands that the interpreter think and plan the dramatic sweep of each piece. The opening *Arabesque in C Major* is a bit of a trifle, but Richard-Hamelin treated it with the same care as the sprawling, three-movement *Fantasy* in the same key.

It's not about playing all the notes, which Richard-Hamelin dispatches with the ease the rest of us have with folding socks. This remarkable pianist shapes each phrase with careful attention, then links it to the next one in a way that tells a compelling story from beginning to end.

If there is one defining characteristic of Richard-Hamelin's playing it's how he wields the tools of musical rhetoric — stretching time by slightly slowing down and speeding up, and playing with the silences between notes — to ensure that the narrative tension never goes out of the piece he is playing.

All musicians are taught how to do this, but few achieve the level of nuance we heard on the Koerner Hall stage. And even fewer who attempt to go deeper manage to play with time without making their interpretations feel contrived or overwrought.

The four *Ballades* by Chopin are showcases of musical narrative, in many ways much more naturally coherent than the music of Schumann. Even here, in a situation where the composer has handed generations of interpreters all the instructions ready to go, Richard-Hamelin found ways to add his personal, intimate touch.

He played with tremendous insight and maturity, yet the *Ballades* never sounded calculated. Each chord and run and flourish sounded fresh and spontaneous.

Richard-Hamelin is about to release a recording of the Chopin piano concertos and there is a new solo Chopin album to come soon. If Sunday's recital is any indication, these albums will be an excellent way to savour the fleeting pleasures of the concert hall over and over again.

CBC Radio 2 recorded Sunday's recital for an upcoming broadcast. It's worth checking their schedule to make sure you can hear a sample of the best kind of piano performance available to us today.

Ongaku no Tomo Magazine, Japan

Review of the concert at Suntory Hall with the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony,  
September 6, 2018

The first part of the concert was devoted to the performance of Charles Richard-Hamelin, Second Prize winner of the Frédéric Chopin 2015 Piano Competition. This is his sixth visit to Japan. His subtlety and artistic freshness were always present in his playing, especially when he began the major part of the first movement with a thrilling vivacity that reminded me of a teenager who is fully living her first love.

In the third movement, on the other hand, he interpreted the part in contrast, harmoniously balanced between the dynamism of the constant rhythm and the silences subtly present throughout the melody. He's a genius without comparison!

**Tamiko Ogura**

Ongaku no Tomo Magazine, Japan

Review of the recital at Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall, Tokyo, June 7, 2018

Charles Richard-Hamelin (Piano)

Venue: Tokyo Opera City Hall

Repertoire: Arabeske, Fantasy (Schumann) Ballads no 1, no 2, no 3 and no 4 (Chopin)

A graduate of McGill University, the Yale School of Music and the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, Charles Richard-Hamelin, winner of the Second Prize in the Frédéric Chopin Piano Competition, is now making his mark at music festivals around the world. He has been performing several concerts in Japan since 2016 and is beginning to gain recognition for his artistic value among music lovers in Japan. During the concert that evening, which began with the Arabeske and Fantasy, he performed in a very natural way, remaining faithful to the classical version of each piece, but his extraordinary creativity distinguished himself in the way he interpreted the detail. By playing with vivacity, he managed to highlight the dynamism of the melody: the constant presence of the melody throughout his performance was well noticed. It was the continuous and successive presence of the melody that represented his creativity. Impressive!

As for Chopin's four ballads, he interpreted them with a very eloquent approach. By mastering the details of each piece in a very expressive way throughout his performance, he managed to attract audiences with his very convincing, reassuring and grandiose way of playing and to express his subtle and deep feelings. It should not be forgotten to say that his mastery of the pedals contributed enormously to adding artistic depth to his interpretation. He is a pianist who makes you want to listen to him even more.

**Akemi Hara.**



August 11, 2018

<https://szwareman.blog.polityka.pl/2018/08/11/dwa-razy-cztery/>

## **Twice four times**

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by Doroty Szwareman

We heard the complete set of Chopin's ballads during two recitals today. Each one was different, both wonderful.

As I have often said here, Charles Richard-Hamelin was one of my favourite participants in the last Chopin Competition, and although I also appreciate the talent of Chopin very much, I liked the Canadian more. This is a rational and logical game, and at the same time poetic and subtle. In his recital on the stage of the National Opera, the pianist juxtaposed his former colleagues and peers: Schumann and Chopin. Schumann was the quintessence of Romanticism, which, however, was framed in classical terms. First the delicate Arabesque, then the Fantasy in C major, combining different moods. It is a bit different interpretation than many familiar to me, very conquering emotions. In Richard-Hamelin's works everything was as if subdued, the first movement, apart from the very beginning, did not explode with shouts, the second movement, the march, did not have the power and triumphalism, it was simply expressive and strong. The finale, which some people interpret after the march as rest after the battle, was simply a pure poetry, a lyrical statement.

Ballades - wonderful. Everything was absolutely in its place. No effort - if you have heard so many different performances at competitions, you are already allergic to e.g. the finale of the first or fourth Ballade, often led by unfortunate pianists to complete nonsense. How comfortable it is to finally listen to the interpretation without blemish, without hysteria "whether I make it or not". It was very beautiful.



August 10, 2018

<http://www.michael-moran.com/2018/08/14th-chopin-and-his-europe-chopin-i.html?m=1>



**Classical Music in Poland - From the Reviewer's Chopin Notepad**  
**14th Chopin and his Europe (Chopin i jego Europa) International Music Festival**  
**Warsaw 9-31 August 2018**

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by Michael Moran

**From Chopin to Paderewski**

**Friday 10.08 at 17.00 Stage of the Polish National Opera**  
**CHARLES RICHARD-HAMELIN**

I had followed the career of this pianist with the greatest interest since he was awarded the Second Prize in the 17th International Fryderyk Chopin Competition.

He opened his recital with a refined and heartfelt performance of the Schumann *Arabesque in C major* Op. 18. When written Schumann was at the lowest point of romantic frustration in his relationship with the pianist Clara Wieck. Her father was violently opposed to any liaison between them which might jeopardize her career. Schumann was reduced to communicating with Clara through his music and letters of intense feeling. Much of his music at this time is heartbreaking in its longing, shifting moods, some more exuberant. Richard-Hamelin understood this fluctuating aspect of Schumann's nature.

I felt he was preparing us for his performance of the C major Fantasy which followed. Although entitled a '*Fantasy*' this inspired work expresses a fascinating tension between the established sonata form (three distinct movements but not in the order one would expect of a classical sonata) and the ideas one associates with the word 'Fantasy'. Again the work is a 'deep lament' for Clara which was once entitled '*Ruines*'. Its naming and publication history is complex and not perhaps for a review.

Schumann prefaced this piece with a quotation from Friedrich Schlegel:

*Durch alle Töne tönent  
Im bunten Erdentraum  
Ein leiser Ton gezogen  
Für den, der heimlich lauschet*

Through all the notes  
In earth's many-coloured dream  
There sounds one soft long-drawn note  
For the one who listens in secret.

The implications are clear and when Clara received the score she wrote to him telling him she was 'half ill with rapture'.

Richard-Hamelin opened the first movement with great nobility and a magnificent cantabile tone at a tempo that indicated that this would be a deeply thoughtful, even philosophical performance, of great poetry, passion and beauty. So it turned out. beautifully introspective. His performance was in turn rhapsodic and yet at times playful, his left hand particularly reflective in its articulation, a view containing true *grandeur*.

The second movement was full of mercurial whimsy and what I would call 'intellectual emotions'. he managed the internal polyphony expressively and great complexity. A tremendous sense of narration and musical logic in this work by Richard-Hamelin. The third movement lyrical theme (a glorious song) was deeply moving with heartfelt *rubato* - so expressive and nuanced in its moderation and introspection. Such a rhapsodic presentation of the rising passions of true love. The conclusion was dreamlike with a superb singing tone that faded to a yearning for Clara, a conclusion in gossamer *pianissimos*. I felt this was without doubt one of the finest performances of this extremely challenging work I had ever heard.

After the interval the *Four Ballades* of Chopin. The first *Ballade* in *G minor* Op.31 under his fingers was clearly the opening of a great narrative with magnificently aesthetic *cantabile* tone and refined touch. Fine *rubato* and nuanced episodes. I felt his phrasing could not be faulted as was the sensual agitation that colours the excitement of many 'scenes' as we reach for that spectacular coda to the work. The opening of the *F major Ballade* Op. 38 had the feeling of a child's fairy tale. Quite magical and innocent. The inevitable comparison came with the disturbances of the dreaded adult passions. But this struggle with the nature of human emotions was never an hysterical account of the work.

In the *Third Ballade in A major* Op.47 the narrative was reflective in its various mood swings. Chopin polyphony was beautifully delineated and I felt during the performance that some episodes were as dark clouds passing over the face of the sun. Triumphant and magnificent *coda*. That great masterpiece of Western keyboard music, the *Fourth Ballade in F-minor* op.52 . What a monumental story of shifting realities is displayed in this work. Richard-Hamelin engaged us with strong emotions and movingly lyrical episodes with such variety it was a deeply satisfying journey of the human psyche. His ability to build tensions followed by relaxations was managed with consummate skill. He gave us a passionately engaging *coda* to the work.

How this pianist has developed in many ways since that first triumph at the 17th International Chopin Competition. Certainly I consider that in that competition Second Prize is certainly a triumph of immense significance.

A deeply considered, modest and profoundly musical recital the like of which is rarely heard today.

August 2018

**Wieslaw Kowalski**

## **Chopin and his Europe 2018 - Piano recital Charles Richard-Hamelin - Grand Theatre - National Opera - L'Institut National Frédéric Chopin**

First of all, the Canadian Charles Richard-Hamelin is the winner of the second prize at the 17th International Chopin Competition in 2015. At the same competition, he also received an award for his performance of a sonata, awarded by Krystian Zimerman. On the TW-ON stage, during the 14th edition of the "Chopin and his Europe" Festival, we heard works by Robert Schumann and Fryderyk Chopin. With this performance, the young pianist confirmed his great talent, extraordinary musical sensitivity, which in his interpretations manifests itself in the ability to combine lyricism and poetry with an extremely well thought-out, mature and penetrating playing. The first sounds of Schumann's Arabesque in C major Op. 18, written in Vienna in 1839, were already enchanting. Richard-Hamelin perfectly captures all stylistic delicacy and subtleties of this work, his playing captivates with grace, fluidity and charm, he is also not devoid of melancholy and more intense emotions, which can also be found in this work. After Arabesque, it was the turn of the three-part Fantasy in C major Op. 17 by the German composer, dating from 1836 and regarded as one of the most important works of early Romanticism. This time, the laureate of the music competitions in Montreal and Seoul had to combine atmospheric diversity, which in the first movement is quite a snapshot, but extremely passionate and also a bit lamentative, in the second, more anointed and full of sublimity, and in the third, definitely contemplative and reflective. And it has to be said that Richard-Hamelin's performance, surprising, because it did not duplicate others, was one of the most touching interpretations of this piece that I had the opportunity to hear so far. Certainly different from the one presented in the last recordings by Stephen Hough or András Schiff. It is hard to verbalize how the pianist managed to squeeze out of this Fantasy all its poetic and poignant lyricism of a suffering man. Anyway, it was a deeply memorable performance. After the break Richard-Hamelin presented four ballads by Frederick Chopin, and as an encore the Nocturne in C sharp minor, Op. posth. All interpretations were delightfully beautiful and showed excellent technique and a sense of form of the Canadian pianist. In the Ballade in G minor Op. 23, dedicated to Baron Stockhausen, the mysteriousness of the first motif was perfectly contrasted with the more lyrical and muffled narrative contained in the second motif. In the Ballade in F major Op. 38, dedicated to Robert Schumann, singing and idyllicity with spontaneity and almost demonic elements appearing, but played without any affectation. The Ballade in A flat major Op. 47, written for Pauline de Noailles, preserves in Richard-Hamelin's interpretation all its complexity, in which gloomy moments, carrying a kind of danger and fear, are miraculously confronted with what can be fleeting, natural, brilliant and in a way exciting. The last piece was the Ballade in F minor Op. 52, dedicated to Charlotte de Rothschild, in which the pianist once again skillfully interpreted, without any false or exalted tones, the lyrical and reflective character of the work, as well as all its more dramatic climaxes. After the Chopin Competition, Charles Richard-Hamelin said that he was aware of how much more he still had to learn in order to get at least a little closer to the ideal. We must admit that he used the time perfectly. In his interpretations of Lanaudière-born musician, he is above all delighted with the way in which he strives to show the beauty of each piece and the truth of its sound, as well as his care for the quality of sound, which is to show the thought-emotional texture of the musical work, its proper mood, rhythm and dynamics.



July 23, 2018



(Österreich)

## **OÖ stiftskonzert: A festival for Chopin**

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by Fred Dorfer

The piano recital of the brilliant Canadian pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin became highly acclaimed at 'Chopin Festival' in Kremsmünster Monastery. The recital opened the evening with the intimate Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, wonderfully transparent. The popular Polonaise in A flat major swept through the hall fanfaresque and heroic. Four ballads rich in contrasts, mysterious, lyrical, demoniac and sensual, were juxtaposed with the highest art of interpretation. Richard-Hamelin celebrated Chopin's music with perfect technique, finest agogics and stormy agility. Enthusiasm!

June 19, 2018

# Süddeutsche Zeitung

(Deutschland)

## Imaginative

### Charles Richard-Hamelin in the Allerheiligen Hofkirche

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By Harald Eggebrecht, Munich

He is not related to the world-famous namesake Marc-André Hamelin. Although he is also a French Canadian, Charles Richard-Hamelin, born in 1989, is in any case a very different kind of pianist than the one generation older compatriot. Charles Richard-Hamelin, winner of the Warsaw Chopin Competition in 2015, among others, offered works by Frédéric Chopin and Robert Schumann in the Allerheiligenhofkirche, which was not fully occupied.

Richard-Hamelin's playing is characterized by beauty of sound, variety of colors and an incredibly fine, piano oriented, yet always clear touch culture. The power of persuasion in Chopin's four Impromptus, for example, and above all in the largely elaborated F minor Ballad op. 52, arises from a strong narrative imagination. Sometimes Richard-Hamelin's left hand does not quite offer the contoured resistance with which Chopin contrasted his excursions into the high and highest registers. But the melodious unfolding, the contemplative or dreamy lingering, the bold ascent and sudden breakout into fantastic virtuosity cascades sweeps along, because he can musically shape all these events and, so to speak, adventures of piano excursions in time, without agitation or false hustle and bustle. Thus the ballad becomes an exciting, even stirring journey into Chopin's always improvisational imagination. While Schumann's arabesque still took place under the effect of Chopin, as it were, and therefore came somewhat casually, the outrageously multifaceted F-sharp Minor Sonata op. 11 became a grandiose tour through Schumann's ecstasies and outbursts as well as into those digressions in which there seems to be almost no coming back. The young pianist's strength, splendour and emphasis were equally captivating as his enormous ability to dream, poetry and longing. Bravi and two encores: Bach and Chopin.



## FRANCE

### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

**Festival de la Roque d'Anthéron**  
**Abbaye de Silvacane**

**Adam Laloum** 14 Aug

**Parc du Château de Florans**

**Nelson Freire** 14 Aug; **Charles Richard-Hamelin, Arcadi Volodos** 16 Aug

ROBERT TURNBULL

[...]

**Charles Richard-Hamelin** is perhaps a case of a runner-up who, some would say, should have come first. The Canadian won second prize at the International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw (the winner was the Korean, Seong-Jin Cho) following a rather nervous concerto in the finals; but anyone who hears the other stages of the Competition (available on YouTube) can hardly fail to be impressed. Hamelin's recital for Laroque began with a Mozart D minor Fantasy played with exemplary subtlety and precision. It's rare to hear new insights into a piece as well-known as this. There followed four Chopin Impromptus crafted to perfection through a combination of impeccable musicianship and clean, nimble finger-work. He ended with Schumann's riveting first sonata. Here the composer pays obvious homage to Beethoven and Hamelin enjoyed quoting the dotted rhythm allusion to the *Hammerklavier* Sonata in the first movement Allegro. This was Schumann at his most idiomatic, the composer's famously contrasting moods beautifully judged through a cornucopia of colours, with dramatic flair and moments of heart-breaking intimacy. [...]

Impeccable musicianship: Charles Richard-Hamelin



Edmonton Classical Music, April 8, 2017

<http://dev.edmontonclassicalmusic.org/2017/04/08/review-charles-richard-hamelin/>

## Review Charles Richard-Hamelin

By Mark Morris, On April 8, 2017

In Review, review by Isis Tse

Kilburn Memorial Concert

Charles Richard-Hamelin (piano), Convocation Hall, University of Alberta, Tuesday, April 4

Schumann: Piano Sonata no. 1 in F sharp minor, op. 11 The featured artist of this year's Kilburn Memorial Concert at Convocation Hall on Tuesday evening (April 4) was pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin, the silver medalist of the International Chopin Piano Competition in 2015. The 28-year-old musician is the first Canadian to finish in the top three of this prestigious competition. He studied at McGill University, the Yale School of Music, and the Conservatoire de Musique de Montréal – since winning the competition two years ago, his international career has taken off. He recently appeared with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra in October 2016, performing Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor.

The Kilburn Memorial Concert is an annual event put on by the University of Alberta that boasts free admission; online RSVP was required and the concert was shown as sold out on the website. However, Convocation Hall was only about two-thirds full. Given the calibre of this performance, it is unfortunate that spots were unavailable for those who would have wanted to attend.

The program opened with Mozart's *Fantasia No. 3*, but Richard-Hamelin immediately confirmed his reputation for Chopin with his use of "melody delay" – letting the right hand trail behind the left hand accompaniment – and delicate rubato. The remaining first half of the program was devoted to works of Chopin. His performance of the Chopin Impromptus showed his ability for dramatic contrasts and superb lyricism. In the second and third Impromptus, in particular, he let the music speak for itself. Dissonance, harmonic colours, and register changes were brought out with poise. His version of the *Fantasia-Impromptu* was compelling and musical, while not falling into the trap of self-indulgence. The "Heroic" Polonaise, too, lived up to its nickname, but the *fortissimos* were joyous without being aggressive.

The second half of the program featured early Schumann works, which are certainly less well-known pieces than the Chopin selections. The first of the selections was five short pieces from *Bunte Blätter* ('Coloured Leaves'), each of them no longer than two and a half minutes. Given the relative obscurity of *Bunte Blätter*, the audience was unprepared for the ending and did not manage to applaud before he immediately launched into the first movement of the Piano Sonata No. 1, Op.11. Richard-Hamelin plays for the music rather than the audience. At times, his performance is so intimate that one feels as if one is intruding by listening.

The sonata was Schumann's first venture into the form; it suffers somewhat from a lack of structural cohesion. However, Richard-Hamelin brought out the passion in the first and last movements, the emotional fragility of the Aria, and the classical poise of the Scherzo contrasted with Chopin-inspired Intermezzo.

Charles Richard-Hamelin is not a showy performer, and his greatest strength is his unpretentious approach. He is physically reserved and almost crouches over the piano. His playing, rather than being a carefully planned performance, is a genuine interpretation of an artist who is emotionally present in the moment. His technical ability is impeccable but never stands in the way of musical sensitivity. The young pianist shows maturity and insight beyond his years. It is refreshing to see such honest, heartfelt music-making.

His first recording, featuring late works by Chopin, was released on the Canadian Analekta label; a second album, released in the fall of 2016, was recorded live at the Palais Montcalm in Quebec City with music by Beethoven, Enescu and Chopin. I look forward to hearing more from this exceptional young artist.



ArtsFile Review, March 09, 2017

<http://artsfile.ca/review-charles-richard-hamelin-offers-a-glorious-mozart-in-southam-hall/>

## **Review: Charles-Richard Hamelin offers a glorious Mozart in Southam Hall**

By Natasha Gauthier

Charles Richard-Hamelin is arguably the best and most complete pianist under the age of 30 in Canada. He combines monster virtuosity with keen intelligence and exceptionally sensitive, imaginative musicality. His headline-making silver medal at the 2015 Chopin competition in Warsaw certainly boosted his career, but unlike some big international prize winners, he hasn't burned out early. His work ethic and consistency have allowed him to maintain the momentum.

On Wednesday, Richard-Hamelin played Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 with NACO, under the guest baton of Carlo Rizzi. This excitable Italian conducts with enthusiasm, grace, and beautifully clear technique. He doesn't over-intellectualize the music, but gives everything a narrative, a sense of dance, and an emotional immediacy that reflect his impeccable opera house credentials.

To date, I've mostly heard Richard-Hamelin in big Romantic and post-Romantic repertoire. His Mozart was glorious: supple, winsome, warmly lit from within, delicate but never feeble. He plays the concerto as if it were chamber music, focusing on minute detail and counterpoint, always listening to the orchestra. There's a moment toward the end of the second movement where the left hand of the piano engages in a little back-and-forth conversation of staccato arpeggios with the bassoon. I've rarely heard it so perfectly executed. Richard-Hamelin played his own delightful cadenza at the end of the first movement. The last movement was a puckish frolick.

After such a brilliant but subtle performance, only a few patrons leapt to their feet, eventually coaxing others to follow. Fortunately it was enough to persuade Richard-Hamelin to play an encore: Alfred Cortot's solemn, reverent solo piano transcription of the slow movement from Bach's F Minor keyboard concerto.

Before the Mozart, Rossini's William Tell Overture gave individual NACO members plenty of opportunities to shine. In particular, Rachel Mercer's doleful opening cello solo rippled with luxe, bel canto phrasing.

NACO has been plowing through some enormous, demanding works lately, and Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" Symphony No. 6 didn't give them a break. Rizzi brought out the symphony's operatic sense of despair and finality. A nearly opaque fog of gloom rose in the opening notes, rooted in Chris Millard's sepulchral bassoon solos.

The conductor took the second movement at a livelier pace than most, making the amorous melodic line flow much more coherently over the awkward 5/4 time signature. But Rizzi really upped the tempo in the third movement, putting the "molto" in *molto vivace*. No pompous military march this; the daredevil velocity could be interpreted either as self-destruction or a last frantic scrabbling at life. The first violins and violas responded with positively breakneck playing glvanized by the stellar trombone and trumpet sections.

Applause broke the spell before the desolate fourth movement. The conductor seemed mildly annoyed. I feel for him, but I've always thought that if it's that important, a simple word from the podium before the music starts can prevent unwanted interruptions. Nobody likes to feel scolded; it just turns people off classical concerts. A little audience interaction can go a long way to making everyone comfortable with the ground rules.

Super Conductor, Monday, February 27, 2017

<http://super-conductor.blogspot.ca/2017/02/concert-review-beyond-zero.html>

## Concert Review: Beyond the Zero

### The Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra plays for peace.

by [Paul J. Pelkonen](#)

(A version of this article was originally published in Japanese translation by the Association of Japanese Symphony Orchestras, reused with permission)

The city of Hiroshima, located on the southern end of the big Japanese island of Honshu, remains best known for one date: Aug. 6, 1945. This was where the American bomber *Enola Gay* dropped "Little Boy," the first of only two atomic bombs ever used against human beings. Since that fatal day, Hiroshima has returned from its ashes as a symbol of international peace. The Peace Museum, the Cenotaph and the A-Bomb Dome (a building that survived the blast) speak volumes by simply standing and saying nothing.

This city of rivers is also home to the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra, which plays a few blocks away from where Little Boy exploded. And as its home city rose from the ashes to flourish in the years since the war, so has this orchestra risen to a place of prominence in Japan. On Thursday, Feb. 16, the HSO offered this season's inaugural Concert for Peace, under the baton of Kayzashi Akiyama, its experienced music director. The program: Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, Chopin's *Second Piano Concerto* and *Infinite String*, an orchestral work by composer and Osaka native Dai Fujikura.

As a symbol of international cooperation, the orchestra was joined by guest musicians from the Sinfonia Varsova in Poland and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal in Canada. The soloist in the Chopin was from that faraway land as well, the Montreal-born pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin. Mr. Richard-Hamelin had also given a short recital the day before, playing works by Chopin and Bach on the "bombed piano", a Baldwin upright that survived the fire and shockwave of 1945

The results of Thursday's concert were initially good. Dai Fujikura's one-movement *Infinite String* has been heard by this reviewer before, at the New York Philharmonic's *CONTACT!* series. It is a series of rolling, shuddering Doppler effects, moving and metamorphosing across five sections of strings. A steady shiver amps up into a shattering roar, engulfing the listener before dwindling again. New pulses developed in the cellos and basses, adding rhythmic ideas and bringing weight to the rolling waves of sound. The playing was taut and precise.

Mr. Richard-Hamelin ambled onstage, settling at the Steinway for the Chopin *Piano Concerto No. 2*. Following the opening *tutti* statement, he entered. All of his notes were in place, but more interesting playing was coming from the textured depths of the orchestral accompaniment. Mr. Akiyama explored the rich colors of the first movement with oboe and horn contributions from the out-of-town guests prominently and gratefully placed against the piano runs and the chug of strings. However, the next two movements were muddled and blurred. The slow movement meandered, and was followed by a mannered and somewhat cautious finale. An encore by Mr. Hamelin was Bach, again polite and precisely played.

Thus workaday approach continued in the second half of the concert, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. This can be the Murphy's Law of classical music works where anything can go wrong and often does. To start with, a mis-step in the strings resulted in the famed opening chords echoing for half a beat, producing an unwelcome ricochet effect. From this awkward start, the famous movement developed dully and reluctantly, with interjections from the solo horn, bassoon and oboe failing to set matters right.

The middle movements were better, with the dragging *Andante* followed by a determined sounding march with firm, determined horns. However, blurry rhythms from Mr. Akiyama marred matters, despite crisp playing of the low strings. The orchestra charged into the final movement and its *tutti* brass fanfare. However, this energetic statement of purpose never managed to achieve liftoff. Beethoven, especially when played in such an historic city and potential history-making concert, deserved better than this.

Bachtrack, February 18, 2017

[https://bachtrack.com/fr\\_FR/review-akiyama-richard-hamelin-hiroshima-february-2017](https://bachtrack.com/fr_FR/review-akiyama-richard-hamelin-hiroshima-february-2017)

## Hiroshima sends its message of Peace through Music

\*\*\*\*1

[Robert Markow](#),

[...]

Furthering the Polish connection was the choice of [Charles Richard-Hamelin](#) (no relation to Marc-André Hamelin, also from Quebec) as soloist in Chopin's Second Piano Concerto. Richard-Hamelin was second prize winner at the 2015 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, and has already carved out a major career for himself, particularly in Japan. The twenty-seven-year-old pianist deserves every bit of the acclaim already heaped on him, and I can only add mine. What strikes one first and foremost about Richard-Hamelin's playing is the beautifully sculpted, sustained lines he draws from the piano, the singing line Chopin learned from the operas of Bellini and Donizetti. There is a sense of direction, purpose, and inevitability to every note Richard-Hamelin plays. This is a pianist of subtlety, not showmanship, of thought, not temper. His acknowledged heroes are Lipatti and Michelangeli, revealed in his own playing. Richard-Hamelin made magic too out of his encore, a little Bach piece so simple any third-year student could have played the notes, but I venture to say not one famous soloist in a hundred could have matched his exquisite poise.

[...]

Le Devoir, February 13th, 2017

<http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/musique/491544/musique-classique-charles-richard-hamelin-bien-plus-grand-que-vous-l-imaginez>

by Christophe Hauss, translate by Rafael Adam Wugalter

### **Charles Richard-Hamelin: How could anyone have imagined how great he is?**

I'm trying to recall the last time listening to a piano concerto left me in an overwhelming state of revelation that brought tears to my eyes. It must have been March 2010, when Denis Matsuev performed Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 with Valery Gergiev at the Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier. But Saturday evening was Mozart. Little reason, a priori, to expect anything all that extraordinary.

Oh, but it was. Do we truly fathom what we have just collectively experienced? True, Charles Richard-Hamelin earned himself a second prize at the International Chopin Competition. And true, he more than held his own performing the Brahms Concerto No. 1 with Kent Nagano at the Lanaudière Festival. But this was Mozart. The supreme arbiter of all musicians. And not just that: it was one of the three piano concerti (the others being Nos. 24 and 27) that say everything and forgive nothing.

On stage is a 27-year-old Quebec soloist, but when you close your eyes, you hear a discourse, a tone, a sense of phrasing and contour, an attentive sensibility for balance throughout, a conception of dynamics and an overarching vision reminiscent of Clifford Curzon, Ivan Moravec or Christian Blackshaw!

On March 4, Emanuel Ax, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Andris Nelsons will be here to perform the same work on the same stage. I do hope they have all the enjoyment it takes to equal such a state of grace, which called to mind — for those who have seen the footage — what transpired at the 2015 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, when Lucas Debargue performed Concerto No. 24 in the semi-final round.

### **A Mozartian instinct**

Charles Richard-Hamelin has a rare and precious Mozartian instinct. He proved this with his own cadenzas, including a rather adventurous one in the third movement, which reminded me of the daring deployed by André Previn in his reading of the Finale of Concerto No. 20. I can now most assuredly say that I look forward, with great interest, to hearing what our pianist will do with Schubert. Saturday's encore, the Largo from Bach's Concerto in F minor arranged by Alfred Cortot, augurs well.



Juno Awards, February 7th, 2017

<http://junoawards.ca/nomination/classical-album-of-the-year-solo-or-chamber-charles-richard-hamelin/>

## **Classical Album of the Year: Solo or Chamber Ensemble 2017**

Charles Richard-Hamelin

Beethoven, Enescu & Chopin: Works for Piano (Live)

Category:

Classical Album of the Year: Solo or Chamber Ensemble

Year:

2017

Label:

Analekta\*Select

Silver medalist and laureate of the Krystian Zimerman award of the best sonata at the International Chopin Piano Competition in 2015, Charles Richard-Hamelin is standing out as one of the most important pianists of his generation. He also won the second prize at the Montreal International Musical Competition and the third prize and special award for the best performance of a Beethoven sonata at the Seoul International Music Competition in South Korea. In April 2015, he was awarded the prestigious “Career Development Award” by the Women’s Musical Club of Toronto.

Richard-Hamelin has appeared in various prestigious festivals including the Prague Spring Festival, La Roque d’Anthéron in France, “Chopin and his Europe” Festival in Warsaw and the Lanaudière Festival in Canada. As a soloist, he has performed with various ensembles including the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Poznan Philharmonic Orchestra, Beethoven Academy Orchestra, Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, OFUNAM (Mexico), Korean Symphony Orchestra and I Musici de Montréal.

Grammophone, January 2017

<http://www.grammophone.co.uk/review/charles-richard-hamelin-live>

by Harriet Smith

## **Charles Richard-Hamelin: Live**

A French-Canadian pianist named Hamelin, but not that one and no relation. Charles Richard-Hamelin (silver medallist at the 2015 Chopin Competition) was 26 years old when he recorded this live recital and the maturity of his playing is impressive. So too is the scope of his recital, which avoids the obvious. In Beethoven's Op 51 Rondos he is particularly responsive to the Second Rondo's more capricious moments, while its close, with a sudden outbreak of high spirits, is delightful.

The Chopin sequence, which closes the disc, mixes the familiar and lesser known. His take on the Third Ballade is refreshingly Classical, if not perhaps displaying as much personality as it might have done. On the other hand, his way with the early Introduction and Rondo, balancing delicacy and sinew without a hint of sentimentality, is very telling. The applause after this is startling as the audience have been largely silent up to that point. And in the concluding Polonaise he finds plenty to talk about without merely obsessing over its rhythm.

But the highlight for me was Enescu's Second Suite. I have to confess this was new to be – but what a piece! Enescu is still underrated as a composer, his huge gifts as violinist, pianist, conductor and educator meaning that he lived many more lives than most of us could imagine. He wrote the Suite for a competition in 1903 and it sounds like a piano arrangement of a symphonic work, so vividly is it coloured. The opening Toccata is suffused with the sounds of bells and Richard-Hamelin is alive to its sense of joy. In the Sarabande he becomes utterly inward, relishing its more urgent inner section, spiced with whole-tone harmonies. Everywhere, he displays a strong sense of narrative, making him a compelling storyteller. The most inward point of the Suite comes with a flickering Pavane, which conjures the sound world of the Debussy of *Pour le piano*. Richard-Hamelin fully embraces the celebratory nature of the closing Bourrée, contrasting fanfares with brilliant post-Lisztian passagework. Captured in a warmly immediate recording, Richard-Hamelin is a welcome new voice on the pianistic firmament.

Crossover media, January 10, 2017

<http://www.crossovermedia.net/artists/charles-richard-hamelin/story/charles-richard-hamelin-live-beethoven-enescu-chopin-kdfc-download-of-the-week/>

## **Charles Richard-Hamelin –**

### **Live: Beethoven, Enescu, Chopin / KDFC: Download of the Week**

Each week KDFC: San Francisco members can download a free mp3 from some of the biggest releases in the world of Classical music. Our pick this week is from Analekta. The Canadian label is proud to present Live: Beethoven – Enescu – Chopin, the second album by Charles Richard-Hamelin, one of the most notable pianists of his generation, silver medalist and winner of the Krystian Zimerman Prize for best performance of a sonata at the 2015 International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. Recorded before an audience at Salle Raoul-Jobin in Québec City's Palais Montcalm this past May, Live: Beethoven – Enescu – Chopin confirms the impressive talent of the Québec pianist.

Grab this free track from KDFC: San Francisco

Crossover Media Projects with Charles Richard-Hamelin

## **Charles Richard-Hamelin**

### **Live - Beethoven, Enescu, Chopin**

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ARTAMAG, December 1st, 2016

FOCUS

ENESCO'S TIME HAS COME

December 1st, 2016 | Jean-Charles Hoffelé

At the 17th Chopin Competition, Charles Richard-Hamelin saw the 1st Prize snatched by Seong-Jin Cho. Although the audience would have given it to him without hesitation. Such keyboard mastery, this heroic tone, this distinctive left hand would have earned it. But no, second place, which in fact doesn't take anything away from his Korean rival.

But Richard-Hamelin's perfect mastery in his performance of the Third Sonata won him the Krystian Zimerman Prize, a telling sign that pointed to the youthful flaws of his challenger.

Coming back from his (probable) disappointment, here he is in May 2016 in the beautiful acoustics of Palais Montcalm's Raoul-Jobin Hall for a recital. Chopin appears as coda (and a telling sign, Beethoven is also featured with two works rarely considered by pianists, his two Rondos at the beginning): The Third Ballade, controlled with clarity, the great Nocturne op. 55 no 2 swept in a single gesture are testimony to his narrative art. Then, the romantic style is exposed in the Introduction and Rondo, op. 16. Finally, exaltation defines the Heroic Polonaise as the implacable rhythm transforms the landscape.

(...)

Charles Richard-Hamelin resets Enesco's Second Suite in the landscape of its 1903 premiere, infusing its spectacular or tender lines with the exalted cantabiles of the Sarabande raised to their acme, the trills warble and ornaments of the Pavane, the chiming bells of the chords in the Bourrée, and everywhere attention to detail, stressing the "Grand Siècle" forms that are pointed out explicitly by the titles of the four pieces. But above all, bring between the staves the thrilling open air, the rich colors, the sensuality of a faun, the pantheist secret that reinvented music in France at the turn of the 20th century, before it was leveled by 14-18. Ravel will remember all this in his Tombeau de Couperin. It's more than a pianist. It is indeed a sign that Enesco's time has come.



Gramophone, December 2016

<http://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/charles-richard-hamelin-chopin>

By Patrick Rucker

## Charles Richard-Hamelin: Chopin

Charles Richard-Hamelin is the 27-year-old Quebec-born pianist who won second prize at the Chopin Competition last year. Many apparently felt he was a shoo-in for first place, we are told, had not his concerto performance been disturbed by a bad case of nerves. Now the Fryderyk Chopin Institute has released a generous two-disc set, tracing Richard-Hamelin's progress through the first-, second- and third-stage auditions, as well his contribution to the winners' concert in October 2015. I can only echo what has already been written about him. Richard-Hamelin is a supremely artistic, highly sensitive yet thoroughly masculine young pianist, whose strikingly original ideas remain true to the spirit of Chopin. For those of us not fortunate enough to have been in Warsaw for the concert, this release is probably the next best thing.

Perhaps the most perceptive interpretation of the lot is the *Polonaise-fantaisie*, easily among the most beautifully wrought and persuasive I've heard. No wandering in a trance-like vagueness here. This is a boldly conceived and powerful performance: robust music, not reminiscent of the dance but actually dancing and happy to be doing so. Naturally there is plenty of atmosphere, punctuated by pensive moments, but Richard-Hamelin's performance seems so forthright and inevitable, so self-evidently sane and musical, that one could almost imagine we've been listening to wrong-headed, or at least highly self-indulgent, readings for the past century and a half. This performance seems less a late masterpiece by a deathly ill composer than the work of a man who still relishes life.

The mighty F sharp minor *Polonaise* is fairly ablaze with intense patriotic fervour, though in the midst of this abandon, Richard-Hamelin strikes a secure balance between heart and intellect. Each section serves a unique function within the structure as a whole and the overall impression is lean and succinct. The far less familiar E flat major *Rondo*, Op 16, is played with panache and virtuoso abandon, and simply oozes charm. Each harmonic turn in the beautifully paced, eloquent C sharp minor *Prelude*, Op 45, registers surprise. The perfectly prepared *cadenza* unfolds with an acceleration that is far from precipitous, concluding with an understated aptness.

From the clarion peal of the B minor *Sonata's* opening notes, Richard-Hamelin holds us aloft in an unswerving trajectory from which we're not released until the last chord of the finale. His unerring sense of proportion is one of many factors that conspire to create a rare sense of cohesion. A fluent *rubato* enhances the rhetorical poise of thematic material – the lines always breathe and move – without unhinging the integrity of the overriding structure. The open, spacious vistas of the *Largo* are a sensual delight, and once we're launched on the fleet and foreboding *Presto non tanto*, there's nothing to do but hold on for dear life.

And there are *Études*, *Nocturnes*, *Mazurkas*, an A flat *Ballade* and a *Barcarolle* to savour as well. The sound of the Yamaha on these live performance recordings is superbly captured. Richard-Hamelin has bold, original ideas about the music he plays, the emotional reservoirs to back them up and the technical equipment to convey them without distraction. Surely this is a young pianist of whom we will hear a great deal more, and very soon.

# Life-Changing Musical Moments

By PAUL ENNIS

## Charles Richard-Hamelin

It is said that making your mark in a prestigious international competition changes your life and for Charles Richard-Hamelin that is exactly what happened when he was 25. “There is something magical about this legendary hall [Warsaw Philharmonic Hall] that somehow made it possible for me to be myself on stage, and be able to say what I wanted to say, at least most of the time,” he wrote on the *Scene and Heard International* website.

Richard-Hamelin won the silver medal at the International Chopin Piano Competition in 2015 as well as the Krystian Zimerman Prize for best performance of a sonata and his career took off. “This silver medal was of course incredibly unexpected and has single-handedly changed my whole life,” he said. “I’ve never performed professionally outside of Canada before the Chopin and now I have confirmed engagements in Canada, the USA, Poland, France, Spain, Mexico, Japan and South Korea.”

By May 2016 when he spoke to Yves Leclerc (*Journal de Québec*) he had already given 40 concerts that calendar year with 40 more to come. One of those concerts is his upcoming Sinfonia Toronto performance, December 9, of Mozart’s *Piano Concerto No.23 in A Major K488* conducted by Nurhan Arman. The pattern continues in 2017 when he joins Christian Reif and the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony January 13 and 14 for Mozart’s *Piano Concerto No.20 in D Minor K466*. The following evening he gives a recital for the Kitchener- Waterloo Chamber Music Society that mirrors most of the repertoire Analekta captured on the CD of his May 2016 Quebec City concert – two Beethoven *Rondos*, Enescu’s *Suite No.2* and Chopin’s “*Heroic*” *Polonaise No.6*. There his playing sparkled, his confidence was clearly evident, his musicianship mature and engaging.

“I love this new life, even if it is a bit tiring,” he said to Leclerc. “I am not in a position, however, where I can afford to refuse offers that arrive on my table. This is what will enable me to secure a future abroad. I have contracts for the next two years and we will see if it will continue and open doors.”

A mere five months before his Chopin Competition success, he was awarded the prestigious Career Development Award by the Women’s Musical Club of Toronto. That venerable institution will reap the benefits of their prescience when Richard-Hamelin returns May 4, 2017, for his first Toronto solo recital since winning the Chopin Competition prizes.

Musical Toronto, November 14, 2016

<http://www.musicaltoronto.org/2016/11/14/scrutiny-rcm-generation-next/#>

# SCRUTINY | Generation Next Showcases The Wealth Of Canadian Talent

By Joseph So

Royal Conservatory

Generation Next featuring pianists Alexander Seredenko, Tony Yike Yang, and Charles Richard-Hamelin; cellist Stephane Tetreault, and mezzo-soprano Emily D'Angelo at Koerner Hall. Nov. 10.

[...] The last person to perform was Charles Richard-Hamelin, in the challenging Chopin *Piano Sonata No. 3*. As is typical of this pianist, his stage manner is modest, non-flashy, totally without the histrionics that seems to have infected so many young pianists today. He never panders to the audience – what we get is not showmanship but honest and truly beautiful music-making. On this occasion, his singing tone, elegant phrasing, poetic imagination, and formidable technique were all in place, just what's needed for a memorable *Sonata No. 3*. Incidentally, kudos to the very disciplined and knowledgeable audience, without a single inappropriate applause the whole evening. Hamelin's playing of the Finale was exceptional. I understand the concert was taped by CBC for broadcast or streaming on the web, so do check the schedule and hear for yourself. Hamelin even gave an encore, a scintillating Chopin Polonaise. His success in Warsaw was no fluke! [...]

Seen and heard-international, November 13 2016

<http://seenandheard-international.com/2016/11/charles-richard-hamelin-brings-rare-strength-and-feeling-to-an-all-chopin-recital/>

# Charles Richard-Hamelin Brings Rare Strength and Feeling to an All-Chopin Recital



**Canada Chopin:** Charles Richard-Hamelin (piano), Vancouver Playhouse, Vancouver, 6.11.2016. (GN)



Charles Richard-Hamelin

**Chopin** – Nocturne in B major Op.62 No.1, Ballade No.3 in A flat major Op.47, Polonaise-Fantasia Op.61, Introduction et Rondo Op.16, Three Mazurkas Op.59, Sonata No.3 in B minor Op.58

*Encores:* Polonaise in A flat major Op.53 'Heroic', Mazurka No.4 in B minor Op.33

This was our first visit from 27-year-old Montreal pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin, fresh off his Silver Medal finish in the 2015 Warsaw Chopin Competition. Richard-Hamelin and Yike (Tony) Yang both received medals, the first time Canadian artists have ever placed so highly in this revered event. I thought it was important that younger pianists see our prizewinner in this all-Chopin recital, and I was pleased to be joined by 10-year-old Max Li, a recent first-prize winner in the local Kiwanis Competition. Given my 'you can never start 'em too early' philosophy, one quaint possibility was to have him try to review the concert since he plays Chopin too.

Master Li had all the makings of a good reviewer, always moving his programme in line with the rhythms, thoughtfully turning over its pages time and time again for better insight and, yes, coming up with the ultimate verdict: Richard-Hamelin played extremely well but he was not as exciting as some pianists. In many respects, he hit it right on: unlike a number of the young and glamorous Chopin pianists that Li might have encountered, Richard-Hamelin never treated the composer as a vehicle for display, speed or bravura. What we saw instead was wonderfully-concentrated inward playing that aimed at the soul of the composer and exuded intelligence and architectural strength. The relatively deliberate tempos may have made it 'unexciting', but this was playing



of great feeling and galvanizing purpose and insight, absolutely rare for an artist under 30. Sometimes I thought of pianists like Claudio Arrau or Emil Gilels, though the artist's self-confessed standard-bearer is (naturally) Dinu Lipatti. This turned out to be one of the best piano recitals we have seen in the past year or two.

Involvement and lyrical space were immediately apparent from the opening B major Nocturne. This was a wise, beautifully proportioned reading, often achingly beautiful, though some might find the tempos on the relaxed side. The Ballade No.3 initiated the stronger pieces, and introduced us to the type of suspending concentration that Richard-Hamelin can achieve: the performance was beautifully 'whole'. Exposed with patience and architecture, the pianist was particularly sensitive to the emotional extremes of the composer's world: from the sweetest of repose, to carefree and fanciful joy, to the most weighty and uncompromising assertion. The perception of this type of volatility seems to be a hallmark of Richard-Hamelin's Chopin: indeed quite uniquely so, since everything is still anchored within a very firm structure.

Sterling command and elegant pacing also informed the pianist's Polonaise-Fantasia Op.61, opening out considerable dramatic space, and cultivating a lovely carefree innocence alongside. Yet it was the yearning flow and breadth of expression later on that was the most enticing. This performance had genuine spontaneity throughout, and built to an absolutely overwhelming close. The more youthful Introduction and Rondo Op.16 had fine animation and tonal control and captured the work's playfulness and caprice. If patrons arrived with a sense of anticipation about this recital, by the end of the first half genuine excitement was in the air.

The following three Mazurkas Op.59, while slight, were beautifully rendered: Richard-Hamelin gave them splendid lyrical elevation and managed to capture their whim and folk dance element. This was very human playing, and I liked its rhythmic integrity too. The big event was the Chopin Sonata No.3, and this is where the pianist's quest for extremes made for quite a daring and individual performance. The opening Allegro certainly paid attention to its *maestoso* designation: strongly dramatic and weightily commanding. But it also captured its tumultuous quality most perceptively, subsiding into its cantabile theme in the most meltingly beautiful way. Here was the repose that almost took us to a different world, only to be turned back with strong determination later. If the brief Scherzo bubbled forth with all the right accents, then it was the contrasting Largo that introduced the 'heavenly lengths'. Starting with considerable sinew and at a good pace, the development became more and more searching and intimate, suggesting a river that flows on and on until it almost reaches a still. It was the sense of flow and gentle musing that made this reading distinctive and perhaps more balladic than usual; the very tender, suspended delivery of the closing theme was simply exquisite. The finale had the virtue of great lucidity. It had a lovely jogging ease at the beginning, and always maintained a feeling of caprice no matter how much tempestuous weight was unearthed en route.

Some might feel that the weighty extremes of the Sonata were a little more emphatic than they had to be, or that the river in the Largo meandered a little too much but, all told, this was performance of tremendous intelligence, conviction and cohesion. It was unmistakably 'real' and commanding, and remarkable for a young pianist. There was explosive applause at the end, and a powerful and imaginative reading of the indefatigable 'Heroic' Polonaise and a touching Mazurka sent everyone home satisfied, though probably still hungry for more.

There is nothing more suspicious than a reviewer extolling the virtues of an artist from his own country, but Charles Richard-Hamelin absolutely must be heard. Playing of this insight and maturity is rare. The pianist always displays sterling technique and agility, but it is interesting that I never referred to them above. That's because I was too busy thinking about his Chopin. I do hope to be seeing more young Canadian pianists follow in the inspired footsteps of Richard-Hamelin – with the bonus that many become perceptive reviewers as well!

*Geoffrey Newman*

**TORONTO CONCERT REVIEWS, November 11, 2016**

<https://www.torontoconcertreviews.ca/november-10-2016-generation-next---koerner-hall---royal-conservatory-of-music.html>

**Music reviews of the finest concerts in Toronto: symphonic, choral, opera, chamber, jazz and period music**

## **GENERATION NEXT showcases rising Canadian talent!**

**By David Richards**

« Many in the audience had long anticipated the silver medalist from the 2015 International Chopin Competition. Charles Richard-Hamelin did not disappoint. He found all the lyric beauty and captured all of the varied moods of Chopin's masterpiece, Sonata No. 3 in B minor Op. 58. He spun musical threads of silken melody with the delicacy of a ballerina. The brilliant displays of virtuosic passages flowed easily from his hands. The audience demanded an encore and he came back with Chopin's thrilling Polonaise héroïque Op. 53. »

Vancouver Classical Music, November 6, 2016

<https://www.vanclassicalmusic.com/a-stunning-vancouver-debut-for-chopin-competition-medalist-charles-richardhamelin>

# A STUNNING VANCOUVER DEBUT FOR CHOPIN COMPETITION MEDALIST CHARLES RICHARD-HAMELIN

by Geoffrey Newman

*Charles Richard-Hamelin, piano: An All-Chopin Concert, Playhouse, November 6, 2016.*

This was our first visit from 27-year old Montreal pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin, fresh off his Silver Medal finish in the 2015 Warsaw Chopin Competition. Richard-Hamelin and Yike (Tony) Yang both received medals, the first time Canadian artists have ever placed so highly in this revered event. I thought it was important that younger pianists see our prizewinner in this all-Chopin recital, so I actually invited along 10-year old Max Li, himself a recent first-prize winner in the local Kiwanis Competition. Given my 'you can never start'em too early' philosophy, one quaint possibility was to have him try to review the concert, since he plays Chopin too.

Master Li had all the makings of a good reviewer, always moving his programme in line with the rhythms, thoughtfully turning over its pages time and time again for better insight and, yes, coming up with the ultimate verdict: Richard-Hamelin played extremely well but he was not particularly exciting or passionate. Fortunately, he hit it right on: unlike many of the young and glamorous Chopin pianists that Li might have encountered, Richard-Hamelin never treated the composer as a vehicle for display, speed or bravura. What we saw instead was wonderfully-concentrated inward playing that aimed at the soul of the composer and exuded great intelligence and architectural strength. The relatively deliberate tempos may have made it 'unexciting' but this was playing of great feeling and galvanizing purpose and insight, absolutely rare for an artist under 30. Sometimes I thought of pianists like Claudio Arrau or Emil Gilels, though the artist's self-confessed standard-bearer is (naturally) Dinu Lipatti. This turned out to be one of the best piano recitals we have seen in the past year or two.

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The following three *Mazurkas*, Op. 59, while slight, were beautifully rendered: Richard-Hamelin gave them splendid lyrical elevation, always managing to capture their whim and folk dance element. This was very human playing and I liked its rhythmic integrity too. The big event was the Chopin Sonata No. 3, and this is where the pianist's quest for extremes made for quite a daring and individual performance. The opening Allegro certainly paid attention to its *maestoso* designation: strongly dramatic and weightily commanding. But it also captured its tumultuous quality most perceptively, subsiding into its cantabile theme in the most meltingly beautiful way. Here was the repose that almost took us to a different world, only to be turned back with strong determination later. If the brief Scherzo bubbled forth with all the right accents, then it was the contrasting Largo that introduced the 'heavenly lengths'. Starting with considerable sinew and at a good pace, the development became more and more searching and intimate, suggesting a river that flows on and on until it almost reaches a still. It was the sense of flow and gentle musing that made this performance distinctive and perhaps more balladic than usual; the very tender, suspended delivery of the closing theme was simply exquisite. The finale had the virtue of great lucidity. It had a lovely jogging ease at the beginning, and always maintained a feeling of caprice no matter how much tempestuous weight was unearthed en route.

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Edmonton Journal, October 30, 2016

<http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/music/newly-named-conductor-alexander-prior-charms-eso-audience>

## Newly named conductor Alexander Prior charms ESO audience

**Tom Murray**

There may have been two guest stars at Saturday night's Edmonton Symphony Orchestra concert, but all eyes were definitely glued on one for most of the evening.

That was the man at centrestage, Alexander Prior, named just this week as the new chief conductor of the ESO for the 2017/2018 season, after working with orchestras around the world. Prior was under the scrutiny of attendees eyeing the 24-year-old native of London, England, in a very different manner than as the guest conductor he's been here over the last few years.

Now he was no longer a child prodigy or a globe-trotting, rising star in the classical world. He was the man who would be replacing the beloved Bill Eddins, who is moving on after more than a decade of leading the orchestra.

Big news indeed, so it wasn't surprising that the Winspear was packed in response, though that was surely helped along by the ESO offering a bucketful of last-minute \$24 tickets, resulting in a large backlog of people snaking their way through the outer lobby in a quest for tickets. The concert started 10 minutes late because of these last-minute ticket purchasers, but the house was full to capacity and buzzing in palpable excitement. It was an interesting mix of young and old, dressed up and dressed down, downtown and suburbs, all drawn to the changing of the ESO guard.

Prior bounced out and immediately charmed the audience with (deliberate) awkwardly phrased Canadianisms and winning demeanour, delighting in his evident rapport with the orchestra, enthusing about his new job and the city he would be getting to know. He expressed excitement in the idea of getting to check out Canadian composers in depth before launching into Montreal native Clermont Pepin's Variations symphoniques, a satisfying musical bouillabaisse that covered a great deal of sonic territory in just under 20 minutes.

Another Quebec-based artist, pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin, was the special guest for Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, a piece he's played to critical and public acclaim in more than a few venues. While not quite as immediately charismatic as the conductor, he proved to be a beguiling performer, spider hands blurring across the keyboard on the faster passages, soulfully plucking notes on the slower, gentler sections, with Prior occasionally peering at him over his shoulder like a pitcher keeping an eye on the second base runner. By the end, he had completely won over the audience, who called him back for a couple of bows as well as a short solo piece.

It would be fair to say that the Winspear faithful seemed more than thrilled with the new conductor by the start of the intermission, giving both Prior and Richard-Hamelin several warm standing ovations in turn. The evening ended with a Carl Nielsen's Symphony No. 2 (a.k.a. The Four Temperaments). Prior moving like a silent comedian as he conducted the four movements, happily leading the orchestra he'll take charge of next year.

The five-year contract marks Prior's first gig as the artistic leader of an orchestra and is the latest in a long list of remarkable accomplishments. At the age of 13, his ballet Mowgli, commissioned by the Moscow State Ballet, received international acclaim. He graduated with distinction in conducting at 17 from the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

Since then, he has conducted orchestras from Cologne to Seattle to Boston. As a composer, he has written several symphonies, concertos, choral works and operas. He was rumoured to be in the running for a permanent conducting job with several orchestras, including the Victoria Symphony, before accepting the ESO position.



**Musical Toronto**, October 23, 2016

<http://www.musicaltoronto.org/2016/10/23/record-keeping-charles-richard-hamelin/>

## **RECORD KEEPING | Charles Richard-Hamelin Confirms His Growing Reputation For Chopin**

By Paul E. Robinson

In the past few years, Charles Richard-Hamelin has emerged as one of the most gifted pianists of his generation. Having studied at McGill and at Yale, he went on to win prizes at various international competitions, and in 2015, was a silver medalist at the International Chopin Competition. That same year, he made his first recording — not surprisingly, all-Chopin — for Analekta (AN2 9127). There is more Chopin on this, his latest CD, as well as some less well-known music by Beethoven and Enescu. Like the earlier Chopin CD, this live concert (May 2016) recording features superb performances and exceptionally fine sound.

The interesting choice of repertoire on this CD is refreshing; the works by Beethoven and Chopin, for example, are pieces which, for the most part, are infrequently played. The two Beethoven Rondos Op. 51, although well off the familiar Beethoven track, are by no means inconsequential pieces. They do not scale the heights of the *Pathétique* or *Appassionata* sonatas — not to mention the late piano sonatas or the *Diabelli Variations* — but they are nonetheless significant contributions to our appreciation of the rondo form. Richard-Hamelin treats them as the connoisseur's treats they are, with impressive technical mastery.

This CD was recorded live at the Salle Raoul-Jobin of the Palais Montcalm in Quebec City. Kudos to producer/sound engineer Carl Talbot and assistant recording engineer Jack Kelly for capturing the sheer beauty of the piano sound in this hall.

George Enescu (1881-1955) was one of the great musical polymaths of his time. He could do it all: play both the violin and the piano at a virtuoso level, conduct, teach and compose. It is good to see that more and more of his compositions are being recorded and widely appreciated.

Enescu wrote the Piano Suite No. 2 in D major Op. 10 at the age of twenty-two. While its four movements — Toccata, Sarabande, Pavane and Bourée — are based on Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century forms, the sound is definitely early Twentieth Century. The original title of this piano suite, *Des cloches sonores* (Ringing Bells), also identifies its unifying feature — bells — Through his interpretation of both the delicate and powerful sonorities in this score, Richard-Hamelin gives us a consistently engrossing performance.

Chopin's Introduction and Rondo Op. 16, like Beethoven's Rondos Op. 51, although fine music, is seldom played. Richard-Hamelin easily meets its considerable technical challenges.

The Polonaise No. 6 in A-flat major Op. 53, one of Chopin's best-known works — the polonaise with the rapidly repeated four-note figure in octaves in the bass — appears to be an encore from this live concert. With this exciting performance, its well-judged transitions and resounding but perfectly balanced climaxes, Richard-Hamelin confirms his growing reputation as a Chopin interpreter.

All in all, this fine CD is a major addition to Charles Richard-Hamelin's growing discography.

Charles Richard-Hamelin will be appearing at Koerner Hall in Toronto on November 10 as part of a concert titled "[Generation Next](#)." He will play Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 3.

Saskatoon StarPhoenix, September 18 2016

## **Soloist woos crowd as SSO season starts**

<http://thestarphoenix.com/entertainment/local-arts/soloist-woos-crowd-as-ssso-season-starts>

By Heather Persson

### **Charles Richard-Hamelin looks good on paper.**

The Quebec-born pianist brings an impressive set of credentials when he arrives in a city, including a master's degree from Yale and appearances at prestigious festivals around the world.

He also is unquestionably qualified to perform Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Saskatoon Symphony. At the 2015 International Chopin Piano Competition, he was a silver medalist and laureate – the first Canadian to attain this honour. His first solo CD focuses on later works of the composer.

Richard-Hamelin's resume alone, however, doesn't begin to express how impressive he is in live performance.

A 20-year-old Chopin wrote the concerto, infusing it with a youthful enthusiasm. It is, of course, deeply romantic. But the work is also demanding. The performer is called upon to woo the audience with vigor and precision.

And woo Richard-Hamelin did. By the end of his performance on Saturday night, every music lover in the room was ready to hand him their phone number. The crowd was on its feet, extracting a moving solo encore performance.

Physically reserved, this is a soloist who does not rely on personal showmanship. He saves his flash for the keyboard, creating electric sparks of passion with dynamic play.

Music director Eric Paetkau had a spring in his step as he bounded onto the stage to begin the SSO's 86<sup>th</sup> season. The local symphony is the fifth-oldest in Canada. (The Regina Symphony Orchestra, which also began their new season on Saturday, is the oldest in the country.)

The SSO also showed energy as they tackled the challenges offered up in *Voyageur*, a composition by Canadian Andrew Staniland. The percussion was especially impressive in this piece that offered a breath of fresh, more modern air. It was also appropriate to kick off with a Canadian work for a season that will feature an emphasis on works from our home and native land.

The evening ended with the symphony offering up a pleasingly dynamic performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 in A Major, prompting a sense of promise about the music to come.

Le Devoir , August 6th, 2016

<http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/musique/477203/musique-classique-charles-richard-hamelin-comme-un-grand>

Charles Richard-Hamelin

## **A performance of stature from Charles Richard-Hamelin\***

By [Christophe Huss](#) translate by Rafael A. Wugalter

The public didn't just vote for the concerto they most wanted to hear. They came in droves, and gave Charles Richard-Hamelin a well-deserved standing ovation for rising to his challenge. Indeed, the 27-year-old Quebecer proved entirely worthy of Brahms's Piano Concerto no. 1, mastering the imposing score, its poetry, and its powerful contrasts.

Charles Richard-Hamelin has made this concerto a part of him. The few barely noticeable missteps were attributable to some nervousness in his first intervention. Far more importantly, though, he gave a rendition of Brahms Concerto no. 1. And the great intelligence of that rendition was the icing on the cake!

The fact that he admires the American piano masters of the 1960s is certainly interesting, but his approach was a clean break from the showy, percussive style generally associated with Brahms's opus 15. I had the impression he saw the work as following in the footsteps of Schumann's concerto.

Where many see things vertically, his vision was phrased. His varied palette of touch and his consciousness of sound were, as always, clearly present. Some phrase openings in the first movement seemed to come from another, incorporeal world. As for the overall sound obtained from the instrument, I will wait for Charles Richard-Hamelin to play the New York Steinway at the Maison symphonique de Montréal, rather than a Yamaha outdoors, to provide an assessment.

Richard-Hamelin and Nagano found common ground in the finale, but more so in the slow movement, which was lyrical throughout, and never stagnant. It seemed to me that the pianist saw the first section as more lively and agitated than the conductor. However, this incipient wish to coax Kent Nagano out of his relative inertia did not really materialize. It would be interesting to see Richard-Hamelin work with a more spirited conductor, of the likes of Paavo Järvi, Manfred Honeck or Marek Janowski, to explore the voices and impulses that one senses in his vision.

[...]

Diapason, August 1st, 2016, Nohant, France.

Nohant Festival : Chopin by its prizewinners

<http://www.diapasonmag.fr/actualites/critiques/nohant-festival-chopin-par-ses-laureats>

By Bertrand Boissard

Charles Richard-Hamelin, winner of the Second Prize in 2015, drove Sonata no. 3 like a luxury sedan. (...). Effervescence was however on hand at the close of the Polonaise-Fantaisie, which truly took flight. Much power here, but no harshness.

Concert Classique.com July 29, 2016, Nohant, France

<http://www.concertclassic.com/article/nohant-festival-chopin-de-belles-decouvertes-et-une-invitee-surprise-compte-rendu>

## **Nohant Chopin Festival**

By Michel Le Naour,

Promising Canadian artist Charles Richard-Hamelin (Second Prize and Krystian Zimerman Prize at the most recent Chopin Competition in Warsaw) gave a recital dedicated entirely to the Polish composer. His mastery and imagination first struck this listener in Ballad no. 3, thanks to the depth of his touch, his narrative sense and his vocal inflections. The same qualities were present in the Polonaise-Fantaisie, performed with improvisational freshness, and yet fully respectful of the structure. His inspired, winged fingers gave body to the Introduction and Rondo op. 16, making an impression beyond the brilliant character of the piece itself.

After the intermission, his performances of the four op. 33 Mazurkas were true to tradition, with well-marked rhythm, appropriate accents, and an expressive simplicity so natural it was confounding.

The Sonata no. 3 took on a visionary dimension thanks to the artist's complete commitment, evident from the moment the two themes of the first movement were confronted. The finale exuded an elemental power, though the tempo appeared somewhat rushed. The encore piece, Beethoven's rarely heard Rondo op. 51, no. 1, was performed with joy, humour and humanity, closing a top-flight concert on a happy note.



Ottawa Citizen, July 12 2016

<http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-reviews/music-review-rapturous-chopin-with-charles-richard-hamelin-and-i-musici-de-montreal>

by Natasha Gauthier

## Music review: Rapturous Chopin with Charles Richard-Hamelin and I Musici de Montréal

Here are four things you probably didn't know about 26-year-old pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin (you won't BELIEVE #2):

1. His name isn't Charles-Richard. The hyphen goes between his two surnames.
2. He's not in any way related to superstar virtuoso Marc-André Hamelin.
3. He's from Joliette and had his first piano lessons with his dad, an amateur musician.
4. Just before he gained international fame by becoming the first Canadian to win the silver medal at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw in October, Richard-Hamelin gave a solo recital in Ottawa as part of Roland Graham's series at Southminster United. So anybody who was there can legitimately claim they were into him before he blew up.

The Chopin triumph kick-started his career with a whirlwind of concert dates, recording contracts, and the kind of media and public attention usually reserved for star athletes. Like their sports counterparts, many young musicians who become overnight sensations can crack under the pressure and attention. Richard-Hamelin has admitted in the press that he finds his new schedule gruelling, but based on his appearance at Music and Beyond Tuesday he's coping just fine.

Richard-Hamelin performed with the chamber string ensemble I Musici de Montréal, playing Chopin's Piano Concerto no. 2, the same piece that wowed the judges at the Chopin Competition finals.

Other young Canadian pianists may claim to be Chopin specialists, but Richard-Hamelin is the only one I've heard who deserves the title: the true heir to Louis Lortie, André Laplante and Janina Fialkowska.

This was astonishing pianism of the highest level. There's something about Richard-Hamelin that reminds me of a young Radu Lupu – both physically, with his dishevelled dark hair and bear-like posture at the piano, and in his molten-gold sound all warmth, power, and miraculous, almost vocal legato.

Richard-Hamelin's raw emotional impact is the real deal, rooted completely in his convincing musicianship and not in the heavenward gazing and other self-conscious mannerisms of many of his peers. The first movement was powered by old-fashioned Romantic sweep, while the second floated by in a softly shimmering rapture. The brilliant, flamboyant finale was pure dance.

Pianists usually play a short Chopin Etude or Nocturne as an encore after a concerto. Not one to slack off, Richard-Hamelin launched into the enormous, knuckle-busting Polonaise in A-flat Major. He killed it, tossing off some of the brawniest, cleanest left-hand octaves I've ever heard, and deservedly brought the house down.

Jean-Marie Zeitouni became I Musici's artistic director after the death of founder Yuli Turovsky in 2013. Moscow-trained Turovsky was a master of the Russian repertoire, and Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings was one of the group's signature pieces under his baton. Zeitouni's tempi are more fiery, his concept of the composer more daring, less reverential and nostalgic. But if the interpretation was fresh and reinvigorated, I Musici's trademark rich, generous, Russian-inspired sound hasn't changed.

The concert began with an incisive, whip-sharp performance of the Scherzo for strings by Quebec composer André Prévost.

SCENA.CZ, Prague Spring - June 3, 2016

<http://www.scena.cz/index.php?d=1&o=3&c=27539&r=10>

by Zuzana Michnová

## **Recital by Canadian pianist Charles Richard - Hamelin**

Substituting for Pollini is amazing. After all, we have lots of his records at home. And surely the audience is not expecting me to be a second Pollini. On stage I represent myself.-- Such was the reaction of the Canadian pianist to the fact that he was to appear at the Prague Spring as replacement for Italian pianist Maurizio Pollini who cancelled for health reasons.

Charles Richard-Hamelin had won 2. prize and the Krystian Zimerman Prize at the 2015 International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw, for best rendition of the Sonata.

He began his premiere in Prague in a truly grand style. With the very first piece of the concert - Nocturne H-Dur, Op. 62 No. 1, he showed the best of his musical talent.

In this Night Song (as Chopin's Nocturnes are often labelled) he offered images of moods, almost touching in their sincerity. Tenderness, hesitation, gentleness, ... all these tie this lyrical pianist to the Polish composer. Richard-Hamelin himself is reflected in these levels, and that is why they are so very convincing.

Richard-Hamelin is playful and elegant, as he demonstrated most boldly in the last of the Four Mazurka - H-Moll, No. 4 Op.33: The captivating melody of the Mazurka, alternating with passion and a capricious danceability. Hesitation and kindness and all that closed with a short and strict chordal cadence.

He delivered the third of the best performances of Friday's concert in the interpretation of Pavane by George Enescu as a second encore for the audience. The magnificence, natural dignity and genuineness expressed in this composition were a strong finale of the whole evening.

Charles Richard-Hamelin has a splendid technique, ability to work wonderfully with dynamics, and can play very delicate pianissimos. His fortissimos tend to be firm rather than dramatic. He is the type of a dependable artist who can always make us look forward to a professional performance.

OPERA + June 4, 2016 15:39

<http://operaplus.cz/charles-richard-hamelin-ocaroval-prahu/>

by [Kryštof Březina](#),

## Charles Richard-Hamelin Charmed Prague

### Charles Richard-Hamelin at Fryderyk Chopin at Prague Spring

The recital debut in Prague by Charles Richard-Hamelin, a young Canadian laureate of this year's Chopin competition in Warsaw, was very memorable. The cascade of out-of-this world dreamy pianissimos, the elegant conception of the phrases and the novel, original interpretation of well known classics of the piano repertoire, have definitely placed yesterday's concert at the top at the Rudolfinum stage. **Charles Richard-Hamelin** chose an „all-Chopin“ program for his performance in Prague, and guided the listeners through it with near perfection. It is as if he chose to ignore the danger hidden in the monotonies of the authors' language, and decided to show the audience the richness of Chopin's personality with a cleverly put-together program.

He opened the recital with a dreamy *Nocturne* in B Major op. 62, No. 1. The performance of this piece which in me evokes endless meditation under a starry sky, was most convincing. It is unbelievable how the young pianist was able to reach the very bottom edge of the dynamic possibilities which piano affords, and still maintain the fullness and colorfulness of its sound. Then followed the *Ballad in A flat major*, op. 47, in which he displayed the more epic side of Chopin's work. Chopin never indicated the source of the inspiration for his work in words (although he often hinted that he was inspired to write the *Ballads* by poetry of his friend Miczkiewicz). Still the performer carries the listener into a heart-breaking story which moved some to tears. The only weakness on the third ballad was the missing contrast to the perfect pianissimos - a majestic, deafening fortissimo at the climax of the composition. He showed how enormously well thought-out was his conception in the *Polonaise – fantasy in A flat major*, op. 61. On the other hand he demonstrated the relaxed parlor-room style of early Chopin in the technically exposed composition *Introduction and Rondo Es dur*, op. 16. Its virtuosity in combination with the unconventional execution made for an appropriate conclusion of the first half of the recital.

The second half was carried in the spirit of larger wholes. At its beginning Richard-Hamelin appeared more relaxed, as he was bolder in the highest dynamics. He opened with four *Mazurkas*, op. 33, of which the last two captivated me the most. The performer showed a sensitive and tasteful rubato which made each mazurka into a little gem, shining with the author's national pride while also revealing the sensitive side of his personality. At the culmination of the whole recital the pianist reached for his Warsaw triumph which earned him the special Krystian Zimerman Prize – the *Sonata in B minor*, op. 58. In this monumental composition of four movements Richard-Hamelin best confirmed what was stated in the program, i.e. that he was a musician in the right place. These days preference is often given to technical perfection at the expense of musical enjoyment by the player as well as the audience. Last night convinced me, however, that there are performers who first and foremost follow in the footsteps of great pianists of the twentieth century. Richard-Hamelin's technique, of course, is of an excellent calibre; otherwise he could not succeed in any competition. But he has more than that. In the sonata he showed a complete palette of emotions, colors and intensities, and let the listener touch the purpose of the piece and dive into its world, and he did so with modesty and respect of the author whose music was with us throughout the evening. A thunderous applause, a standing ovation and the need for two encores which made it look like the concert was continuing, prove that this pianist at the start of his career has fully won over his audience.

HARMONIE LINE Monday, June 6 2016

<http://www.casopisharmonie.cz/kritiky/charles-richard-hamelin-zakoncil-trojici-klavirnich-recitalu-prazskeho-jara.html>

by [Irena Černíčková](#)

## Charles Richard-Hamelin Concluded a Series of Three Piano Recitals of Prague Spring

Right at the start it must be said that the organisers of this year's Prague Spring were lucky in their selection of all pianists. True, the much awaited Maurizio Pollini cancelled for health reasons, nonetheless, those who wanted to hear exceptional piano playing on that evening, did get to enjoy it thanks to "substitute" Canadian pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin.

The twenty seven year old artist had won the silver medal at the 2015 International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. His rendition of the Chopin Sonata No. 3 in B minor was awarded the Krystian Zimerman Prize at that Competition. So it is hardly surprising that on June 3, Prague Rudolfinum's - Dvořák Hall, was filled only with the sounds of the music of this Polish romantic composer. For this Prague Spring evening Hamelin chose Nocturne in B major Op. 62 No. 1, Ballad No. 3 in **A flat major** Op. 47, Polonaise-Fantaisie in A flat major Op. 61 and Introduction & Rondo in E flat major Op. 16 - so much in the first half of the concert.

Right at the opening Nocturne was pleasantly surprised by one thing. With most of the recent piano recitals at the Rudolfinum Concert Hall I had the feeling that the artists needed to "warm up" a little before they and the local instrument start to get along with confidence (especially in the weaker dynamic positions). However, with Hamelin I did not detect any of such "initial searching". He sat down at the piano and played the introductory Nocturne with an air of improvisational prelude while being sure of his game, as if he were playing in passing on an instrument he'd known forever. In that same spirit he managed to navigate through the whole first half of the evening with grace, even with the much more technically demanding pieces. Yet, with all the technical brilliance his playing contained a smooth familiarity, which can be done only when the performer's utmost goal is to reveal the beauty of the music itself, not the speed of his fingers and the size of his ego.

In the second half of the evening there were at first the parlour atmosphere of the Four Mazurkas Op. 33; then Hamelin demonstrated that his Krystian Zimerman Prize for Chopin Sonata Op. 3 in B minor awarded in Warsaw, was well deserved. All the demanding places sounded with confidence, lightness, without any technical problems (and that shows great art with this category of pieces). In the third, slow movement, Hamelin was able to express beautifully the nostalgic air of the part, and he managed to keep a unified expressive line, stemming out of the nature of the funeral march, even in the more dramatic harmonic and dynamic twists. Thus, based on the performance that I heard, the Prague debut of Charles Richard-Hamelin was a worthy conclusion to a number of piano recitals of the Prague Spring (if I forget my increased heart rate as I was applauding between works!). By the way, the Prague Spring Prologue included a performance by Korean pianist Seong-Jin Cho who had placed one rank above Hamelin in the Chopin Competition. I have heard both and I cannot even imagine the difficulty for the judges who had to struggle with the gradation of the art of these two gentlemen.

<http://www.classical-music.com/review/charles-richard-hamelin-plays-chopin>

By **Jeremy Siepmann**

## **Charles Richard-Hamelin plays Chopin**

'Blessedly free of that metre-driven angularity and stasis that have increasingly beset performance over the past half-century'

A welcome newcomer to the seriously over-crowded international piano scene, Charles Richard-Hamelin (French-Canadian but no relation to Marc-André) is clearly a musician-pianist rather than the other way around. Not that he is in any way deficient as a pianist. Far from it. Fluent, multi-faceted and tonally seductive, he is a technician of exceptional elegance and sophistication. Part of that sophistication is his refusal to dazzle. Technique is at all times put to strictly musical ends. His playing repeatedly put me in mind of Chopin's idol, Mozart, who prized the twin virtues of 'taste and feeling' and said of piano-playing that it should 'flow like oil'.

The playing here – quite strikingly in the outer movements of the B minor Sonata – is blessedly free of that metre-driven angularity and stasis that have increasingly beset performances over the past half-century. Melodic inflection is curvaceous, natural and discreetly sensuous; the tonal palette is unfailingly refined (a prime requirement in Chopin), and the pervasive polyphony of Chopin's textures is eminently clear but never ostentatious. That said, Richard-Hamelin is not, on present evidence, a 'big' pianist, though the Third Sonata and Polonaise-Fantasy in A flat are some of Chopin's biggest works: I feel an insufficiency of large-scale momentum and binding connections; I miss a truly epic sense of drama. Too many sentences; not enough paragraphs. But time is on his side.



**The Globe and Mail**, January 16 2016

By Robert Harris

## **Yang and Richard-Hamelin perform an all-Chopin program**

[...] If Tony Yang is more a powerhouse at the piano. Charles Richard-Hamelin is more a poet. Richard-Hamelin is a good ten years older than Tony Yang, and more advanced in his career, so it's not entirely fair to compare them, but Hamelin approaches his Chopin with a quite different sensibility. Chopin is one of those composers where familiarity breeds not contempt, but convention, so we've stopped hearing, if we ever did, how radical a composer Chopin actually is. His sense of time, his sense of harmony, above all his structural originalities are immensely sophisticated and daring. Richard-Hamelin seemed to be aware of the total Chopin – not just melting us with liquid line after liquid line of Chopin's famous melodies, but exposing inner voices and harmonic twists in both left and right hands, and illuminating Chopin's extraordinary structural gambits, especially in his Third Sonata which closed the program. Richard-Hamelin won the Krystian Zimmerman prize at the Chopin Competition for best sonata performance, although I'm not sure for which sonata, but his Third was breathtaking. At the end of a very long program of Chopin, Hamelin entranced his audience with the soft languor of his playing at one moment, passage-work that was always musical at another, bravura playing at yet another. He is an artist firmly on a unique and original path. [...]

Le Devoir, Sunday November 27 2015

## An impressive triumph by Charles Richard-Hamelin

By Christophe Huss,

Concert review, *Grand récital Chopin*

Nocturne, op. 62, no. 1. Ballade no. 3. Polonaise-fantaisie op. 61. Introduction and Rondo, op. 16. Four Mazurkas, op. 33. Sonata no. 3. Charles Richard-Hamelin (piano). Salle Pierre-Mercure, Thursday, November 26, 2015.

Thursday night's recital at Salle Pierre-Mercure, organized by the young Lanaudière pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin's agent on the heels of the Chopin Competition, was made possible by his logical decision to withdraw from the Hamamatsu Competition in Japan. He had been scheduled to take part in that competition starting this week.

Richard-Hamelin's career has been launched by his second-place ranking at the Chopin Competition. He now has performances planned for Canada, Poland, New York, Spain, Korea, France, Japan and Mexico, though he has not yet revealed the specifics.

The fact that this impromptu recital drew spectators and observers who might potentially have gone to see the OSM was a bit ironic, since that concert featured Yuliana Avdeeva, the 2010 Chopin Competition winner, whose first Montreal performance on Thursday would have gone unnoticed had it not been for the fact that it was broadcast live and rebroadcast on Saturday by the Mezzo Live HD channel.

Avdeeva's award-winning performances from 2010 did not impress me nearly as much as Richard-Hamelin's did, both during the competition, and even more Thursday night. Artistically, he has grown so much since last year alone that he is barely the same performer. The fundamental qualities that he has always had remain: an authentic sound that comes from his entire body, a broad touch palette, and a true sense of poetry. But freedom and practice have made his performances more coherent as statements.

During our interview an hour after the Chopin Competition finale, one of Charles Richard-Hamelin's answers really struck me. The young man showed concern about how the life experience of audience members can be enriched after attending a concert. A circus-like affair, where people marvel at the theatrics and then move on, is not how that can happen. But it's a different thing when an artist truly has something to say, and Charles Richard-Hamelin is such a storyteller of the keyboard. This was clear from his second piece, the Ballade no. 3, whose second theme had a remarkable poetic impact.

The first thing that strikes you is how organically Richard-Hamelin brings together very contrasting episodes. He did this with Ballade no. 3 and the Polonaise-fantaisie (after an introduction that demonstrated a rare power of concentration), but also with a piece characterized by a more superficial virtuosity, the Introduction and Rondo. The pieces hold together impeccably: the architectural design and emotional trajectory, and the relationship between the tempi, the atmospheres and the dynamic levels are all perfect. In addition, he is particularly adept at the art of transition. That is what scored him points in Warsaw, and it is what "nourishes" listeners and gives them the impression of something experiential. His performance of Sonata no. 3 was a particularly vivid example of this.

Charles Richard-Hamelin's dive into Chopin was a catalyst. He now literally breathes the composer, and the flow is never cut by any unhelpful digressions or coquettishness. If he continues along this path, he will lastingly keep the confidence of those he has won over. His challenge now is to instil new repertoire with the same degree of accomplishment and maturity as the Chopin works that have become second nature for him.

He deserves such confidence, because he seems to have that "little something" which makes an artist interesting to follow, notably as a recitalist.

*La Presse*, November 27, 2015

Translation of *Charles Richard-Hamelin: l'air de rien et puis... le ravissement*

By Alain Brunet

## **Charles Richard-Hamelin:**

### **The man is humble, but his performances are ravishing**

**Pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin gave his homecoming performance to a full house in Montreal's Salle Pierre-Mercure. A triumphant return to be sure: in October, the young virtuoso won the silver medal, and the Krystian Zimerman prize for best sonata performance, at the 17th International Fryderik Chopin Piano Competition.**

To rank second in such a competition — one of the most prestigious on the planet, with Martha Argerich serving on the jury — is, without question, an unequalled achievement for a Quebec or Canadian pianist.

It came as no surprise that the launch of his new career as a concert pianist was devoted to the Franco-Polish composer and pianist. Music lovers who attended this “Chopin Grand Recital” experienced nothing less than an evening of pure rapture.

There is reason to believe that some in the audience were embarking on a long-term relationship with this young man, who at first seems unassuming, but who ultimately transcends any need for posturing. A modest-looking man with loose-fitting attire, a gentle smile and a pleasant demeanour, he fits the profile of a white-collar worker of modest origin and with no particular story to tell. But Charles Richard-Hamelin's music can nourish and elevate the soul.

The full extent of his talent was clear on Thursday from his circumspect selection of Chopin works. This, of course, was preceded by his remarkable achievements in Warsaw, which were available on the Web. But his physical presence in concert quickly demonstrates that this virtuoso from Quebec's Lanaudière region has mastered all the pianistic advancements of the 19th century, of which Chopin was one of the main exponents. But that is not all.

What already sets Charles Richard-Hamelin apart from the best technicians of his generation is his own distinctive reading of the works. He appropriates the nocturnes, ballades, polonaises, mazurkas and sonatas in a way that goes well beyond the technical perfection essential for any major soloist wishing to tackle Chopin's opus.

Everything is superbly dosed and in ideal phase with a personality that reveals itself through the profundity of the selected pieces. This musician by no means mechanistically glued to the scores he has absorbed so well. There is no superfluous high-speed layering, no pointless exuberance, and no blandness or sogginess in the more introspective passages. But there is precision and versatility, without even a hint of bad taste. His is truly a calm strength.

As he embarks on an international career, this 26-year-old soloist has certainly not closed the book on his development. The extensive touring to come will help him work out his style and add to his thinking, thereby putting more of his own personality into his performances and giving them his signature.

The best is yet to come for Charles Richard-Hamelin.

**Le Soleil** (Québec city) Sunday, 27 September 2015.  
by Richard Boivert

## **Charles Richard-Hamelin**

### **Authentic and promising**

Four Stars \*\*\*\*

The first album of Charles Richard- Hamelin is truly worth listening to. The young Quebec pianist plays Chopin with panache and in full clarity. He has nothing to hide and it shows. Each note has its importance and is played as such. His Sonata No. 3 is sung with both tenderness and passion. The piano tells a story with a soft swing, never a hint of heaviness or precipitation, its lyricism simply makes one want to sing along. Personally, I had never before felt the touch of Chopin's music to be so close to the world of opera. The Polonaise- Fantaisie and the two Nocturnes , op. 62 also reveal themselves to be of the outmost expressivness : rhythm, style, intelligence in the phrasing, everything is there. And never does the music feel affected with any kind of manierism.

## Reviews

**On the album *Mozart: Concertos nos. 20 & 23, with Jonathan Cohen and Les Violons du Roy*. Released by Analekta.**

From the intense opening of No. 20 to the joyful arrival of No. 23, Charles Richard-Hamelin and Jonathan Cohen form a compelling Mozart partnership. - Gramophone Magazine

**On the album *Schumann: The Three Violin Sonatas*. Andrew Wan and Charles Richard-Hamelin. Released by Analekta.**

Wan brings to the table a poetic liveness, precision, silvery purity and tonal clarity, inflecting Schumann's limpid phrases with a gentle ease, complementing Richard-Hamelin's velvet-gloved sonority and glowing cantabile to perfection. - Julian Haylock, BBC Music Magazine

After recording the sonatas for violin and piano by Ludwig van Beethoven, a triptych that won numerous awards, including the Juno for Classical Album of the Year – Small Ensemble (2022) and an ADISQ award, Andrew Wan and Charles Richard-Hamelin continue their fruitful collaboration by performing the complete sonatas for violin and piano by Robert Schumann (1810-1856). A perfect work to highlight the complicity that has developed between the concertmaster of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and the pianist who won the silver medal at the 2015 Frédéric Chopin International Piano Competition. - Presto Music, November 2022

**On the album *Chopin: 24 Préludes – Andante Spianato & Grande Polonaise Brillante*.**

Richard-Hamelin describes this set of pieces as a microcosm of Chopin's piano music as a whole, adding, "it is Chopin at his most beautiful, heart-wrenching, experimental, dissonant, sometimes even violent. It is a fascinating journey through the human psyche and my interpretation aims to show precisely that. - Robert Rowat, CBC Music, April 2021

**On the album *Ludwig van Beethoven, Sonatas for Violin and Piano (vol.2): Sonatas Nos. 1,2,3 and 5*. Andrew Wan and Charles Richard-Hamelin. Released by Analekta.**

The Canadian musicians treat the Op 12 and Op 24 sonatas with bountiful finesse and discernment, bringing vibrancy to the light-hearted interplay and poetic elegance to passages in which lyricism is paramount. - Gramophone, London (UK)

This remarkable pianist shapes each phrase with careful attention, then links it to the text one in a way that tells a compelling story from beginning to end. [...] If there is one defining characteristic of Richard-Hamelin's playing it's how he wields the tools of musical rhetoric – stretching time by slightly slowing down and speeding up, and playing with the silences between notes – to ensure that the narrative tension never goes out of the piece he is playing.

- John Terrauds, The Star, Toronto

The young pianist's strength, splendour and sense for emphasis were equally captivating as his enormous ability to convey dream, poetry and longing.

- Harald Eggebrecht, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich (Deutschland)

Charles Richard-Hamelin is clearly a musician-pianist: fluent, multi-faceted and tonally seductive [...] Melodic inflection is curvaceous, natural and discreetly sensuous.

- Jeremy Siepmann, BBC Music Magazine

Richard-Hamelin has bold, original ideas about the music he plays, the emotional reservoirs to back them up and the technical equipment to convey them without distraction.

- Gramophone, London (UK)