

mary kathleen ernst pianist

PERFORMANCE REVIEW *The Buffalo News*

State University of New York at Buffalo

A Native Pianist Shows She Has World of Talent

An overflow crowd of well-wishers packed Allen Hall Auditorium on the State University of Buffalo Main Street Campus Wednesday night to hear Buffalo native Mary Kathleen Ernst give her first recital in some time. For the young pianist has been building an international career for herself as a soloist, and her appearance was presumably a bi-product of her visit home.

Featured on the program was the U.S. premiere of a work first played by Ernst in Spain a few months ago. Larry Alan Smith's "Fortune" is a brief, three-movement work based, would you believe, on a Chinese fortune cookie message.

It's a well-crafted and entertaining piece—sort of a Debussy-Hindemith amalgam laced with just enough minimalism to give it a contemporary flavor. To the young composer I'd say: "OK for a start; what else ya got?" The remainder of the program was entirely traditional, comprising Beethoven's "Appassionata" Sonata, the Chopin A-flat Major Ballade, Liszt's Transcription (as Grand Etude No. 6) of Paganini's 24th Caprice—the one everybody uses for variations—plus Chopin's "Harp" Etude as an encore.

She reveals herself as a very fine pianist, worthy of the various international awards she's been picking up. Her tone can be wonderfully big and resonant, as at the beginning of Beethoven's slow movement, and her ability to project and unify the piano sound is all the more remarkable given a piano suffering from a variety of minor ills of intonation, voicing and regulation.

She is brilliant at expressing contrast by sudden shifts of loudness and tone color, and where such contrasts are important—as in the Beethoven and much of the Liszt—she clearly rates among the best.

- Andrew Stiller



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