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FISHER INVESTMENTS™

Emmanuel Ceysson: He's All Harp, but More Soul Sure Would Come in Handy

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The harp is so rarely heard outside the context of an orchestra that a recital involving the plucked instrument can easily slide into a simple display of its wide-ranging sound. It is therefore up to the artist to move audiences past that novelty and actually say something about the music.

Emmanuel Ceysson has as good a chance as any harpist in recent years to explore the rich if limited solo harp repertoire and perhaps inspire new works. At 23, the Frenchman is already the principal harp player at the Paris Opera and a notable performer with the Young Concert Artists, which, along with the Embassy Series, presented him on Thursday evening at La Maison Francaise. If the virtuosity was there, however, that all-important musicianship remained concealed.

A rainbow of effects emerged in sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti and C.P.E. Bach, as well as Faure's "Une Chatelaine en sa Tour." Cleanly attacked lines evolved into glowing pulses. Prominent main themes played against sparkling backdrops and joined with more mellow accompanying figures. An account of Marcel Tournier's Sonatine, inspired by the elegant harp works of Maurice Ravel, drew even further on Ceysson's finesse, making one wonder whether any other instrument -- including the piano -- demands as much delicate fingerwork.

But the commanding technique became a barrier to expression in two showpieces, Albert Zabel's "Fantasy on Gounod's 'Faust' " and Ekatarina Walter-Kuene's "Fantasy on [Tchaikovsky's 'Eugene Onegin.'](#) " The sound was orchestral in scope and made character-laden references to episodes in the operas, but the pieces were ultimately more surface effect than inner poetry. When tables turned in [Paul Hindemith's](#) towering Harp Sonata, Ceysson leaned toward that technical breeziness, away from thoughtful contemplation.

-- [Daniel Ginsberg](#)

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