



## REVIEW: JOEL FAN

**Albuquerque Journal**

Tuesday, April 28th 2009

By D.S. Crafts

On Sunday afternoon Joel Fan gave us a wild ride back and forth through the piano literature. Works from Beethoven to the contemporary were offered in very non-chronological order, barely allowing one sensibility to fade before offering up the next.

This carefully and cleverly designed program gave a world tour through music ranging from Turkey and China through the Americas combining well-known works with some nearly unknown pieces.

One of the outstanding players of his generation, Joel Fan has been heard here in Santa Fe, but Sunday's concert at the Simms Center for the Performing Arts was sponsored by Chamber Music Albuquerque. Pianists often tend to either the lyrical or the rhythmic in their playing. With Fan one is hard pressed to know which tendency comes more easily to him, demonstrating a consummate mastery of both.

Fan is precisely the kind of performer needed to keep the classical music scene alive and vibrant. Not only immensely talented, he is a bundle of infectious energy that cannot help but catch his audience in the net of his enthusiasm.

He established an immediate rapport with verbal comments preceding nearly every piece, conveying not only the nature of each work, but his understanding of its interpretation. The Prokofiev Piano Sonata No. 3 he called a "demonic fairy tale for children." The designation for this one-movement work is *Allegro tempestoso*, and with pounding strokes of pianistic lightening, Fan indeed brought the work to a tempestuous climax, highlighting Prokofiev's sparking harmonies.

No. 31 is Beethoven's penultimate piano sonata written simply to please himself. It is highly introspective eschewing, very possibly intentionally, any immediately outstanding themes or melodies. Depth of feeling not virtuosity is called for, and Fan plays the work with a spiritual reverence that glows hauntingly.