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Pianist Fan's final concert delivers passion at Kimball

BY LIZ STINSON

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There is something so stark and disarmingly engaging about a solo pianist on stage — especially when the bareness of the musician and his instrument becomes evident in contrast to a mostly full auditorium. But as the tension built Saturday night in Kimball Recital Hall in anticipation of the first note, it only took a second to vanish when the eloquent fingers of pianist Joel Fan touched the keys.

The grace and terocity with which a pianist crawls across the keys never ceases to amaze me, and Fan was no exception last night.

The pianist, who had been traveling around Nebraska for the past week with the Meadowlark Music Festival, played his final of six concerts.

Having never heard Fan play, I was excited to see the top-notch pianist, who has played with famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma, up close.

Fan started his program with a snappy, exerciselike pentatonic sketch by Turkish composer A. Adnan Saygun, which was followed by Russian 20th century composer Sergei Prokofiev's "Sonata No. 3 in A minor."

Contemporary pieces like Prokofiev's tend me make me anxious and nervous, but there was a sweetness to the piece that put me at ease. That sweetness paired with Fan's intense energy, so much energy, in fact, that he jumped off of his

REVIEW

bench with each accent, made the pieces incredibly engaging.

Fan later played two more contemporary pieces by American composer Leon Kirchner and Chinese composer Qigang Chen. While the pieces weren't my personal favorites, Fan clearly delivered them with expertise and zest.

The biggest surprise of the evening came when Fan started Syrian composer Dia Succari's "La Nuit du Destin" ("The Night of Destiny"). I instantly fell in love with the Middle-Eastern tale of romance. The piece was so lovely that I forgot to pay attention to Fan at all.

The program flowed gracefully from a night in Syria to a night on Lake Lucerne with Beethoven's "Sonata No. 14 Op. 27" ("Moonlight"). The piece's first movement is regarded as one of Beethoven's most famed melodies, but it was pleasing to hear the other two movements and how they played off of the first's theme.

To my great pleasure, Fan saved Chopin's "Sonata No. 2 Op. 35" in B-flat minor for the finale.

From the first notes of the sonata, both Fan and Chopin gripped me. The composer's melodies are nearly magical. Simply put, they make you feel alive. Fan made use of the built-in emotion of Chopin's music and delivered a passionate performance.

Throughout the eclectic pro-

gram, which featured pieces off of his recently released CD, "World Keys," Fan played with an interactive and engagingly physical style. The accomplished pianist no doubt delivered each piece with sincerity and energy, but to be honest, it's not hard to lose the musician in this music. But then again, that's what it's really all about.

Reach Liz Stinson at 473-7254 or at estinson@journalstar.com.