

# Georgy Tchaidze, Wigmore Hall, review

Georgy Tchaidze at Wigmore Hall, though occasionally too serious for his own good, gave a beautifully calibrated performance.

★★★★★

Fine sensibility: Russian pianist Georgy Tchaidze Photo: Chad Johnston

By **Ivan Hewett**

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RUSSIA may appear to be in a state of permanent near-chaos, but one thing that hasn't changed since the Soviet era is its ability to produce brilliant, competition-winning pianists. One of the latest is Georgy Tchaidze, who became Laureate of the Honens International Piano Competition in Canada in 2009.

Tchaidze may be only 24, but under those cherubic youthful looks is a deeply serious musician. He came on stage with a preoccupied air and pondered the keyboard with a frown of concentration, before playing the flourish that begins Nikolai Medtner's *Fairy Tales* with exactly the right tender gravity.

Medtner's music can seem like a fogged echo of Rachmaninov, his more famous compatriot, and it needs a pianist of fine sensibility and perfectly honed technique to bring out its flavour. Tchaidze certainly has both. Sometimes the scene portrayed was agitated and feverish, as in *The Wood Spirit*, or dreamlike, as in *The Magic Violin*. Tchaidze caught the different moods, but more importantly, he caught Medtner's unique tone of regretful, brown-varnished dignity.

This was the start of an all-Russian programme, which showed Tchaidze's deep feeling for the emotional subtleties of his own country's music. He chose to play Prokofiev's Fourth Sonata rather than one of the better-known, more flamboyant ones, and revealed its extraordinary way of being sardonic, tender and haunted all at once. The craggy second movement showed Tchaidze can muster a gigantic ringing tone, as well as the finest gradations of pianissimo.

This was all wonderful, but in the three movements from Tchaikovsky's *Seasons*, I began to feel Tchaidze was sometimes too serious for his own good. The piece portraying November as a ride on a troika has a touch of nostalgia, certainly. But we should

also feel we're out of doors, bowling along in the snow behind three horses. I didn't feel that in Tchaidze's performance, which looked at the troika ride from behind a tightly closed window. The Ballad of the Unhatched Chicks in Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition also felt po-faced. The piece should make one smile; here I just found I was admiring Tchaidze's perfectly light execution. Apart from that, the piece was exactly right for his gifts. The stoic peasant endurance in Bydlo and the diabolical energy in Baba Yag were especially fine, and at the end Tchaidze made the giant bell strokes of The Great Gate of Kiev ring out with an immense grandeur.

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