

## Michael Wedd at Spencertown Academy

By John Paul Keeler  
For Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

Last Sunday Michael Wedd gave a piano recital at the Spencertown Academy. The young 20 year old is already an astounding artist. He is a protege of the eminent pianists Vladimir Pleshakov and Elena Winther.

### REVIEW

The program began with Franz Schubert's (1797-1828) "Impromptu No. 2 D935". Mr. Wedd seemed to be getting his piano focused to the acoustics of the hall. The playing was somewhat perfunctory. Next came the Schubert "Impromptu No. 3 D899.

Suddenly we were in the world of sheer pianistic magic. Wedd played with the poetic expression that one heard years ago with Dinu Lipatti and Lili Kraus in this ravishing Schubert piece.

The first half of the program ended with the mighty "Sonata No. 23 in F Minor Op 57 (Appassionata)" of Beethoven (1770-1827). Young Mr. Wedd has ample technique to attempt this Beethoven but not yet the artistic maturity. He reminds me a bit of young opera singers who in the first flush of vocal excellence force their voices as if with such power they could break Venetian glass that might be in the concert space as their voices push through the roof. Beethoven is so naturally dramatic that a young pianist can easily bring the music to bathos or melodrama by overplaying and falling into the somewhat manic traps the composer sets for the immature artist. Wedd brought excitement by his brilliant execution but it is too soon for him to play Beethoven. Perhaps in his Beethoven quest he needs to look back to the recordings of Schnabel and forward to the current CD's of John O'Connor. At this point in the program one thought that Wedd's current playing would be better served by works of Bach, Scarlatti, Mozart and Haydn as well as the Mendelssohn "Songs without Words."

After intermission the great glory of the program was Robert Schumann's (1810-56) "Kreisleriana Opus 16". These eight fantasies of Schumann from 1838



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were played as if Wedd was the greatest pianist in the world. He played them perfectly with complete pianistic balance, ravishing tone and the art that conceals art. Indeed if the composer's wife Clara who was one of the great pianists of the 19th century were with us today she would take Wedd under her wing.

The program ended with

Franz Liszt (1811-86) "Tarantella Venizie/e Napoli". The brilliant bit of pianistic humbug was probably Wedd's homage to the composers 200th birthday on October 22. The Liszt piece brought down the house. An encore titled "The Lark" was a charming exercise of bel canto on the piano. I remember a remark by Ralph Fitzpatrick America's greatest harpsichordist who declared "The harpsichord is only a box of wires if the artist doesn't make it sing" Well Wedd makes his piano sing. If this young man can stand the enslavement of 8 hours practice each day and the attendant lonesomeness required by his artistic vocation I have no doubt that he could reach the top. In the meantime piano buffs in the twin counties should rush to hear him and one day might exclaim "We heard Wedd in his beginning in the Twin Counties."

Wedd plays this Sunday afternoon, October 23 at Camp Hill Village at 3 p.m. and Saturday, November 5 at 8 p.m. at the Doctorow Center in Hunter. Tickets may be had at the door.

## Profile ▶ Michael Wedd

Michael Wedd is dedicated young musician, passionate and well-spoken about his upcoming performances and future career as a concert pianist; but modest in describing his talent.

Wedd started playing the piano at around age 10 1/2, but didn't become serious about it until age 15. His earlier interest was in composing. He says he has been on the "fast track to catch up", with most pianists starting at younger ages of 5-7 years old. With intensive study and practice, he has been reassured by his teachers he has achieved the appropriate level.

A visit to the Catskill Mountain Foundation and piano museum in Hunter, provided him with an opportunity to meet the Pleshakovs. He auditioned to become a student and began studying with Vladimir Pleshakov and Elena Winther in 2006. Each week he attends three two-hour sessions, and while preparing for concerts, Wedd practices 8 hours per day. In slower seasons, he drops that down to a mere 6-7 hours. Wedd is grateful to have the opportunity to work with the world-renowned Pleshakovs — he says it's complete in-depth training, preparing him technically and emotionally to strive for improvement and pursue his future goals. The "lineage" of the teaching is also important to him, as he describes it — direct links through Pleshakov to such masters as Siloti, Rachmaninoff and Liszt.

Wedd is drawn to the Romantic Era, late 19th century — he has success with it. Wedd has been preparing his current concert program for about eight months. He says it is crucial to perform live to get to know what works and what doesn't to draw the emotional response from the audience. Then you can fine tune, tweak and perfect some more. He says he experiences the "full wrath of nerves" on opening night, but you can't let that get in the way.

Check out his upcoming schedule and concert program details at [www.michaelwedd.com](http://www.michaelwedd.com).

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Readers: Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Martha Clarke, Robert Barnett, Felix Blaska, and Denis Volpi. Photo by Fabrizio Ferri

