

London debuts

Speed for excitement

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By Joan Chissell

Ronald Brautigam, from Holland, still has to learn when discretion is the better part of valour, but he left no doubt of a technique and temperament worth restraining, Beethoven's "Appassionata", like Schumann's G minor Sonata (with its original, virtuosic finale) showed that he relies too much on speed for excitement: their flanking movements, dispatched with impulsive youthful exuberance, were more breathless than breathtaking. But both slow movements were beautifully poised.

The American pianist Daniel Graham aroused high expectations with his immensely characterful yet stylishly disciplined account of Bach's sixth French suite. In its own full-blooded way Schubert's G major Sonata, Op 78 was stimulating, too, even if one or two climaxes were inflated as if in an attempt to compensate for the work's restricted contrasts of tempo.

Stravinsky himself would surely have delighted in the clear-cut, laconic charm and stylish understatement that the English duettists Colin Howard and Alexander Wells brought to miniatures by Casella, Debussy and Berners – as well as his own rarely heard Three Easy Pieces – constituting the first half of their recital in salute of his centenary. Their own program-notes were proof in themselves of their insight, and their fingers, excellently controlled and attuned, never let them down – not even in *The Rite of Spring* after the interval.

In a shared Maisie Lewis Young Artists Fund recital, the viola player Rosemary Sanderson held her audience captive with her lovely, glowing tone and intuitive response to the musical message of sonatas by Hindemith (unaccompanied) and Brahms (finely partnered by John Gough). Through Chopin's Barcarolle and Franck's Prelude, Chorale and Fugue needed a broader, stabler architectural grasp, the evening's solo pianist, John Lenehan, met the Challenge of Stravinsky's kaleidoscopic Three Movements from *Petrushka* with fingers as brilliant as they were colorful. The International Trio (from Iowa, USA) enterprisingly arrived with a long-forgotten piano trio in D by Capriani Potter, now echoing early Beethoven no pre-echoing Mendelssohn. Though the resonance of St. James's Piccadilly, inevitably resulted in keyboard domination and some loss of detail, the players themselves were always alert to balance as well as nimble in repartee.