

Pianist lived up to media's promise

By IFAN PAYNE
Music Critic

Framed between the impressive portals of Mozart and Liszt, Andre-Michel Schub treated his audience to a breathtaking display of exceptional pianism in McCain Auditorium on Tuesday evening.

Because of all that followed, it is too easy to forget that the performance of Mozart's *Sonata No. 12 in F Major* which opened the program represented Mozart playing of the very highest order.

From the start, two notable characteristics of Mr. Schub's art were apparent: the crystalline transparency on the one hand, and the rhythmic precision and vitality of his playing on the other. One could but gaze in wonder at a performance of such petaline clarity and elegant beauty.

As if to vanquish all thought of toy armies in sunny landscapes, the performance of Mendelssohn's *Variations Serieuses* provided not only a foretaste, in its nascent tonality, of the Liszt to come, but allowed Mr. Schub to lift the wraps off a corner of his technical prowess. Held in the palm of the pianist's art, I found myself deeply caring about the soul's journey through this austere work.

And austere was the appellation that came to mind during the performance of Schumann's *Etudes Symphoniques*. This is a work of considerable somber brilliance, relieved only by the final triumphant march in the major key that was so eloquently portrayed by Andre-Michel Schub.

The well-scaled interpretation of Beethoven's *Sonata No. 11* that followed the interval seemed a welcome

respite between all that had gone before and what was to follow.

Doreen Bauman and her staff have done a superb job in providing uniform programs to all of their attractions, but a note of explanation concerning the background to Liszt's *Dante Sonata* might have heightened insight into this fine work. It is, in fact, a not so miniature tone poem that creates a musical portrayal of Dante's Inferno. This view of the underworld was given a majestic reading by Mr. Schub and the audience should have been sent home with that magnificent vision ringing in their ears.

Unfortunately the standing ovationists (or is it ovational standees?) imposed their will and that vision of Hell was replaced firstly by a Chopin performance that for all its textural

clarity was not as lyrical or eloquent as we have heard in the recent past in this very hall, and, secondly, by a piece of Mendelssohniana that for all its exterior glitter could never match up to Liszt's thunderous view of the Netherworld. Strange that one should plan a program with such care, and then wipe the slate clean with ephemera at the end.

Andre-Michel Schub not only lived up to all of the media promise, but transcended his own recordings. These latter do not at all give an accurate impression of the tonal richness of his playing nor of the emotional commitment of his interpretations as heard during this recital. Nor does a recording suggest accurately the dazzling stylistic variety displayed by this brilliant young pianist during the span of a single concert.