



# THE CLIBURN

EVGENI BOZHANOV

FINALST

AND WINNER OF THE STEVEN DE GROOTE MEMORIAL AWARD  
FOR THE BEST PERFORMANCE OF CHAMBER MUSIC  
THIRTEENTH VAN CLIBURN INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

## CRITICAL ACCLAIM

### **Selected Press Quotes from The Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition**

“...a marvelous showcase of his [Evgeni Bozhanov (25, Bulgaria)] sparkling pianism. His musicianship ranged from sophisticated to showy. Schumann’s Davidsbundlertanze sketch in a series of 18 musical episodes showed the contrasting sides of the Romantic artist the confident and assertive on the one hand, the dreamy and introverted on the other. Written in 1837 at the beginning of the composer’s secret engagement to Clara Wieck, one of the most formidable piano virtuosos of that day, the piece exudes a happiness and vitality based on the composer’s sense of confident well-being. Bozhanov captured all the contrasts and nuance of this multifaceted composition. He brings such great ease to the keyboard that even the most difficult passages seem to drip from his hands and fingers. The music was sometimes lively, sometimes remote; Bozhanov’s solid touch and his pedaling always gave the music a golden glow. The work was energetic and well-executed; you sensed that Bozhanov knew exactly where he wanted the music to go. His was a poetic and persuasive performance. Bozhanov concluded with Liszt’s artful and flamboyant Faust Waltz, from the opera by Gounod. Thundering chords introduced the bouncy theme; as the wildly pianistic machinations unwound, Bozhanov helped enunciate the phrases with a purse of his lips and a bob of his head. He began with Rain Tree Sketch I by Japanese composer Takemitsu, a short, delicate palate cleanser that glowed with a pale light.”

- Chris Shull, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

Evgeni Bozhanov (25, Bulgaria) is the most compelling musical personality I've heard in the 31/2 Cliburns I've covered. He can produce more nuances of tone in a measure of music than most

pianists find in a lifetime, but everything seems so organic. His Chopin E minor Concerto, anything but the pastel powder-puff norm, actually pulsed with some testosterone. Flashy parts got really pushed at times, but pianists recorded in the early 20th century routinely sped up when note values got smaller; the finale was deliciously playful. Let an introspective passage come along, though, and Bozhanov could slow down and luxuriate among the roses. This was music-making of a freshness hardly heard since the glory days, 70 years ago, of Alfred Cortot and Benno Moiseiwitsch. Conlon and the orchestra responded most sensitively, no small compliment...."

- Scott Cantrell, *The Dallas Morning News*

"The first movement of the Chopin featured his fine, arching phrases and clear, bell-like tone. Muscular cascades still held a delicacy, as if chiseled in crystal. In the second movement romance, Bozhanov illuminated the tender melody with bright, buoyant sound. The pianist achieved a wonderful give-and-take with Conlon and the orchestra, which lovingly cradled his phrases with a warm, engaged accompaniment. The piano's melody in the third movement rang like a distant carillon; the charming rondo ran to a sparkling, exuberant conclusion."

- Chris Shull, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

"My favorite of the finalists is Bozhanov, a big 25-year-old Bulgarian... whose music-making has utter command and virtually hypnotic personality. His passionate and breathtakingly nuanced Franck Piano Quintet was the unforgettable performance of the competition so far. In solo repertory he has seemed incapable of playing a note on autopilot, with revelations in nearly every phrase. ... on musical grounds, he's clearly ready for a major career, and he's got the makings of a legend."

-Scott Cantrell, *The Dallas Morning News*

"From start to finish, Bozhanov captured the essence of the music with an easy, always-engaging virtuosity. Playing Mozart's Sonata in D major in an elegant, classical style, he displayed quicksilver fingers and a light, singing touch that broadened evenly into darker resonance. He sustained a delicious joie de vivre throughout Chopin's Rondo a la Mazur. But it was in Sonata No. 3 by Chopin where his musicality shown brightest. He captured not only the music's glorious surface translucent melodies, chiming trills, incandescent chords but also tied the work's intricate thematic inventions into broad arcs of musical progression. His was a performance of deep riches, poetic intensity and noble feeling."

- Chris Shull, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

### **Queen Elizabeth International Piano Competition of Belgium**

"Avec ce pianiste de 26 ans, rien n'est laissé au hasard. La moindre note a sa place, les plans sonores. Il se passe toujours quelque chose dans sa sonate de Beethoven, même si c'est un silence. Le discours d'Evgeni Bozhanov est extrêmement bien construit. Dans l'imposé, Target, il apporte une lecture claire, avec une direction. Dans le deuxième concerto de Rachmaninov, il entraîne tout l'orchestre : son jeu déteint sur celui de l'orchestre."

[With a pianist of 26 years, nothing is left to chance. There's always something in his Beethoven sonata, even if it is silence. Evgeni Bozhanov's interpretation is extremely well constructed. In Rachmaninoff's Second Concerto, he leads the entire orchestra, inspiring their performance.]

- Marie Michiels, Radio Télévision Belge Francophone

"Les phrases se suivent et ne se ressemblent pas... comme s'il écrivait la musique au fur et à mesure qu'il la joue... Une très grande personnalité et en même temps une lecture de la musique tout à fait pure. Lorsqu' Evgeny Bozhanov joue, on ne sait pas combien de temps dure le voyage. Et peu importe, finalement. Parce que quand il est sur scène, on n'a qu'une seule envie, c'est de l'écouter."

[Bozhanov's images never appear the same in his performance; it is as if he wrote the music. He has a great personality. His interpretation of the music is quite pure. When he plays, we do not know how long the trip...and it doesn't matter. Because when he is on stage, the only wish one has is to listen.]

- Marie Michiels, Radio Télévision Belge Francophone