

# YEOL EUM SON

Silver Medalist

Steven De Groote Memorial Award for the Best Performance of Chamber Music  
Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition

“That she would attempt a program as taxing as this is remarkable enough, with finger-busting etudes, a jazz variations and a complex arrangement of a symphony movement. But she did so with control and command... she made powerful statements, not only about herself, but about the music....

Her focus was more on color and touch than power, giving the work a range of pastel, nearly impressionistic, hues. She could play with somber reflection, retreat to a wisp of a tone, then surprise with powerful chords.

It was thrilling, highflying and just plain fun.”

-Michael Huebner, *The Birmingham News*

“Featured pianist Yeol eum Son was enchanting on Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21...”

Hearing Yeol eum Son perform so adeptly, it’s easy to see why she is a 2009 Van Cliburn competition medalist. Her sensitive rendering of the ethereal middle movement of Mozart’s 21<sup>st</sup>, in contrast to the raw power of the triumphant finale, displayed the breadth of her talent.

... So many things about this piece are characteristic of a truly creative person. Yeol eum Son was in perfect form – yielding a performance that was distilled and clear.... The audience stood almost in sync with Son’s final flourish, sustain the ovation for three curtain calls before intermission.”

-Linda Loomis and James O. Welsch, *Syracuse Post-Standard*

”Yeol eum Son, Silver Medal winner of the 2009 competition, is a proponent of the romantic keyboard tradition. The relatively straightforward, uninflected style of playing taught in many conservatories and heard in competitions is not for her. The Korean pianist exhibited competition mode in her note-perfect, finely judged command of the keyboard, yet this young pianist’s performances of works by Schumann and Chopin were anything but academic. Her liberal use of rubato, personalized phrasing and molding of the musical line hark back to another era; yet Son never allowed her interpretations to reach the point of exaggeration, finding a middle ground between strong-willed passion and artful musicianship.

The opening movement of Schumann’s *Fantasie in C Major*, Op. 17 was initially cool but soon Son’s romantic impulse took over, bending phrases and inflecting the musical pulse. In the martial second movement, the usual metronomic reading was replaced by a free-form series of episodes, almost like a stream of consciousness that brought character and a strong personal stamp to every bar. The longing of the subdued finale was conveyed with deep brush strokes, the quiet ending deeply affecting.

Chopin’s *Andante Spianato* and *Grand Polonaise Brillante* was an even more impressive demonstration of technique and style. The *Andante* was exquisitely drawn, the melodic arch sustained over the full

course of the piece. Son played the polonaise at full tilt, drawing impressive power from the instrument while always maintaining an expressive dance rhythm. Both the aristocratic and bravura sides of Chopin were well served.

Son was the evening's poet.

-Lawrence Budmen, *The Miami Herald*

"She is a pianist of striking skills and supple discernment."

-Rita Moran, *Ventura County Star*

"Yeol Eum Son dazzled the audience with her masterful playing of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor. The work posed no obstacles for the seasoned performer, who skipped through the most rapid passages with ease, offering crystalline tone and utmost clarity at all times..."

Son began the intricate cadenza with a firm attack, then showcased her delicate touch in the rippling arpeggios and fluid melodic lines. The languid largo was almost abstract in its precise articulation, but the rondo/allegro movement allowed room for playful sparkle to co-exist with technical virtuosity. The lithe and lovely artist received prolonged applause and a richly deserved standing ovation from the appreciative crowd."

-*News Leader*

"Son's performance of all 14 of Chopin's Waltzes, during the second half of the concert, was very impressive, because each waltz stood out individually yet together they formed an interwoven tapestry. Son found the wistful melancholy that pervades some of the waltzes, but never went overboard. She also revealed the joyful sentiment in many of the waltzes yet kept that sentiment in bounds. She seemed to have an innate sense as to when to pull back the volume and the tempo, and that kept the audience fully engaged..."

She poured tons of emotion into [the Liszt Spanish Rhapsody] and there were moments in which her playing almost became ferocious. The results were spectacular and lots of cheering ensued after the piece came to its glorious end."

- James Bash, *Northwest Reverb*

"Yeol Eum Son is a tremendous musician who plays with great taste and elegance. She has a great touch for Mozart, and can play very softly and be heard because her technique is so refined."

-Daniel Hege, Wichita Symphony Music Director

"Son should have no trouble building a career. She's got the fingers and the personality - and, at least here, the haut-est couture."

-Scott Cantrell, *The Dallas Morning News*