

Review: Piers Lane at Auckland Museum

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By [William Dart](#)

So far this year, Auckland Museum's Fazioli International Piano Recital series has gone Gallic, with the cool keyboard stylings of Cedric Tiberghien and Emmanuel Despax. Piers Lane opened his weekend recital with a charming crop of Schubert Dances, casual little masterpieces that the composer himself would have dashed off at home for the diversion of his friends.

For the next two hours, thanks to an intimate venue and the warmth of the Australian pianist's personality, the evening had the enviable aura of a welcoming house concert.

Lane did wonders with these Schubertian trifles, cleverly lined up from six different sets of dances. There was the sentimental, the flippant and even the tongue-in-cheek portentous – and all were caught. At one point, 3/4 threatened to morph deliciously into 4/4, thanks to Lane's tempo toying.

Spoken introductions were witty and revealing. Who would have expected to hear Brahms introduced as a handsome, tall, blue-eyed young man knocking on Schumann's door? How many realised there were links between a Chopin Nocturne and one of the composer's Concertos?

Brahms' F minor Sonata was given a bravura performance and, in its outer movements, Lane conveyed the composer's frustrations with the mere 88 keys of the instrument; the Andante espressivo was a whispered Intermezzo, an idyll of echoing phrases and subtle rubato.

A set of five Chopin Nocturnes included Op 9 No 2, so popular, Lane confided, that it was used on mobile phones. The poise and simplicity of his interpretation made it sound afresh, drawing beautiful sonorities from the Museum's Fazioli which also obliged with a sonorous storm in the middle of Op 15 No 1.

We had been promised a surprise and it turned out to be one of Dudley Moore's "What if?" We were asked to imagine how the Colonel Bogey March might have fared in the Beethoven sonata machine. It was a high-minded hoot, and to say it was a crowd-pleaser would be understatement. Definitely a night at the museum to remember.



Pianist Piers Lane. Photo / Supplied