Luca Buratto, 24, is the third Honens Competition Laureate I have had the good fortune to hear in concert. He won in 2015. This concert at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall was very well attended. Except for Prokofieff 's Piano Sonata No. 7, the program was unusual: Ligeti's Etudes, Book III; Janacek's Sonata 1.X.1905; Thomas Ades's Traced Overhead; and the big closing piece, Schumann's rarely heard Humoresque.

Buratto is a serious, intense performer. His technique is complete, and the variety of sounds he elicits from the piano is quite amazing. The Ligeti and Prokofieff call on his fast and detached playing, but the Janacek and much of the Schumann called for a fluid legato. The Ades called for some of the quietest playing imaginable, making one wish that New York's subways were not quite so close to the hall. There was no such problem at the end of the Prokofieff, which was delivered with a release of held-back energy. The famous 7/8 Precipitato finale covered the entire range of the piano in its closing measures.

To start with Ligeti was quite unusual. The four Etudes are grouped by the composer as Book 3 and numbered 15 to 18 (1995-2001). As with most etudes, there is a fair amount of repetition in each, and they seem fearsomely difficult. The last two of the group are very fast and busy-No. 18 ends up with a tempo marked presto impossibile. I can imagine it being difficult to take in all 18 etudes at one sitting, but this group seemed just about perfect for a good taste of the composer and his idiom. Buratto's technical abilities and variety of sounds contributed greatly to their enjoyment.

Janacek's sonata was inspired by an actual event where someone was killed at a conflict between Czech and German factions in the city of Brno. Its foreboding atmosphere was a perfect balance to Ligeti's etudes. Prokofieff 's Sonata 7 (1942) is perhaps the best-known and most performed of the composer's nine. For me it always conjures up images of the horrors Russians faced in WW II. It is brilliantly percussive in the outer movements with a wonderful lyric contract in the middle-and that describes Buratto's effective and powerful performance.

British composer Thomas Ades, despite being listed with Prokofieff 's birth and death years, was present at the recital (actually born1971). His Traced Overhead in three movements, which started the concert's second half, was very well received and called for some of Buratto's softest sounds. The compositional language was quite contemporary, but I heard some romantic-period inspiration as well.

It is welcome for a pianist to let Schumann's unquestionably great Symphonic Etudes, Fantasy, and Carnaval rest in favor of another worthy composition. Why his 25- minute Humoresque is not heard very often remains a mystery to me, especially after the strong performance I heard from Buratto, who made the most of its chromaticism and changes of mood. His transitions from one section to another were of special note, as were his clear bass lines and inner counter- point. There was also some great technical dis- play, with blisteringly quick and clear octave passages.

The unassuming Buratto graciously acknowledged many curtain calls and offered one substantial encore. Debussy's popular 'Isle of Joy', most often heard as a program closer, was exciting here. Buratto showed yet another aspect of his abilities. We all left the hall knowing this was a young pianist to watch.

**James Harrington - American Record Guide - Cincinnati, Ohio - Jan/Feb 2018**