

Mrs. Satu Paavola

Helsinki Sibelius Academy (Finland)

Biography

Satu Paavola (b. 1980) is a Finnish pianist. She began her piano lessons at the age of four, first privately with Liubow Obmolotkova, later in various Finnish music institutions with Michal L. Zielinski, Eva Poutanen, Meri Louhos and Matti Raekallio. In 2004 Satu Paavola graduated as a Master of Music from the Helsinki Sibelius Academy. After graduation she completed her education with a "Soloklasse Konzertdiplom" at the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media in 2011. Since 2008 Satu Paavola was a postgraduate student at the DocMus Department of Artistic Research at the Sibelius Academy. She graduated as a Doctor of Music in 2018. Satu Paavola has gained prizes in national and international piano competitions and she has performed in various concerts and festivals in Europe and in the USA.

Satu Paavola's wide solo repertoire consists of diverse piano music from the Baroque to Contemporary. She has shown a special interest in rarely performed piano repertoire of the 19th century. Her debut piano recording (released in 2012) consists of Sigismond Thalberg's (1812—1871) piano fantasies based on Bel Canto operas. The following year, in 2013, Satu Paavola released her second piano recording of Charles-Valentin Alkan's (1813-1888) solo piano works. One of the characteristics in Satu Paavola's musical path is a great admiration for classical singing and opera. Simultaneously with her pianistic education she has studied singing. The interest in the singing aspect in her artistic and pedagogic work is also present in her doctoral thesis "Ideals of Bel Canto Applied to the Piano" (2018).

Topic Presented

Three bodily aspects when creating an illusion of "bel canto" on the piano

Abstract

Creating an illusion of singing is the main concern when teaching piano students to execute a romantic work in bel canto style. The methods for cultivating a singing line thus have mostly remained the same: a cantabile phrase is advised to be produced with the help of a deep, prolonged touch and smooth arm movements. This is guided by a rather abstract idea of the singing voice. The importance of inner body sentiments — the foundation for voice production and technique — is often ignored.

This lecture recital introduces singing-inspired viewpoints for achieving bel canto on the piano. They are based on author's doctoral thesis: "Ideals of Bel Canto Applied to the Piano" (2018). The author discusses the role of bodily introspection, touch, support and breathing. The aspects are demonstrated within an operatic fantasy by Sigismond Thalberg (1812—1871) "Grande capriccio su La Sonnambula di Bellini".

The aims of this lecture recital is to inspire young performing artists as well as pedagogues to develop and utilize bodily awareness when pursuing bel canto ideals, i.e. a round, vital and even sound quality, persistent legato phrasing as well as a smooth integration of virtuosic elements. The rich inner world of bodily sentiments help the pianist in search for beauty in music. It forms and maintains a strong bond between an artist, instrument, audience and classical traditions.