

Charming and fluent

IMAGINATIVE: LARGE-SCALE PERFORMANCE THRILLS AND MOVES

→ **Talented artist makes the most of strong programme.**

Michael Traub

As part of the recent Johannesburg International Mozart Festival, the French-Israeli pianist Jonathan Gilad played two adjacent Mozart sonatas, *No. 12 in F major* and *No. 13 in B-flat major*.

These were large-scale performances, using plenty of pedal and going for a big sound. No Dresden china delicacy here, except in passing.

The shortage was in the softer levels of tone; there was not enough contrast between the really soft and volume levels slight-

Classical

Johannesburg

International Mozart

Festival

★★★★★

- ▶ **Recital:** Jonathan Gilad
- ▶ **Programme:** Music by Mozart, Liszt, Wagner-Liszt
- ▶ **Venue:** Northwards, Parktown

ly above that. The best movements of the two works were the *Finales*, which had charm as well as fluency.

Liszt's transcription of the closing scene of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, the *Liebestod (Love-Death)*, demonstrates how an imaginative composer can get an orchestral

richness of sound out of a piano.

Gilad drew refulgent tone from a piano that was smaller than a concert grand, and one hardly missed the extra sonority in this relatively small venue.

The highlight of the evening, however, was Liszt's mighty *Sonata in B minor*, one of the peaks of the Romantic period and intended to range over a vast spectrum of emotions, from the tenderest intimacy to the most extravagant explosion of feeling.

Gilad showed that he had the technical proficiency to manage the many physical difficulties for the executant; more importantly, perhaps, he displayed complete emotional identity with the sentiments of the composition. A very few wrong notes were excusable in the heat of the moment.

The *Sonata* was exciting and moving by turns.



BOLD. Pianist Jonathan Gilad gave an exciting performance at the Johannesburg International Mozart Theatre. Picture: Augustin Detienne.