Mark form

Eric Haozhe Lai

Piano

ABRSM

ARSM in Music Performance

Overall result: **Pass**

Pieces or songs

22/30

The sincere character of the Bach Prelude in G minor was conjured immediately at a suitable tempo. Further consistency over tone in the trills was required, and there was blurring of texture throughout which affected the clarity of melodic line. Some of the lilting rhythmic energy was discovered with forward motion sustained, and the pulse was mostly securely projected. The Fugue subject was given a clearly articulated character that was partially sustained in this rendition. The imitative lines were mostly brought out from the texture though softer presentation of the other parts was needed. Multiple pitching errors were present, particularly during the exposition as the third voice entered and latterly just before the coda, where errors affected tonality. Blurring of the texture prevented clearer melodic lines and the tempo ebbed in the thickest parts of texture, though you recovered to keep the piece flowing.

The rich and dramatic chords at the opening of the Beethoven Sonata were well-contrasted with the lyrical melody, with a mostly well-balanced texture, despite pitching errors in the chords centrally in the introduction. Further clarity of accompaniment passage was possible in the Allegro with some of the shorter note values in the central part of texture not speaking cleanly and rushing occurring during the descending runs in the upper texture, and upwards leaps at the end of the exposition. The piece was given a suitable driving energy though through the rumbling bassline, and the excited character was found, with some musical shaping present, particularly of the melodic lines. Multiple splashes of pitching errors were present, although you recovered quickly and these rarely affected flow. The best of the playing was in the poise you gave to the dotted rhythms of the slower sections.

The gently flowing peaceful mood of the central movement of the Sonata was captured at the outset and the melody was partially well-projected from the texture, though lighter lower chords were desirable, particularly initially, and in the triplet accompaniment later. Though an overall softer dynamic palette was needed to reflect the calm character of the piece, you controlled the ebb and flow of music well, with some stylistic use of rubato.

After a small stumble, the final movement was established at a swift tempo. Greater rhythmic evenness was needed in the passagework overall with clarity of melodic line affected at times, and much further shaping of phrases was possible, with rushing occurring at the ends of phrases. While the tempo was not secure in the final stanzas, with control lost briefly on a couple of occasions, you found a lyrical colour for the central 'choral-like' section with some sweet tones.

A rich tone was conjured at the outset of the Scriabin, and the melody was generously and warmly supported by the lower texture. The melody was shaped musically, with the winding lines given a clear direction. Pitching errors were present from the second phrase onwards, and in the central section further clarity over the shifting rhythms was needed. A bright colour was found for the major section, though direction of melodic line was lost here with further errors of pitching affecting a flowing musical line. There was generally prompt recovery from slips, though a bigger stumble affected flow towards the end. Despite this, some of the stormy energy was captured, and the musical texture was warmed appropriately through the use of pedal.

The spinning figurations were cleanly portrayed at the beginning of the Rachmaninov Prelude. The leaps of register were mostly well-managed and the strident melody in octaves spoke clearly from the texture. Further shaping and variety of dynamics and colours within phrases was required, but you gave the piece a driving energy throughout, with the descending run latterly and the coda particularly precise and powerful.

Performance as a whole

15/20

This was a well-chosen sequence of pieces that created a pleasing musical arch and built to a dramatic conclusion. The playing expressed a range of clearly defined musical styles. Multiple pitching errors

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were present across the programme, though particularly in the Fugue, first movement of the Sonata and in the Impromptu. The best of the playing was in the energy you gave each piece, and in some sweet tones that were conjured in the lyrical moments. The textures required further balancing in the first half of the programme with lighter accompaniment figurations and more precise use of pedalling. There was also scope to allow further time in between the items to allow the musical mood to settle, especially just before the Rondo where the final chord of the central movement needed longer to settle. Despite this, the programme flowed forward, and there was a sense of commitment to the performance.

Pass 34 | Merit 40 | Distinction 45

Total mark: **37**/50

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