

CAMA @ The Granda

The Lang Lang Effect

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

THE MUSICIANS IN THE SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

may be no older than 27, but don't let that fool you. As demonstrated during a recent CAMA performance at The Granada, these young people already represent some of the finest musicians in the classical music world – and certainly a promise of what the future holds. Couple that with 27-year-old Chinese piano sensation Lang Lang, who joins the orchestra as a soloist on its first ever North American tour, and you've got an exhilarating rush of talent packed into one evening.

Under the expert direction of Maestro Christoph Eschenbach, the impetuous impulses one might expect from a youthful orchestra were replaced instead with an understated calm – even when the music called for zippy scales or twittering trills, as Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1 in D Major*, aka the "Classical" symphony, often does, the musicians maintained their impeccable balance. The connection between conductor and orchestra was such that Eschenbach needed only to glance at a section to communicate his musical ideas. In fact, most of Eschenbach's energy went into holding the group back, much like a herd of hot-blooded thoroughbreds



Lang Lang

Photo by Delfel Schneider

at the starting gate. Eschenbach's style seemed to have a similar effect on Lang Lang's performance of Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major*, K. 453, written when Mozart was only 28. Known for his flamboyant

performances, the rock-star of the classical music world played the concerto as if pulling sound like taffy from deep within the keyboard, resulting in a fluid, suspended resonance that hung in the air like a light balloon. Despite the quieting effect Lang Lang's slow, balletic movements had on the crowd, everyone leapt to their feet yelling for more. After a series of bows, Lang Lang complied and generously played Franz Liszt's *Liebestraum No. 3*.

The program ended with Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7 in A Major*, Op. 92, which Richard Wagner famously dubbed "The Apotheosis of the Dance." Eschenbach maintained his elegant control over the orchestra, which played with nearly perfect transitions and seamless endings, but their sound really took off as individual musicians took more risks and were visibly carried away by the dancing spirit of the music.

If you missed the concert, learn more about the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra by visiting www.shmf.de and check out Lang Lang's YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/langlang>.