

Yael Weiss
piano

"a pianist who delves deeply and tellingly"

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At her performance Thursday at the Israeli Embassy, Yael Weiss showed herself to be a pianist who delves deeply and tellingly into that cloudy area where fantasy morphs into improvisation, inventiveness being common to both.

The fantastical element came shining through most notably in three Chopin Mazurkas, in which she conjured up colorful images of Polish dancers. In Schumann's "Drei Fantasiestücke," Op. 111, Weiss's playing had a sharp immediacy revealing the piece's savage beauty. Here, as in the Chopin Mazurkas, Weiss's ultra-sensitive touch also revealed the supremely vocal dimension these pieces share, though the pianist was somewhat hampered by her Steinway's hollow tone quality.

Two brand-new improvisations by Israeli composer Noam Sivan were equally fanciful: a peripatetic takeoff on JS Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" (no tune has ever undergone more arrangements) and a concert paraphrase of Bellini's aria "Tutto e Gioia," unleashed with the theatrical pizzazz of a diva. Weiss gave Schumann's "Humoreske," Op. 20, a fiery impetuosity, lending lyrical grace to an Etude and Barcarolle of Chopin. The concert was an Embassy Series event.