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## BORIS KUSCHNIR

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ART OF PEDAGOGY WITH ONE OF HIS  
FORMER PUPILS, NIKOLAJ ZNAIDER



**THOMAS RANN (CELLO)**

**Wigmore Hall, London 2 June 2008**

Thomas Rann's performance of the Tchaikovsky *Pezzo capriccioso* was a highlight of the evening. The cello's role in this piece is particularly demanding, requiring a wide range of bowing techniques and a strong sense of rhythm. Rann's playing was both technically precise and musically expressive, capturing the essence of the work.

The other highlights of the evening were the Rossini Variations by Martinů and the Tchaikovsky *Andante*. Rann's playing was both technically precise and musically expressive, capturing the essence of the work.

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**WU QIAN (PIANO)**

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Australian cellist Thomas Rann selected a viciously demanding programme featuring two contemporary unaccompanied sonatas, neither of which proved to be the easiest sell. George Crumb's Sonata only really caught fire in the Toccata finale, where the rhythmic drive fuelled the sense of impetus. In contrast, Peter Sculthorpe's *Requiem* was most bewitching in the quasi-monastic chants that frame the work and which Rann delivered with perfect simplicity. Yet he needed to dramatise and characterise the music more vividly, even though his technical accomplishment was never less than impressive.

Beethoven's C major Cello Sonata requires the same degree of fantasy and imagination to depict its musical gestures fully, but Rann lacked them on this occasion. Nor was communication helped by performing with his back to Wu Qian, an arrangement that encouraged both to perform as if in their own hermetically sealed bubbles.

Ironically, although it was penned as long ago as 1915, Debussy's Cello Sonata remains challenging for audiences, and to project this music to its full these artists needed a more



Flawless spiccato from Thomas Rann

obvious sense of theatre and of space. Rann's considerable armoury of bowing techniques was put to better use in the Tchaikovsky *Pezzo capriccioso*, where the spiccato section was flawless and the sumptuous lyricism winningly conveyed. Martinů's Rossini Variations also proved an apt vehicle for Rann's superb bowing, but humour often seemed buried under the notes.

JOANNE TALBOT

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