

Piano Masterclasses

One of the most prestigious musical events of 2006, under the patronage of the UNMB, has been the musical talents discovery course, taught by famous American professor Ian Hobson of the University of Illinois, offered by the Center of Excellence. The impressive participation of Romanian piano students shows both their interest in training with a world-famous piano virtuoso and their eagerness to collaborate with a distinguished world-class teacher.

Maestro Hobson's activities in the world of music are impressive: not only is he a conductor of international caliber, but he is also one of the most well-known and highly-regarded contemporary American piano professors. Ian Hobson studied at famous schools such as the Royal Academy of Music in London, University of Cambridge, and Yale University. He's a member of many international juries, and has often been invited to lead master piano classes in European and American schools. One of professor Hobson's recent achievements includes conducting the opera *Oedipus* by George Enescu, whose American debut took place in Illinois.

The piano master class in Bucharest, held on March 17, 2006, was a special occasion for young Romanian musicians' encounter with a talented performer and pedagogue, with a real gift for communicating with young pianists. Like Maestro Neuhaus (??), Maestro Hobson is devoted to the "art of piano playing," and is highly interested in the sound and musical expression of each piece he studies and performs. In Bucharest, he witnessed the students' performances of great classical composers, both romantic and modern.

Ian Hobson's audience was impressed by both the maestro's piano virtuosity and his impressive repertoire. In *Alborada del Gracioso de Ravel*, the maestro emphasized the expressive contrast between the work's two sections (the former, exuberant, refined, resembling guitar strumming; the latter, lyrical, introspective, and profound). Referring to the performance of *Toccata de Schumann*, Professor Hobson emphasized precision, rhythmical consistency, and the balance of form to render music's vitality and beauty. Accompanying the students, Maestro Hobson's second piano performance of *Beethoven's Fourth Concerto in Sol Major* and *Rachmaninov's Second Concerto in Do Minor* was worthy of a great conductor's many talents. His comments and suggestions emphasized the expressive contour of themes, exemplifying a refined performance and a subtle musical discourse in accordance with the style and message of the chosen pieces. Such examples during the master class were ample.

We have especially admired the pedagogue's exceptional capacity of synthesis, whose ability to express the essential to his students is truly remarkable. His performances and

demonstrations have an impressive accuracy of expression, and they speak eloquently to the maestro's famous trio of qualities—the pianist, the conductor, and the pedagogue. Ian Hobson's gifts for artistic expression, as well as his creative method in his interaction with students, are expressed in precise, synthesized directions, eloquent demonstrations, and expressive gestures—all qualities of an outstanding talent. Ian Hobson's artistic talents are complemented by a wealth of other qualities—elegance, charm, distinction, and modesty—he subtly transmitted to his students, along with his enthusiasm and artistic passion.

A respectful student of the piano and a world-class pianist, Maestro Hobson is skillful at emphasizing certain performance details, which brings an extra dose of originality, genuineness, and freshness to his performances of well-known pieces. His impressive artistic versatility render his performances subtle; his performing art and impressive knowledge give his performances a special tint of sensitivity and poetry. Ian Hobson's music, as his students and audiences witnessed it, is poetry in motion. His presence inspires and animates his disciples, and motivates them to be the best they can be.

Several weeks under the guidance of Maestro Hobson, the piano students in Bucharest received a great lesson in outstanding performance, artistic dedication, and generosity. Lending a careful ear to the maestro's teachings and energized presence, the students managed to add a significant layer of expressiveness and vivacity to their performance. These students' collaboration with a musician of Maestro Hobson's caliber will undoubtedly open unknown artistic inner chambers, and polish both artistic and human future expressions.

Some exceptional pedagogues impart of their artistic knowledge to students over long periods of time. But there is also another category of truly exceptional pedagogues and artists who have the gift of opening their disciples' hearts and minds during the first lessons, and Maestro Hobson is one of them. His complex musical persona combines with a deep humanist vision of both pedagogy and the art of piano performance, based on concepts such as harmony, balance, and beauty. Our words fail to capture our profound admiration, respect, and gratitude for a well-accomplished pedagogue and artist. We hope to see Maestro Ian Hobson on our stages soon, both as a piano performer and conductor.

**Carmen Manea**