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Thunder and Lightning on the Keys, With Some Intermittent Sunshine

By any measure, the International Keyboard Institute & Festival is the grandest offering in the procession of hybrid seminars and concert series that make up the summer schedule at Mannes College the New School for Music. It runs two weeks, more than twice the length of the other institutes. Its daily schedule is packed with master classes (four most days) and concerts (two every evening), as well as a competition.

This year's installment began on Sunday evening with a recital by Jerome Rose, the institute's founder and director. Mr. Rose is a pianist who never met a triple forte he didn't like or couldn't make just a bit more thunderous, and he favors repertory that rewards this preference.

Why not? He has the fingers, the power and the sense of color and drama to present the barnstormers of the Romantic repertory in a fiery light. At times during his account of Liszt's "Mephisto Waltz" No. 1, which closed his program, the ambient haze produced by strings of fortissimo chords suggested the sulfurous cloud that Liszt might have imagined surrounding his protagonist.

The barnstormers of the Romantic period in a fiery light.

That isn't to say that muscularity and outside gesture were all Mr. Rose had in his arsenal. The gentler sections of Schumann's "Humoreske," if never quite supple, were elastic enough to touch on Schumann's tender side, if only briefly between more impetuous outbursts. Parts of [Beethoven's](#) Sonata in A flat (Op. 110) were enlivened by phrasing that suggested an almost improvisatory ebb and flow, and in the work's closing fugue, clarity and proportion were as crucial to Mr. Rose's high-energy reading as tension and drive.

Other comparatively graceful moments



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Jerome Rose performed as part of the International Keyboard Institute & Festival.

took root in the descriptive passages of Liszt's "Vallée d'Obermann" and the more meditative strands of his "Sonetto 47 del Petrarca." But these moments seemed not to engage Mr. Rose nearly as much as the feistier, flashier ones, and in retrospect, most seemed less like poetry than like glorified placeholders: instances of contrasting calm between waves of forceful, broad-boned piano sound. Those waves could be thrilling in a purely visceral way, particularly in the Liszt works. But it was hard not to feel the lack of something more enduring.

The festival runs through July 27 at Mannes College the New School for Music, 150 West 85th Street, Manhattan; (212) 580-0210, Ext. 4858, or [ikif.org](#). ■