

Die pianis as vertoonkunstenaar: Die Chinese virtuoos-pianis Lang Lang se populêre sukses

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Opsomming

Dit is duidelik dat Lang Lang se populariteit, wat selfs tot buite die sfeer van klassieke musiek strek, hom 'n uitsonderlike figuur as klassieke pianis in 'n populêremusiek-gedrewe bedryf maak. Benewens talle gepubliseerde onderhoude, artikels en resensies is daar tot op hede nog geen poging aangewend om Lang Lang se omstrede uitvoeringstyl omvattend te ondersoek nie. Die doel van hierdie studie is dus om die unieke samestelling van Lang Lang as uitvoerende kunstenaar na te speur. Die data wat gebruik is, sluit onder andere resensies, koerantberigte, tydskrifartikels, transkripsies van radio-onderhoude, gepubliseerde onderhoude, gepubliseerde CV's en outobiografieë in. Aspekte van Lang Lang se spel wat behandel word, is sy verhoogpersoonlikheid, vingervaardigheid en algemene virtuositeit, krag en uithou vermoë, gebruik van dinamiek, die invloed van sy fisieke benadering tot klavierspel op sy interpretasies, sy tempokeuse en uiteindelik sy interpretatiewe "resep". Daarna volg 'n bespreking van Lang Lang se eie sienings aangaande interpretasie. Daar is bevind dat Lang Lang as gevolg van sy opvallende virtuose tegniek alom as 'n virtuoos en uiteindelik as 'n totale vertoonkunstenaar beskou word. 'n Algemene siening is dat Lang Lang se uitgangspunt om sy besondere beheer oor tempo en klankkleur ten beste te vertoon, die samehangende struktuur van die werke wat hy uitvoer, asook tradisionele beskouings oor stylkenmerke, ondermyn. Verder is Lang Lang se uitsprake aangaande sy benadering tot interpretasie dikwels aanvegbaar en teenstrydig. Dit is egter duidelik dat hy geensins die etiket "vertoonkunstenaar" ("showman") berou nie. Hy steur hom ook geensins aan kritiek nie en is getrou aan homself in sy interpretasies.

Trefwoorde: Lang Lang; interpretasie; klaviervirtuoos; vertoonkunstenaarskap

Abstract

The pianist as performance artist: The Chinese virtuoso-pianist Lang Lang

It is clear that Lang Lang's popularity, which extends itself even beyond the sphere of classical music, has made him an extraordinary figure as a classical pianist in a popular-music-driven industry. Apart from many published interviews, articles and music reviews, there has not appeared until now an attempt at investigating extensively Lang Lang's contentious performance style. What are the characteristics which contribute to the fact that

Lang Lang's pianism is regarded as unique? What makes him such an exceptional phenomenon? What are the specific qualities of a pianist who reaches fame so quickly? What is the essence of Lang Lang as a performing artist? And how do reviewers feel about his performances? The aim of this article is, therefore, to trace Lang Lang's inimitable personality as a performing artist.

The research design for this article can be described as a qualitative and ethnographic approach to an individual case study. More specifically, Babbie and Mouton's "life history" technique is applied (2001:283–7). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:283) this type of research is characterised by intensive observation of the life of the topic of study, the use of sound recordings and interviews with friends, and the scrutiny of letters and photos. The data concerning Lang Lang employed in this study include music reviews in papers and magazines, reports in daily papers, articles in magazines, transcripts of radio interviews, published interviews, published CVs and autobiographies.

The "life history" technique is further characterised by an interest in the subjective reality of the individual, a focus on process and change, a perspective on the totality, and the use of this kind of research method as a historical and social tool (Babbie and Mouton 2001:283, 284).

A disadvantage encountered when using the "life history" technique is that the results of an individual case study cannot easily be generalised. The strength of this type of research is, however, that the researcher can move between the biography of the individual study object and the historical or social history within which this research object finds him/herself (Babbie and Mouton 2001:283, 284). Plummer (2001:31-32) describes an "ethnographic biography" in the following manner:

Many ethnographies may be seen as partly composed of the stories people tell of their lives. [...] The study gets close to their experiences – and though they are the centre of the stories, they are linked to an array of significant others reacting to them: professionals, parents, other children. Here the focus is the ethnographic study of lives, whilst broad theoretical links are made to communication and ethnomethodology.

The reaction of such "significant others" – in this case the reaction of Lang Lang's audiences and the media – can be regarded as the "social history" of his presentations with broad theoretical references to reception theory, interpretation, adherence to the text and virtuosity.

Aspects of Lang Lang's playing that are discussed are his stage personality, finger dexterity and general virtuosity, power and stamina, use of dynamics, the influence of his physical approach to piano playing on his interpretations, his choice of tempo, and eventually his interpretative "recipe" and adherence to the text. A discussion of Lang Lang's own views on interpretation is also included.

A variety of aspects which form an integral part of Lang Lang's pianistic make-up was identified during the course of the study.

It is obvious that any concert pianist would possess a virtuoso technique, but Lang Lang's dexterity, power, endurance and ability to manipulate sound colours to their finest nuances receive extraordinary attention in the media coverage of his performances. Because of Lang Lang's exceptional virtuoso technique he is often referred to in reviews as a sportsman.

Ultimately, Lang Lang is generally not only regarded as a virtuoso but as the complete showman.

A visual approach to piano playing has been a common phenomenon since the times of Franz Liszt and Anton Rubinstein. What distinguishes Lang Lang from his fellow virtuosos over the course of the centuries, however, is not simply the presence of a visual approach in his playing, but rather the ebullient joy of his music-making which he projects to his audience. In addition, Lang Lang's concert attire is different from the traditional black swallow-tailed coat and bow-tie used by many musicians on stage. He prefers to wear a brightly coloured Tang dynasty suit which alludes to his Oriental origins. It seems as though Lang Lang's visual impact, and especially his joyful and youthful appearance, as well as his Oriental attire, contribute as much to his success as a showman as his technical prowess.

Reviewers do not necessarily agree with the expediency of the influence of Lang Lang's showmanship on his interpretation of the compositions he performs. It is evident from many reviews that Lang Lang's pianism consists of a combination of four extremes: bombastically loud, sentimentally soft, a breakneck pace, and dreamlike, lingering tempos. Reference is made by reviewers to Lang Lang's "interpretative recipe" and patented approach to interpretation. Many agree that it is Lang Lang's aim to display his extraordinary control over tempo and colour at its best, but that these endeavours undermine the structure of the composition he performs as well as traditional views about the characteristics of style. Many are shocked by Lang Lang's contempt of the music text. Lang Lang's controversial interpretations are, however, "forgiven" by his listeners, as he obviously derives so much pleasure from his performances.

Lang Lang's views on his approach to interpretation are often contradictory. He often asserts that attention to responsible interpretation is more important to him than the urge to see how fast or how loudly he can play, and that a balance between the emotions and the intellect in performance is of utmost importance. On the other hand he declares on many occasion that the pianist is no copying machine and that the pianist must possess his own fantasies. Lang Lang has no regrets about the epithet "showman". He is not affected by the criticism of his playing and remains true to himself in his interpretations. Ultimately Lang Lang comes to the conclusion: "Controversy sells."

Keywords: Lang Lang; interpretation; virtuoso pianist; performance artist

1. Inleiding

Lang Lang se ouers het met hul seun se geboorte op 14 Junie 1982 (29 jaar gelede) nie beseft dat sy koms 'n keerpunt in die geskiedenis van klassieke musiek teweeg sou bring nie. Lang Lang is met die spreekwoordelike goue lepel in die mond gebore en hy is vandag die lieflingskind van klassieke musiek.

Hoe wyd Lang Lang se impak strek, is gereeld in die media te sien.

Die essensie van Lang Lang se faam word uitstekend deur Lebrecht (2009) verwoord: "He occupies a realm of stardom far beyond the quavering concerns of classical music." Hierdie ondertoon van verwondering oor sy sukses in 'n era wat populêre musiek verheerlik, is in al

die mediadekking oor hom sigbaar. Lang Lang se sterstatus word telkens van alle kante bevestig en versterk met uitroepe soos: ster-pianis (Brown 2005c), superster (Anon. 2003; Tommasini 2003; Guerrieri 2009; Jie 2009; Kosman 2009), globale superster (Xinhua 2009; Terauds 2010), kinetiese superster (Kimmelman 2009), megaster (Fisher 2006; Pomfret 2009), “star power is power all the same” (Guerrieri 2009; Massarik 2009) en “Lang Lang has ‘star’ written all over him” (Fox 2003). Fox (2003) meen verder dat dit Lang Lang se werk is om ander mense se lewens te “verlig” (“in the business of lighting up other people’s lives”).

Benewens sy sterstatus word vele ander benamings aan Lang Lang gegee: “crowd pleaser” (Tommasini 2002), wonderkind en genie (Usher 2004), “whiz-kid” (Westwood 2004; Williams 2004; Wallace 2005; Holland 2006), “charmer of the keyboard” (Brown 2005a), “hot ticket” (Guregian 2003), “the boy with fingers of gold” (Anoniem 2004), en hy word ook bestempel as die klassieke kunstenaar wat die beste verkoop in die wêreld (Lambert 2008). Westwood (2004) en Lin (2008:24) kom vorendag met die vleierende term “klavierprins”. Lebrecht (2009) verwys na Lang Lang se “stratosfeer” van vermaardheid, terwyl Brown (2009) hom ’n wêreldfenomeen en Church (2008) hom ’n “debonair fashionability” noem. Kimmelman (2003) beskryf Lang Lang as klassieke musiek se nuwe “teen idol”.

Nie net word Lang Lang deur talle resensente as een van die wêreld se beste pianiste beskou nie (Edgar 2009; Jie 2009; Anoniem 2010), maar vele voel dat hy ook vinnig besig is om een van klassieke musiek se mees bekende en invloedryke persoonlikhede te word (Usher 2004; Lambert 2008; Dong 2009; Edgar 2009; Lennie 2009; Smith 2009:16; Xinhua 2009; Jury 2010). Lebrecht (2009) draai geen doekies om nie: “There is no question who is today’s number one in classical music, measured in terms of world fame.” Op 27-jarige leeftyd kon Lang Lang volgens Lebrecht reeds met legendariese musici soos Enrico Caruso, Arturo Toscanini, Maria Callas en Luciano Pavarotti vergelyk word.

Uiteindelik word Lang Lang, ’n klassieke musikus, as ’n “rock”-ster bestempel (Anon. 2008a; Brown 2008; Lin 2008:24; Anon. 2009b; Edgar 2009; Anon. 2010). Hierdie benaming het al so ’n refrein in die media geword dat die oorsprong daarvan nie meer bepaal kan word nie. In die lig daarvan dat Lang Lang daarin kon slaag om deur die grense van die “beloofde land” van populêre musiek te breek, is dit duidelik waarom Deutsche Grammophon reeds op ’n vroeë stadium die insig gehad het om die 21-jarige Lang Lang as die toekoms van klassieke musiek te identifiseer (Tommasini 2003): “The future of classical music has arrived. His name is Lang Lang.”

Kimmelman (2003) se herinnering aan Lang Lang se konsert in Milwaukee in 2002, waar hy Vladimir Horowitz se legendariese verwerking van Sousa se *Stars and stripes forever* uitgevoer het, omvat Lang Lang se pianistiek:

He had whipped the audience up – as usual, by playing bone-crushing music effortlessly and joyously, dashing from one end of the keyboard to the other, smiling and tossing around his bowl of black hair, seeming to have the time of his life. Then

he slowed down a little, bending forward, as if preparing to leap up, ready to kick the music into a higher gear. The audience took this as a cue and started clapping in rhythm. Lang glanced toward the crowd, surprised. He had something else in mind. He plunged ahead, gradually upping the tempo and leaving the clappers behind. He ended in a torrent of thundering chords, the last one propelling his head backward, eyes skyward and arms out. He looked as if he had just been struck by a bolt from heaven, which is also how the audience reacted: people jumped to their feet, roaring in unison even before the sound of the last chord had died. They seemed to feel they had experienced something miraculous, too.

Dit is duidelik dat Lang Lang se populariteit, wat selfs tot buite die sfeer van klassieke musiek strek, hom 'n spesiale figuur maak as klassieke pianis in 'n musiekbedryf wat deur populêre kunstenaars oorheers word.

Wat maak Lang Lang se pianistiek so besonders? Wat maak hom so 'n buitengewone fenomeen? Wat is die spesifieke eienskappe van 'n pianis wat so vinnig so 'n hoë aansien verwerf? Wat is die essensie van Lang Lang as uitvoerende kunstenaar? En hoe voel resensente oor sy voordrag? Verskillende fasette van sy uitvoerings en eienskappe is reeds in talle gepubliseerde onderhoude, artikels en resensies bespreek, maar tot op hede is nog geen poging aangewend om Lang Lang se klavierstyl omvattend te ondersoek nie. Die doel van hierdie artikel is dus om die unieke samestelling van Lang Lang as uitvoerende kunstenaar te ontleed.

2. Navorsingsmetodologie

2.1. Navorsingsontwerp

Die navorsingsontwerp van hierdie studie kan beskryf word as 'n kwalitatiewe en etnografiese benadering tot 'n individuele gevallestudie. Daar word meer spesifiek gebruik gemaak van Babbie en Mouton (2001:283–7) se lewensgeskiedenisestegniek (“life history”). Volgens Babbie en Mouton (2001:283) word hierdie soort navorsing gekenmerk deur intensiewe waarneming van die lewe van die onderwerp van die studie, die gebruik van klankopnames, onderhoude met vriende en die nagaan van briewe en foto's. Die lewensgeskiedenisestegniek word verder gekenmerk deur 'n belang by die subjektiewe realiteit van die individu, 'n fokus op proses en verandering, 'n perspektief op totaliteit, en die gebruik van dié soort navorsingsmetode as 'n historiese middel (Babbie en Mouton 2001:283).

Een nadeel by die gebruik van die lewensgeskiedenisestegniek is dat die uitkomst van 'n individuele gevallestudie nie maklik veralgemeen kan word nie. Die sterkpunt van hierdie navorsing is egter dat die navorser tussen die biografie van die individuele objek van studie en die sosiale (of historiese) geskiedenis waarbinne hierdie objek van studie hom/haar

bevind, kan beweeg (Babbie en Mouton 2001:284). Plummer (2001:31–2) beskryf die “etnografiese biografie” soos volg:

Many ethnographies may be seen as partly composed of the stories people tell of their lives. [...] The study gets close to their experiences – and though they are the centre of the stories, they are linked to an array of significant others reacting to them: professionals, parents, other children. Here the focus is the ethnographic study of lives, whilst broad theoretical links are made to communication and ethnomethodology.

Die reaksie van sodanige “significant others” – in hierdie geval die reaksie van Lang Lang se gehore en die media – kan as die “sosiale geskiedenis” van hierdie aanbieding beskou word, met breë teoretiese verwysings na resepsieteorie, interpretasie, teksgetrouheid en virtuositeit.

2.2 Bronne oor Lang Lang

2.2.1 Opnames

In die bestudering van ’n uitvoerende kunstenaar se werk moet die uitvoering as primêre data beskou word. Die ontleding van opnames in verskillende media (CD, DVD, TV-programme) sou moontlik ’n oplossing vir die kortstondige aard van ’n uitvoering kon bied, maar die gebruik van opnames is in werklikheid nie so voor die hand liggend soos dit aanvanklik lyk nie.

Dit is algemeen bekend dat die atmosfeer in die opname-ateljee heeltemal van dié van die konsertsaal verskil (Sandor 1987:223–7). Waar die konsertpianis tydens ’n uitvoering as ’t ware op ’n adrenaliengolf ry as gevolg van die gehoor se teenwoordigheid, moet hy in die opname-ateljee hiersonder klaarkom. Nog ’n faktor is die feit dat die meeste opnames geredigeer word. Ons ervaar dus vandag dat die meeste opnames foutloos is, iets wat selde in ’n konsertsaal gebeur. Daar moet ook in gedagte gehou word dat ateljee-koste hoog is en dat die pianis steeds met die vrees van foute maak tydens opnamesessies in die ateljee gekonfronteer word. Dit het tot gevolg dat baie pianiste geïnhibeer is tydens opnamesessies en hul vertolkings op opnames gevolglik die spontaneïteit van ’n direkte uitvoering kortkom. Dan is daar ook musici wat in die ateljee doelbewus ’n meer gewone of minder “geïnspireerde” vertolking as in die konsertsaal aanbied; in Dubal (1989:128) se woorde: “In the concert hall, the inspiration of the moment carries the day. But on recordings those shattering surges, which on first hearing sweep one away, become – upon repeated hearings – nightmarish and ugly.” Dit is daarom uiters belangrik om te onthou dat opnames slegs as ’n *aanduiding* van ’n uitvoerende kunstenaar se styl en nooit as ’n volledige weergawe daarvan gesien kan word nie. Die impak wat die visuele aspek van direkte uitvoering op die luisteraar het, moet ook nie buite rekening gelaat word nie.

Sou die gebruik van beeldmateriaal van direkte uitvoerings hierdie probleem kon oplos? CBS Televisie se televisieprogram “Vladimir Horowitz: A television concert at Carnegie Hall” wat op 22 September 1968 uitgesaai is, is hier van belang. Die opname het op 1 Februarie 1968 voor ’n uitgenooide gehoor van 2 730 mense in Carnegie Hall plasgevind. Alhoewel dit

uitgesaai is as 'n video-opname van 'n direkte uitvoering deur Horowitz, het Horowitz, tesame met Paul Myers en Roger Englander van CBS, vier maande ná die konsert daaraan bestee om die klankbaan en beeld te redigeer (Plaskin 1983:371, 373–5). Englander (weergegee deur Plaskin 1983:374–5) onthou:

[Horowitz] was not, however, pleased with some of the audio portions of the live-performance tape and asked Myers to splice in takes from the two rehearsals [2–3 January 1968]. During the Chopin *Polonaise*, for instance, CBS inserted a seven-minute section shot in the empty hall on January 1 and then had a graphic artist draw in the tops of people's heads in chalk on a black card so that the insert would match the surrounding shots. Horowitz was also dissatisfied with his February 1 performance of the Schumann *Arabesque* and told Myers to use a version recorded many years before. But Horowitz now played the ending slightly faster, so it was impossible to synchronize the video of his hands with the sound. Finally Myers put the old recording through a machine that sped up the tempo without raising the pitch, and Horowitz was satisfied.

Aangesien die visuele aspek van 'n direkte uitvoering 'n belangrike deel van 'n video-opname uitmaak, is beeldmateriaal 'n beter aanduiding van 'n uitvoerende kunstenaar se styl as klankopnames. In die lig van die bogenoemde agter-die-skerm-inligting aangaande die vervaardiging van sulke video-opnames is dit duidelik dat sulke videomateriaal steeds nie as 'n volledig betroubare weergawe van 'n pianis op 'n gegewe oomblik in sy ontwikkeling aanvaar kan word nie. Die maak van klank- en video-opnames kan beskou word as net nog twee van die vele “genres” wat tot 'n pianis se beskikking is, benewens die solo-uitvoering, klavierkonsert saam met orkes, kamermusiek, liedbegeleiding, ensovoorts.

Ten spyte van die redigeringsproses in sulke opnames kan klank- en beeldopnames wel as potensieel waardevolle musikale tekste beskou word. Daar is egter vir die doelwitte van hierdie artikel nie van opnames gebruik gemaak nie. Die ondersoek van 'n verskeidenheid verslae deur resensente en kritici is heeltemal legitiem en kan waarskynlik op 'n groter mate van objektiwiteit aanspraak maak as die ontleding van 'n uitvoering deur 'n enkele ondersoeker.

2.2.2 Die media

Die uitvoerende kuns is in die eerste plek op kommunikasie met die luisteraar gemik. Daarom speel die menings van ooggetuies 'n buitengewoon belangrike rol in die bestudering van 'n uitvoerende kunstenaar se kuns. 'n Bykomende faktor wat in berekening gebring moet word, is dat die musikus se beeld (“image”) in die publieke sfeer sedert die ontstaan van die virtuosos in die Romantiek tot vandag grootliks deur resensente in die media geskep word. Beard en Gloag (2005:152) definieer resepsie juis soos volg: “Reception refers to critical responses to art, literature and music in terms of public reviews that appear in written or printed sources such as books, journals, newspapers, letters and diaries.”

Vir die doeleindes van hierdie artikel word dus ruimskoots gebruik gemaak van gedokumenteerde verslae van Lang Lang se uitvoerings deur resensente soos dit in dagblaaie, tydskrifte en ander media verskyn het.

Die opvallendste interessantheid in die bestudering van resensies en ander ooggetuies se skrywes is die uiteenlopende, en soms teenstrydige, menings wat aangetref word. Die naspeuring van elke resensent se agtergrond en voorkeure is egter irrelevant, aangesien sy/haar gepubliseerde opinie wel 'n invloed op die pianis se beeld in die publieke sfeer het, of sy/haar opinie nou geregverdig is of nie. Dit mag egter wel van belang wees of 'n resensie in 'n dagblad of tydskrif verskyn het, omdat besprekings in tydskrifte gewoonlik uitvoeriger is en meer fasette mag betrek as slegs die bespreking van die werke wat uitgevoer is.

In hierdie artikel word daar op algemene uitlatings deur resensente en ander ooggetuies gefokus, byvoorbeeld “die pianis soek aandag”, en nie in die eerste plek op besprekings aangaande spesifieke vertolkings van spesifieke musiekwerke nie. Daar word deurlopend van direkte aanhalings uit resensies gebruik gemaak om die nuanses van die onderskeie resensente se skrywes oor te dra. Sommige bronne, en veral koerantbronne, wat uit elektroniese databasisse verkry is, beskik nie oor bladsynommers nie.

2.2.3 Egodokumente

Onderhoude met uitvoerende kunstenaars kan waardevolle inligting oor die instrumentalis se siening van sy kuns bied. Met die oog op hierdie artikel is Lang Lang deur middel van sy agent, Lisa Willis by Columbia Artists Management, gekontak en versoek om enkele vrae wat hy nog nie voorheen tydens onderhoude teëgekomp het nie, te beantwoord. Hy het egter deur sy agent laat weet dat hy te besig is om tyd hiervoor in te ruim.

Daar word wel van transkripsies van radio-onderhoude en gepubliseerde onderhoude in hierdie artikel gebruik gemaak. Sommige aanhalings uit hierdie onderhoude met Lang Lang mag taalkundig vreemd voorkom. Dit is belangrik om dan te onthou dat hy in hierdie gevalle direk aangehaal word.

'n Vollengte-outobiografie getiteld *Journey of a thousand miles: My story* het in 2008, toe Lang Lang nog net 25 jaar oud was, verskyn. 'n Verkorte weergawe daarvan, *Lang Lang: Playing with flying keys*, is in dieselfde jaar gepubliseer. Daar word in hierdie artikel gebruik gemaak van uitlatings deur Lang Lang oor sy benadering tot interpretasie, geneem uit sy outobiografieë.

In ooreenstemming met die invloedryke artikel deur Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The intentional fallacy” (1946), word uitlatings deur Lang Lang in egodokumente net ter aanvulling van skrywes deur resensente in hierdie artikel gebruik.

3. Lang Lang as pianis

3.1 Lang Lang se verhoogpersoonlikheid

Die belangrikste komponent van Lang Lang se verhoogpersoonlikheid is sy gawe om met die gehoor te kommunikeer (Kimmelman 2003; Anon. 2009c). Vele mense het al probeer om die geheim agter sy gawe van kommunikasie te identifiseer.

Die bekende New Yorkse resensent Anthony Tommasini (2002) voel dat Lang Lang duidelik lief daarvoor is om voor gehore op te tree en dat gehore gevolglik van hom hou. Net so is Kimmelman (2003), Wallace (2005) en Finch (2009) beïndruk deur die ooglopende oorborrelende vreugde van Lang Lang se musiekmaak. Kimmelman (2003) is verder oortuig dat Lang Lang van agter die klavier hierdie vreugde na die gehoor oordra. Mangan (2004) en Rideout (2003:32) beskryf sy entoesiasme agter die klavier as aansteeklik. Montparker (2005:44, 56) merk op dat dit voorkom of sy vreugde voortspruit uit sy dankbaarheid vir die voorreg om sy gawe met ander te kan deel.

Die belangrikste wyse waarop Lang Lang sy genot aan die gehoor oordra, is deur middel van sy altyd teenwoordige glimlag. Brown (2005b) noem hom die “beamish boy” en verwys ook na sy glimlag as sy “trademark grin”. Kozinn (2007) skryf oor Lang Lang se “Wow, this is fun!”-gesigsuitdrukking.

Hiermee saam maak Lang Lang se jeugdigheid ook ’n groot deel van sy aantrekkingskrag uit. Daar is vele verwysings na sy jeugdigheid in die media te vinde: sy jeug, varsheid, krag en ratsheid sonder enige teken van roetine (Brown 2003); sy vars persoonlikheid (Porterfield 2003); ’n geesdriftige jong man (Anon. 2004); ’n vurige jong ster (Brown 2005b); asook sy jeugdige energie en uitbundigheid (Kozinn 2004; 2007). Leung (2005) en Von Rhein (2004) ervaar Lang Lang as seunsagtig. Von Rhein (2003) is verder van mening dat Lang Lang se jeugdige *joie de vivre* en die opwindende gevoel van spontaneïteit wat hom omring, uitstaan.

Lang Lang se kleredrag speel ook ’n belangrike rol in sy verhoogpersoonlikheid (Porterfield 2003; Von Rhein 2004; Remnick 2008; Smith 2009:20). Tydens een van sy vroeë reise as 16-jarige na Europa het Lang Lang met ’n besoek aan ’n vyfsterhotel besef dat al die kelners swaelstertpakke dra, soos wat uitvoerende kunstenaars ook dikwels dra (Lang Lang in ’n onderhoud met Remnick 2008; Smith 2009:20):

Was the waiter my colleague? This was when I was about sixteen, and I decided I needed a cooler look. So I went to Tang-dynasty suits: red, pink, blue. Real energy! I finally decided to be myself. Chinese-style suits, no tie, a little sparkle in summer. [...] These are things I like and just pick up – I do not have my own designer. To have interesting outfits is kind of encouraging – it changes your mood. I am pretty sure that everyone is happy after they go shopping. No matter how serious you are!

Lang Lang se genot in uitvoering en sy buitengewone en jeugdige voorkoms gee aan hom ’n unieke teenwoordigheid op die verhoog. Vele resensente is beïndruk deur sy engelagtige gesig (Von Rhein 2000; Kimmelman 2003; Kimberley 2009), sy sjarme (Kimmelman 2009), natuurlike charisma (Kimmelman 2003; Von Rhein 2004; Brown 2005b; Roberts 2007) en innemende teenwoordigheid (Allison 2003).

Benewens sy gesigsuitdrukking is die belangrikste aspek van Lang Lang se verhoogpersoonlikheid wat sedert sy verskyning in die musiekwêreld baie kommentaar ontlok het, sy kenmerkende liggaamsbewegings. Stearns (2001) en Kozinn (2004) verwys na hom as 'n uiters fisieke en Porterfield (2003) as 'n flambojante uitvoerder.

Kimmelman (2003) skryf oor Lang Lang se kinetiese kommunikasie met die gehoor. Dervan (2010) bestempel sy speelstyl as “ekstreme choreografie”. Van die “truuks” wat hy aanwend, is hand-arabeske (Brown 2009; Schwartzkoff 2010); oënskynlike beswyming terwyl hy speel (Mangan 2004); dat hy soms met sy hande se laaste aanslag op die finale akkoord in die lug in opspring (Roberts 2007); en die blaas van soentjies vir sy aanbidde aanhangers (Mangan 2004). Rideout (2003:32) vertel verder hoe Lang Lang se gesig vreugde, pyn, vrede en enige ander emosie wat hy deur die musiek wil kanaliseer, uitstraal. Leung (2005) is heel gevat: “If it’s a catharsis [the audience] wants, Lang Lang is more than happy to provide it.”

Alhoewel die gehore en sommige resensente hoogs beïndruk is met Lang Lang se meelewendheid, is daar wel diegene wat geensins oortuig is nie. Bernard Holland (2005) is een van die meer skeptiese kritici wat voel dat die visuele aspek van Lang Lang se spel in die pad van die musiek staan:

[T]he wriggles of ecstasy, the stunned gazes into space, the smiles of complicity (you and me, Frédéric; we understand each other). When Lang Lang has a hand free, he conducts to himself. For a few listeners at least, it was a bit much. Everyone else seemed to love it all [...]. I hoped that what was being loved was not the show, but the genuine talent that the show obscured.

McDougall (2005), daarenteen, is van mening dat puriste nie Lang Lang se flambojante verhoogpersoonlikheid verstaan nie. Hy is oortuig dat hy hom op dieselfde wyse inleef sonder 'n gehoor; totaal verdiep in “die teater van musiek”. Verder beweer McDougall dat Lang Lang se interpretasies nie net uitdrukkings van gevoelens is nie, maar die gevoelens self. Rideout (2003:33) is ook deur Lang Lang se speelstyl meegesleur. Hy voel dat sy emosies gegrond is op 'n baie diep begrip van die musiek. Ook Montparker (2005:44) ervaar Lang Lang se verhoogpersoonlikheid as gepas:

I didn't experience a single gesture or note from this young, enthusiastic, and extravagantly gifted pianist to be anything but honest and relevant to the music [...]. Yes, he played with his entire self, seemingly totally enveloped by the music. But for me, that is a plus. Piano playing that stops at the fingers, or even at the hands, is at best, limited [...]. The most natural pianists use their entire bodies in the process of performance. [...] His playing reinforced my conviction that one of the most important ingredients to the success of a performance is love. [...] Lang Lang [...] allowed the music to possess him.

Die vraag wat noodwendig na vore kom, is die volgende: Is hierdie fisieke benadering van Lang Lang se uitvoerings natuurlik, of word dit bloot vir effek aangewend? Zhou Guangren, 'n bekende pianis en onderwyser aan die Sentrale Konservatorium in Beijing, ken Lang Lang sedert hy as 'n seuntjie daar studeer het (Guregian 2003): “He used to do it all the time, even

when he was a child. This is all designed by his father. We [the faculty members] were all against it. We told him not to do this stuff.”

In ooreenstemming hiermee is talle resensente oortuig daarvan dat Lang Lang se innemende en charismatiese geaardheid as verhoogpersoonlikheid by die gehore swaarder weeg as sy interpretasie van die musiek. So berig Brown (2004) dat hy ’n gehoor op hul voete kan dryf deur charisma alleen en dat dit voorgekom het of dit presies was wat hy tydens sy Carnegie Hall-debuut gedoen het. Brown skryf voorts dat Lang Lang gedurende die meer romantiese werke buitengewone sensitiwiteit aan die dag gelê het. Nógans kom hy tot die gevolgtrekking dat nadat die applous vir die mees oppervlakkige Haydn-interpretasie ooit gedawer het, daar aangeneem moes word dat niemusikale redes vir die gehoor se plesier verantwoordelik was.

Kimberley (2009) is effens meer toegeeflik in sy siening:

The young Chinese pianist Lang Lang is no shrinking violet. The cherubic ecstasy on his face as he plays might have been applied in the make-up mirror and his playing can be wilful, eccentric and mannered. Showman? Charlatan? Perhaps, but the same words were used to describe Chopin’s playing, so maybe Lang Lang and Chopin were made for each other.

3.2 Lang Lang se klaviertegniek

Talle beskrywende woorde is al gebruik om Lang Lang se tegniese vaardigheid te besing: formidabel (Anon. 2001; Guregian 2003); briljant (Tommasini 2002; Littler 2007:23); gelaai soos ’n kragentrale (Von Rhein 2002); verbysterend (Porterfield 2003); fenomenaal (Allison 2003); kolossaal (Von Rhein 2004), onberispelik (Brown 2005c); luisterryk (Kozinn 2004); ontsagwekkend (Wallace 2005; Massarik 2009); verblindend (Roberts 2007; Platt 2009:16); van die sterre (Scher 2008); vurig (Kosman 2008); ongeëwenaar (Lin 2008:24); verstommend (Oestreich 2009); en vele meer.

Lang Lang se vingervaardigheid word telkens aangeprys. So verwys Kimmelman (2003) na sy ongewoon rubberagtige en ratse vingers en Leung (2005) na sy elastiese hande. Brown (2004) en Leung (2005) besing sy uitsonderlike en verbysterende vaardigheid. Von Rhein (2007) berig oor die kristalagtige deursigtigheid van sy vingerwerk en Cameron (2005) oor sy glinsterende passasiewerk. Lin (2008:24) skryf dat hyy speel asof hy *elf* katvingers het wat hom volkome beheer oor die klavier gee.

Krag en uithouvermoë agter die klavier is ook ’n eienskap waarvoor Lang Lang bekend geword het (Brown 2005a; Kosman 2008; Remnick 2008; Song 2008:28; Kimmelman 2009; Lebrecht 2009).

Daar word egter ook dikwels kommentaar gelewer op Lang Lang se neiging om sy vaardigheid en krag agter die klavier te misbruik. So skryf Song (2008:28) dat hy ’n bombastiese en onmoontlik vinnige speelstyl het; en Kosman (2008) voel dat hy vir die bombastiese mik: “Notes, scales and chords flew thick and fast through the air.” Ook Cantrell

(2008) verwys hierna: “Subtlety is not Mr. Lang’s forte. With Liszt’s chattering and booming octaves sometimes pounded within inches of the Steinway’s life”. Hierdie eienskap van sy spel het aan hom die bynaam “Bang Bang” besorg (Remnick 2008; Kimmelman 2009; Lebrecht 2009).

Lang Lang is egter een van die weinige virtuose wat oor die vermoë beskik om net so sensitief en sag as opwindend en hard te speel. Hierdie vermoë het al vele lofuitinge ontlok. Tommasini (2002), Brown (2003), Mangan (2004) en Kimberley (2009) is beïndruk deur sy beheer oor delikate kleure en skakerings. Lin (2008:24) voel dat sy unieke klankkleure ’n uitsonderlike, verbeeldingryke en dikwels dromerige kwaliteit aan sy spel verleen. Oestreich (2004), Kozinn (2007), Evans (2008) en Dervan (2010) is almal van mening dat sy spel op sy mees indrukwekkende is tydens sagter oomblikke, “when his touch on the keys was so light that he scarcely seemed to touch them at all” (Evans 2008). Kozinn (2002) en Cameron (2005) is ingenome met die suiwer- en helderheid van sy klankkleure. Brown (2003; 2007) merk op dat sy meesterskap oor dinamiek “magic moments” en “sounds of wonder” tot gevolg het. McDougall (2005) beweer selfs dat die klankkleure wat uit Lang Lang se Steinway voortkom, normaalweg as buite die klankmoontlikhede van die klavier beskou word. Montparker (2005:44) skryf voorts dat Lang Lang ooglopend baie aandag aan hierdie aspek van sy spel skenk en dat hy die produksie van elke noot met liefde en aandag tot aan die einde beheer. Stearns (2007) ervaar hierdie eienskap van sy spel as ’n welkome “wide-eyed awareness of the music’s greatness with playing that aspires to a lofty beauty”.

Die talle verwysings na sportmanskap in Lang Lang se pianistiek kan nie misgekyk word nie. Sy pianistiese samestelling is al beskryf as atleties (Kosman 2009; Pomfret 2009) en gimnasties (Kimmelman 2009). Lambert (2008) skryf verder dat Lang Lang bekend is as ’n pianistiese sportman wat die klavier op ’n sterk fisieke wyse benader. Remnick (2008) vergelyk hom met ’n kampioenresiesperd: “running through the breakneck passages with no more effort than a champion racehorse rounding a corner. This was just the sort of bravura piece and hyper-public occasion of which he had become a master.”

Volgens Sachs (1982:7) word die virtuoos tradisioneel nie as intellektueel beskou nie: “Many of the world’s foremost virtuosi are commonly believed to occupy an artistic rank somewhere between that of the escape artist and that of the trained seal.” Na aanleiding van die sportmanbenadering in sy spel word Lang Lang in ooreenstemming met hierdie tradisionele siening van die virtuoos bestempel as ’n persoon gedryf deur sy emosionele instinkte (Brown 2007; Church 2008; Tommasini 2008) en nie deur sy intellek nie (Brown 2007; Church 2008).

Uiteindelik is die meeste resensente dit eens dat Lang Lang as virtuoos ’n gekonfyte vertoonkunstenaar is. Brown (2005a) berig soos volg:

Virtuoso panache? Plenty. As he launched upon two of Rachmaninov’s Op 23 Preludes, it was as though he’d just hoisted a placard: “It’s showtime, folks!” Thunderous cascades; brute force in the lowest octave; darting fingers worked to the bone; brilliance times ten. As for interpretation, no boat is rocked or feathers ruffled;

Lang Lang gives us straightforwardly romantic piano playing, free of the deep insights time and experience bring, but shimmering with surface delights.

Vele ander resensente stem saam. Leung (2005) en Schwartzkoff (2010) tipeer Lang Lang as 'n vertoonkunstenaar en Kimmelman (2003) en Oestreich (2004) noem hom 'n "showboat". Guregian (2003) beskou sy vertoonkunstenarskap as vreemdsoortig en Kosman (2008) as uitspattig. Holland (2006) verwys na sy onbeheerste virtuositeit, Guerrieri (2009) na sy waagduiwelneigings, Kimberley (2009) en Kozinn (2007) noem hom 'n vuurvreter; Tommasini (2008) beskryf hom as 'n onbetwisbare virtuoos met witwarm energie; Kozinn (2007) tipeer hom as Dionisies; en Von Rhein (2009) noem hom 'n supervirtuoos wat vuur blaas. Scheinin (2007) gaan so ver om te skryf: "There's no disputing that Lang [...] is swimming in technique; he can do anything. The crime is that he chooses to do so little."

3.3 Lang Lang se interpretasies

Daar is verskeie eienskappe van Lang Lang se interpretasies wat keer op keer in sy mediadekking uitgesonder word.

'n Eienskap van sy spel wat baie kritiek uitlok, is sy keuse van tempo. Met sy uitvoerings van virtuose werke trek hy weg in dolle vaart, terwyl hy die meer romantiese en sentimentele werke te stadig uitvoer. So betreur Brown (2006) die lot van Chopin se Derde Klaviersonate wat deur stadige tempo's en slordige pedaalgebruik geruïneer is, en Allison (2003) beweer dat Lang Lang bloot gewys het dat hy Balakiref se *Islamey* twee keer so vinnig as enigiemand anders kan speel: "So what? At double speed we got half the music. His flashy technique may have left jaws on the floor, but ironically he drained all the wildness and passion away."

'n Groot klagte aangaande Lang Lang se tempokeuse is sy misbruik van rubato vir sentimentele effek. French (2006:34–5) verwys na sy "cutesy taffy-pulling":

Lang Lang proved himself the King of Linger in Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1. The first movement was like driving behind someone who speeds up (crescendo), slows down (decrescendo), speeds up again, then suddenly turns without signalling. Drives you nuts! And every decrescendo meant not just lingering but languishing. I noted, "Get on with it, will you. Just get out of Chopin's way, and let your gorgeous, crystalline, elegant pianism have some meaning!"

Die *Toronto Star* (Anon. 2009a) bekla ook Lang Lang en die jazz-pianis Herbie Hancock se gesamentlike "toffee-pulling contests" wat die gehoor agtergelaat het om die "sticky, gooey mess" wat van Gershwin se *Rhapsody in blue* oorgebly het, te sluk. Platt (2009:16) vermoed dat *rubato* vir Lang Lang beteken om elke keer wanneer 'n lopies in die regterhand die einde van 'n maat versier, die tempo te vertraag. Brown (2005c) skryf soortgelyk dat Lang Lang se interpretasie van Rachmaninof se Tweede Klavierkonsert trane gedrup het: "Or is it molasses? [...] [T]he tempo of languorous Lang is king. The star pianist's technique is impeccable, as always; but to live comfortably with this interpretation [...] you need more generosity of spirit and a sweeter tooth than I seem to possess."

'n Refrein met betrekking tot Lang Lang se interpretasies is dat hy sy gawe om dinamiek te beheer, en veral sy vermoë om verskeie skakerings van *pianissimo* te produseer, vir effek misbruik. Brown (2008) voer aan: "In his approach Lang Lang is clearly aiming for poetry, tenderness, romantic beauty; but you can be poetic without turning notes into wilting waterlilies or the plops of Disneyfied dewdrops." Die *Toronto Star* (Anon. 2003a) voel dat daar met Lang Lang se uitermatige gebruik van *pianissimo* fout gevind kan word:

[W]e all know that speaking softly is often more compelling than yelling at people. But a bit too much understatement and over-reliance on articulating every short musical phrase in the second movement (which was andante without the requested *con moto*) stopped the overall momentum.

Dervan (2010) is ook van mening dat Lang Lang se gebruik van sagte toonkleure nie altyd in die konteks van die musiek geregverdig is nie; sy frasering ly gevolglik onder sy oorgebruik van *pianissimo*. Stearns (2007) skryf dat Lang Lang daarop uit is om die artikulasie van elke frase ter wille van sy eie plesier te varieer. Kimberley (2009) voeg by dat hy by tye onwillig voorkom om twee frases, en soms selfs twee note, sonder die byvoeging van een of ander kleureffek te laat verbygaan.

Dit is duidelik uit vele skrywes dat Lang Lang se pianistiek uit kombinasies van vier uiterstes bestaan: bombasties hard, sentimenteel sag, 'n halsoorkop pas en dromerige dralende tempo's. Brown (2009) som Lang Lang se interpretasies soos volg op: "Alternating between percussive attack and the lyrical droop, Lang Lang's fingers variously hammered, nodded like a daffodil, or disappeared into the orchestra's shrubbery." Scheinin (2007) gaan selfs so ver om te beweer dat Lang Lang 'n interpretatiewe resep het wat hy op al die werke wat hy uitvoer afdruk:

Here's how the recipe works: Begin with extra-crisp articulation and rhythm, an almost martial alertness; then quickly melt things down with liquid trills and satin-soft passage-work, stretching the time, lingering ever so lovingly over key phrases, played at a triple-pianissimo hush, of course, and then pausing dramatically – at which point Lang gasps a little or stares heavenward, before diving back into another round of the same.

Scheinin is nie die enigste resesent wat na 'n "resep" verwys nie. Terauds (2008) beskryf Lang Lang se byna "gepatenteerde benadering" tot interpretasie wat 'n paar basiese elemente behels:

He makes soft passages even softer, capturing our attention by making us listen even harder. He pauses between musical phrases, allowing the music to breathe. His *pianissimo* caresses verge on the ethereal. Loud passages get extra punch with short, sharp shocks to the keyboard. This adds rhythmic fire and also, frequently, a harsh edge.

Scheinin (2007) skryf voorts dat alhoewel baie lede van die gehoor Lang Lang se tegniese gemak en vol klank ooglopend bewonder het, daar fout is wanneer Liszt se Sesde Hongaarse Rapsodie en 'n Chinese volksliedjie, "The moon chased by colorful clouds", dieselfde begin

klink: “Lang ran each through the same course, leaping in – back straight, chin held high – with strength, pride, a sort of generic gallantry, then growing gauzy, moonlit, and ever so peaceful.”

Dervan (2010) berig oor dieselfde verskynsel in Lang Lang se vertolking van Prokofjef se Sewende Sonate. Alhoewel hy die Toccata met onvergewensgesinde geweld gespeel het, wat die gehoor sonder twyfel tot oorgawe sou dwing, het hierdie “resep” die narratief van die eerste beweging verlore laat gaan: “with a tendency to favour incident over plot, to glory in the delight of the moment at the expense of the cogency of the whole. It’s an approach which, like a Hollywood blockbuster, however exciting it may be, doesn’t have much to say.”

Kimmelman (2009) kom ook tot die gevolgtrekking dat hierdie tendense in Lang Lang se interpretasie van Chopin se Tweede Klavierkonsert die algehele struktuur van die werk ondermyn:

The way he took apart Chopin’s score made it into a jumble of hyped-up anecdotes. Here he played super quietly, there super slowly [...]. Occasionally he came to a near standstill, forcing the orchestra to crawl with him, so he could ravish a rubato. He swooned and swayed as if possessed by the music [...] as if the audience needed little parcels of exaggerated emotion and virtuosity to stay interested.

Kosman (2008) verwys na Lang Lang se oordrewe karakterisering van kort passasies: “Soft passages were advertised as soft passages, as though there were exaggerated quotation marks around them, and loud passages often sounded garishly loud. Even a simple scale [...] came with the message ‘Check me out, I’m playing a scale now.’”

Vele ander resensente lug dieselfde beswaar. Von Rhein (2003) vind dat Lang Lang neig om besonderhede ten koste van die algehele struktuur en natuurlike kragtige momentum te beklemtoon. Brown (2007) verwys óók na ’n tekort aan voortstuwing en intellektuele dryfkrag in Lang Lang se vertolking van Beethoven se Vierde Klavierkonsert.

Vele resensente is ontsteld oor Lang Lang se minagting van die teks van die werke wat hy uitvoer. So skryf Harrison (2008:50) dat daar ná Horowitz en Lang Lang se virtuose byvoegings nie veel van Liszt se Tweede Hongaarse Rapsodie oorgebly het nie. Al wat behoue gebly het, was die asemrowende helderheid waarmee Lang Lang die mees skrikwekkend ingewikkelde passasies uitgevoer het. Guerrieri (2009) lewer kommentaar op Lang Lang se vrolike onverskilligheid teenoor die teks in sy uitvoering van Chopin se Polonaise Op. 53 en dat dit by tye die ekwivalent van godslastering was. Dobrin (2009) is soortgelyk ontstoke oor die wyse waarop Lang Lang en Herbie Hancock se genotsugtigheid ’n klug van Gershwin se oorspronklike en gesofistikeerde “Rhapsody in blue” gemaak het:

At one point, Lang Lang repeated a note an absurd number of times, mugged for the crowd, and made the audience laugh. Hancock’s retort? He shot back with a cadenza that was equally irrelevant. Early in the piece a baby in the audience let loose – a sound pained enough to make you think that composers don’t roll over in their graves, they come back as infants to object when their progeny suffer at the hands of bad ideas.

Nog soortgelyke voorvalle word in mediadekking oor Lang Lang se uitvoerings gevind. Dervan (2010) berig dat hy in sy interpretasie van Beethoven se Sonate in C majeur Op. 2 nr. 3 basnote bygevoeg het en die skerpte van kontraste waarvoor Beethoven so bekend is, afgewater het. Ook Lebrecht (2009) verwys na sy luidrugtige minagting van Beethoven se verfyndhede.

Dit is interessant om op te merk dat Lang Lang (volgens Rideout 2003:33) voel dat respek vir die komponis die belangrikste aspek van klavierspel is. Hy sê dat dit behels om die instruksies in die teks na te volg en só die fundamentele struktuur van die musiekwerk aan te leer. "It's easy to lose sight of the structure when you play piano, because there is a lot to think about. But if you do lose it, then you don't have a good foundation for the piece, and every measure you play sounds wrong!" Lang Lang gaan selfs so ver om te sê dat wanneer jy 'n stuk musiek uitvoer, jy nie meer jouself is nie, maar totaal in die denkwêreld van die komponis versonke is (Leung 2005).

Die volgende stelling van Lang Lang is hier van belang. In sy outobiografie, *Journey of a thousand miles: My story* (Lang en Ritz 2008:221; asook Rideout 2003:32), vestig Lang Lang die aandag daarop dat die teks inderwaarheid onvolledig is in die sin dat hierdie teks geen letterlike instruksies, soos byvoorbeeld die presiese krag wat op die klawers toegepas moet word of die presiese emosionele impak van 'n rubato, verskaf nie. Volgens hom moet uitvoerders as gevolg hiervan die teks "interpreteer" om sodoende die emosie in die musiek uit te bring:

Playing music is not rocket science. It is poetry, romance. Musically, how do you convey longing? Anger? Fear? Jubilation? Confusion? Clarity? You look at the text, you look inside yourself, and you come up with an interpretation. Yes, that interpretation is born out of something that has been written by someone you don't know; but your interpretation must be the genuine manifestation of something you do know: human emotion.

Lang Lang gaan voort deur te konstateer dat die teks sonder hierdie emosionele inset van die pianis soortgelyk is aan wiskundige formules:

But when you play, you use that knowledge [the text], and you put it into an emotional environment. Then you know what to do, and you can let your emotion come in. It's like looking at a black and white photograph of a scene for a long time, and then suddenly bringing in the color into it. (Rideout 2003:32)

Holland (2006) identifiseer Lang Lang se uitgangspunt in interpretasie as 'n oormatige klem op virtuositeit (in hierdie geval in sy interpretasie van Beethoven se Eerste Klavierkonsert): "The runs and flourishes existed for themselves. The bizarre accents said more about freewheeling virtuosity than about order and architecture. No one could have imagined the finale played so fast so clearly. Orchestra members panted furiously in pursuit." Dervan (2010) bekla ook die feit dat Lang Lang se virtuositeit ten koste van die musiek in Albéniz se *Corpus Christi en Sevilla* geskied het. Oestreich (2009) voel in ooreenstemming hiermee dat Lang Lang sy vertoonkunstenarskap onnodig op Brahms se Eerste Klavierkonsert afgedruk

het. Guregian (2003) bestempel sy interpretasies uiteindelik as stilisties eiesinnig en vulgêr. Cantrell (2008): “This was vulgarity in excelsis.” Kosman (2008) kom ook tot die slotsom dat Lang Lang se emosionele uitstortings die uitgangspunt in sy interpretasies is, en Crawford (2009:35) dat sy optredes meer oor homself as superster as oor die komponis gaan. Terauds (2008): “As it was in the days of Franz Liszt, Jan Paderewski and Ferruccio Busoni, a century or more ago, a Lang Lang concert is all about him, not the composer.”

Kosman (2008) voel egter dat daar in beginsel niks verkeerd met vertoonkunstenarskap is nie en dat slegs ’n misplaaste estetiese purisme fout sou vind met die visuele opwindning van, in dié geval, die ingeboude virtuositeit in Beethoven se klavierkonserter. Sy beswaar is egter dat elke affek in Lang Lang se artistieke repertorium selfgesentreerd en berekend oorkom. In ooreenstemming met Wimsatt en Beardsley se artikel “The intentional fallacy” verskil Lang Lang se uiteindelige interpretasie met sy intensies deurdat hy beweer dat aandag aan verantwoordelike interpretasie vir hom baie belangriker is as om te sien hoe vinnig of hoe hard hy kan speel (Rideout 2003:34). Hy beklemtoon telkemale dat ’n balans tussen die emosionele en die intellek in uitvoering van uiterste belang is (Rideout 2003:32; Anderson 2005:70; Lang en French 2008:204).

Lang Lang weerspreek homself dikwels in onderhoude aangaande sy uitgangspunt in interpretasie. Die eerste hiervan is waar hy in ’n radio-onderhoud met Chadwick en Bates (2004) sê dat dit sy uitgangspunt is om homself totaal in die musiek te verdiep en hiermee saam die komponis te respekteer (in ooreenstemming met bogenoemde onderhoude met Rideout 2003 en met Leung 2005), maar dan onmiddellik daarna sê dat hy steeds poog om die uitvoering uiters “oorspronklik en persoonlik” te maak. Direk hierna verwys hy (Chadwick en Bates 2004) weer na die “dialoog met die komponis” en dat indien hierdie dialoog afwesig is, die gehoor die musiek moeilik verstaan. Dan huldig hy amper weer ’n teenoorgestelde mening met die stelling dat die pianis nie ’n kopieermasjien is nie: “If we are, we don’t need humans to play piano. That’s the importance of a live concert. You always play slightly different. And I think if you really enjoy what you’re doing, then that shouldn’t be a problem.” Ook in ’n onderhoud met Jacob (2009) voel Lang Lang dat die pianis wel eie fantasieë moet hê, “otherwise everyone plays the same”.

Vir musici vir wie die gegewe op die bladsy van primêre belang is, is Lang Lang (Lang en French 2008:136) se siening dat hy sy eie stempel wil afdruk op die musiekwerke wat hy uitvoer, veral kommerwekkend:

I remembered unfailingly how to interpret certain pieces, which chords to emphasize, when to be lighthearted or romantic or passionate. And as soon as I had memorized those subtle things, I knew when and how to change the overall interpretation, adding my own clarity, precision, and sensitivity – my own signature – to a piece.

Hiermee saam moet sy stelling dat hy self sy persoonlike besluite neem, ook as pianis, beskou word (Zhao 2003).

Telkens kom dit uit Lang Lang se onderhoude na vore dat dit sy uitgangspunt as uitvoerder is om die gehoor aan te raak (Leung 2005): “I love the audience, because I love the tension

there. Because it seems like a lot of people watching, I mean, the creation of this wonderful work. And then you are at the same time the interpreter. It's like building a bridge to their heart." In 'n onderhoud met Chadwick en Bates (2004) noem hy weer eens dat dit sy uitgangspunt is om die gehoor te roer:

[T]hen you make the music really flowing through their heart in a very natural way, I think they will be appreciative of that and they will really think of today as a beautiful day. Maybe they'll be able to have a good dream for the next couple of days and good feelings. And then if they have good feelings, you have better life.

In beginsel is daar geen fout daarmee as 'n pianis as tussenganger die essensie van die musiek na die gehoor wil projekteer nie. Dit is egter duidelik uit vele resensente se kommentaar op Lang Lang se spel dat hy lankal die skeidslyn tussen die pianis as tussenganger en die pianis as vertoonkunstenaar oorgesteek het.

Fisher (2006) het hom wel gevra of hy nie die mantel van vertoonkunstenaarskap berou nie. Hy het daarop geantwoord:

I like to be a showman and a musician at the same time. What I believe is that if you have the technique then why not just do it? Why hold back? It's not natural. But at the same time music is not all about show. But when you play [sic] one concert you cannot really judge a pianist. It's like watching a football star playing for 20 minutes.

Lang Lang se antwoord op dieselfde vraag deur *Morning Bulletin* (Anon. 2009b) bevestig wel dat sy uitgangspunt eerder dié van 'n vertoonkunstenaar as dié van 'n tussenganger is: "In the end, everyone needs to be yourself, rather than what people think you are. [...] [Otherwise] you live in the shadow of somebody else. [...] You limit yourself."

Die volgende is van kardinale belang: Op die vraag of hy hom aan die negatiewe kommentaar van kritici steur, antwoord Lang Lang (Church 2008; Lang en Ritz 2008:222) bloot:

I am who I am. People can write what they want. When I was younger, I did take criticism seriously but it made things worse, because once you compromise your art, you lose yourself. [...] I held my head high and kept playing. The offers kept coming in, and I saw that, ironically, the criticism was helping. It made me controversial, and, funnily enough, controversy sells.

4. Gevolgtrekkings

Die doel van hierdie artikel was om Lang Lang, die lieflingskind van hedendaagse klassieke musiek, se unieke samestelling as uitvoerende kunstenaar te ondersoek. Verskeie aspekte wat 'n integrale deel van sy pianistiese mondering uitmaak, het in die voorgaande besprekings na vore gekom:

Dit is vanselfsprekend dat enige konsertpianis oor 'n virtuose tegniek beskik, maar Lang Lang se vingervaardigheid, krag en uithouvermoë en sy gawe om klankkleure tot in die

fynde nuanses te manipuleer, geniet buitengewone aandag in mediadekking van sy uitvoerings. As gevolg van sy opvallende virtuose tegniek word hy dikwels as 'n sportman bestempel. Uiteindelik word hy alom nie net as 'n virtuoos beskou nie, maar as 'n volslae vertoonkunstenaar.

'n Visuele benadering tot klavierspel is sedert die tyd van Franz Liszt en Anton Rubinstein 'n algemene verskynsel. Wat Lang Lang egter van sy medevirtuose oor die eeue heen onderskei, is nie bloot die teenwoordigheid van 'n visuele benadering in sy spel nie, maar eerder die oorborrelende vreugde van sy musiekmaak wat hy na sy gehore projekteer. Samehangend hiermee wyk sy konsertdrag af van die tradisionele swart swaelstertpak. Hy dra eerder helderkleurige Tang-dinastie-pakke wat sinspeel op sy Oosterse afkoms. Dit wil voorkom of Lang Lang se visuele aanbod net soveel bydra tot sy sukses as vertoonkunstenaar as sy tegniese vaardigheid.

Resensente huldig nie dieselfde mening aangaande die wenslikheid van die invloed wat Lang Lang se vertoonkunsenaarskap op sy interpretasie van musiekwerke het nie. Vele is dit eens dat sy uitgangspunt om sy besondere beheer oor tempo en klankkleur ten beste te vertoon, die samehangende struktuur van die werke wat hy uitvoer, asook tradisionele beskouings oor stylkenmerke, ondermyn. Sy omstrede interpretasies word egter deur die publiek “vergewe” omdat hy skynbaar soveel vreugde uit sy voordragte put.

Lang Lang se uitsprake aangaande sy benadering tot interpretasie is dikwels teenstrydig. Maar hy berou geensins die etiket “vertoonkunstenaar” (“showman”) nie. Hy steur hom geensins aan kritiek nie en is getrou aan homself in sy interpretasies. Hy kom uiteindelik tot die gevolgtrekking: “Controversy sells.”

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