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Orion Weiss at Terrace Theater

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When you're named after one of the biggest constellations in the night sky, the pressure is on to display a little star power – and the young pianist Orion Weiss did exactly that in a high-powered and often ferocious recital Saturday afternoon at the Terrace Theater. Weiss has been racking up an impressive string of triumphs lately (he filled in at the last minute for an ailing Leon Fleischer last summer, turning in a raved-about performance with the Boston Symphony), and Saturday's recital showed why. Just 30, the pianist has an exceptionally clean technique with virtuosity to spare.

Weiss turned in a vivid account of Liszt's Toccata, S.197a – a little dervish of a piece that bursts into life, whirls madly for a minute, then vanishes – followed by an intriguing work written for the pianist by composer Michael Brown, titled "Constellations and Toccata," it contrasts a "human" perspective on the heavens with a "scientific" one; the first section proved to be a sort of spare, slowly turning nocturne from which a sweeping theme emerged, while the hard-driving toccata took an ecstatic, data-driven look into the fiery heart of stars. Weiss kept everything in perfect alignment, and Brown could not hope for a more convincing account of his work.

Even more impressive, though, was Bohuslav Martinu's Fantasie and Toccata, which closed the recital. Written in 1940 as the Czech composer fled Paris ahead of the invading German army, it's an edgy and relentlessly gripping work, as well as a pianistic tour de force – the sort of music that elbows its way into your brain and takes over for a while. It seemed to bring out the best in Weiss. Not only did he handle its virtuosic demands with ease, he made the work into a riveting and unforgettable human experience – and isn't that what concert-going is supposed to be about?