



460 South Prospect Street • Burlington, Vermont, 05401 • 802-656-4455

Dear Sue,

It is with pleasure that I write to tell you how honored we were to present pianist Donal Fox on the UVM Lane Series last Friday, March 22nd.

Frankly, my audience was blown away by his performance, which was one of the most sensitive, creative, and powerful solo piano concerts we have ever presented. The concert straddled that unique line where the listener was both dazzled by his extraordinary technical chops, and touched and awed by the soul, wit, and emotion in the playing. The audience wouldn't let him go! He was planning on a 75 minute set – it stretched at least to 90 minutes, and they were on their feet for the last five. Our audience is sophisticated, and generous – but frankly – he won them over in a way that was pretty amazing to see. Our audience is made up of both students and community members, and the buzz from both contingents was overwhelmingly positive.

As for my part, I so enjoyed having him here! He was generous and eloquent in our pre-concert talk (which really turned into a very interesting discourse about creativity and art), and he gave a great and actually very practical masterclass/workshop with our jazz students in which he spent two hours answering questions, giving feedback, and helping them solve musical problems. Many of the students in the workshop came to the concert that night – something that doesn't always happen – and a real testament to the artist.

One thing that really impressed me was his understanding and sensitivity to the acoustics of our hall and the best qualities of our piano. These two things clearly influenced his program choices which were not planned in advance (although he said he started thinking about what he wanted to share with us as soon as he practiced the evening before the concert). He began with a quiet piece by John Dowling, built on that theme with a great Coltrane melody, and then went into a raucous and full-throttle Bach/Monk mashup. He was VERY engaging with the audience – asking them to guess which composers (jazz and classical) he was playing, and explaining the connections between pieces.

About 20 minutes into the performance, I asked myself “why is this guy not a household name like Herbie Hancock or Brad Meldau, or even Keith Jarrett (whom I have adored forever and whom I was most reminded of by Donal's improvisations)? He is clearly a “musician's musician” who has played with everyone and knows everyone in the field. I can't really answer the question except to say – he should be. He really should be.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help get this guy's music in front of more people! And thank you so much for this opportunity to bring him to Burlington.

Natalie Neuert, Director, University of Vermont Lane Series