

Concert Reviews of Pianist Robert Thies

"Modest in demeanor and dress, Thies seemed truly interested in the music, and being the middle-man through which we, as consumers, are able to access the works of the great composers. He was sensitive to the nuances that must have been the composers' intentions. This player knew exactly how to give sound to the notes on the page."

[Mary Anne Andersen, Cedar City News, January 24, 2018]

"The performer is not only a gifted interpreter but also a communicator...perhaps it is a tribute to the performance that one simply marveled at the unfolding genius of the work itself, rather than being consciously aware of the skill with which Mr. Thies explored and laid bare its complexities.

[David Brown, LA Opus, January 15, 2018]

"Robert Thies performed the Second Piano Concerto by Brahms with a freshness and depth that is reminiscent of some of the legendary pianists of decades past. Robert has all the technique and endurance to exceed every expectation. Some of his most extraordinary playing came in the beautiful slow movement, where his lyric playing was magical. Many of my musicians remarked how much they enjoyed playing with Robert. It was obvious that he knew the entire score. Both audiences jumped to their feet in appreciation of his talent. It was a special and memorable set of performances."

[Joseph Giunta, conductor of Des Moines Symphony, April 4, 2017]

"The listeners will again enjoy the perfection and the natural musicality of the performance by Jennifer Johnson, Judith Farmer, and pianist Robert Thies who are equally at ease in the fast riffs as in the lyrical bits displayed throughout the piece.

[Marc Vallon, The Double Reed (review of Gernot Wolfgang's recording Passing Through, 2016)]

"Thies brought an unassuming stage presence, lacking all the glitz, body and facial contortions common in soloists. Instead, he allowed Prokofiev's music to exude personality without affectation. Soloist and orchestra were effortless and fluid, with a sparkling urgency throughout. Thies' ability to be unobtrusive allowed Prokofiev to be present, as though he had opened a portal to the moment of creation."

[Daniel Gilliam, wuol.org, April 10, 2015]

"Guest soloist Robert Edward Thies delivered Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 1, with delicate, quick-fingered clarity. He easily handled the slinky scales and leaned into the angular melodies with the kind of skill that showed why he won the Prokofiev Piano Competition in St. Petersburg in 1995."

[Michael Morain, Des Moines Register, February 8, 2015]

"Robert Thies is a pianist who – bless him – simply lets his instrument sing. There is nothing of the hoary carnival barker in his pianism, to say nothing of the sideshow. On the contrary, here is a genuine aristocrat of the piano. Thies has that ability – all too rare – to tap directly into the essence of a score. Indeed, his performance had all the seeming inevitability of the score virtually playing itself. His was playing that was vibrant, alive, with a pearlescent, songful touch, but always at the service of what the music demands."

[Ted Ayala, La Crescenta Weekly, October 30, 2014]

"His no-nonsense manner and passion revealed sensitivity and power, and a lyricism fully emerged. The Adagio [of the Rachmaninoff Third Piano Concerto] sounded under his hands like a love letter to a lost world that could only be recreated in music. As a soloist, Thies' sensibility is thoroughly Romantic, and it came out fully formed. His performance prompted the audience to give Thies one of the longest, loudest standing ovations I've heard in my years."

[James Cushing, New Times, February 6, 2014]

“His approach to the Rachmaninoff [Second Concerto] was consistently lyrical. He seemed more interested in humbly serving the music’s structure rather than imposing his own will on it. In the final movement, I kept feeling the image of a man meditating while a storm gathers. Thies has the delicacy and power to carry off the meditation and the storm.”

[James Cushing, The Tribune, October 12, 2011]

“Thies brought a combination of tenderness and power to the Schumann Concerto.”

[Bill Peters, San Gabriel Valley News, Feb 21, 2011]

“Robert Thies brought vibrant life to Gershwin's jazz-inspired 1916 Rhapsody in Blue and stamped it with his own imprint, racing fleetly through the lively sections, and elegantly stretching the slower ones. The orchestra meticulously mirrored Thies' crisp staccatos and languid legatos.”

[Phyllis Rosenblum, Santa Cruz Sentinel October 7, 2010]

“Thies is a high-level virtuoso who carried the Rachmaninoff [Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini] with great style. He crept up on loud passages with drama, and articulated more delicate moments flawlessly.”

[James Cushing, The Tribune, October 4, 2009]

“It was one of those performances that sticks in the memory, and that leaves you physically moved and enchanted long after it ends. Astonishing, powerful, and delicate by turns, informed by Thies’s extraordinary technical brilliance and expressivity. Under his fingers, the Rachmaninoff [Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini] took on a new color, revealing details that usually remain hidden, from tricks of virtuoso pianism to lush new richness and gentle hints at deeper meanings. He plays the work the way Rachmaninoff, who made his living as a pianist, must have played it.”

[John Farrell, Pasadena Star News, July 31, 2009]

"Conducting the Brahms Second Piano Concerto with Robert Thies was one of the most beautiful and deeply satisfying musical experiences of my life. His power, nuance, sensitivity, poetry and emotional intensity in the work made it an unforgettable performance for me and for the Louisville Orchestra musicians ."

[JoAnn Falletta, Music Director/Conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic, November 13, 2008]

"He played [the Ravel Concerto] with technical and emotional brilliance."

[Karl Sayers, Daily Breeze, October 29, 2008]

“Thies played this difficult work [Shostakovich First Piano Concerto] with dedication and boldness. Thies let out all the stops...the performance was spectacular.”

[Kari Sayers, Daily Breeze, September 2005]

“Close your eyes, and it is difficult not to compare him to Ashkenazy, his flawless runs and lush trills during the concerto something to behold and hear. Thies' sensitive performance brought the audience to its feet. Chopin smiled from on high. Roars of approbation ricocheted throughout the hall. Over and over Thies and Mester returned to acknowledge the crowd.”

[Peg Goldberg Longstreth, Naples Daily News, May 10, 2005]

“The first half closed with one of the best performances of Chopin’s Second Piano Concerto that I have had the privilege to witness. Thies performs with no wasted motion- no flashy gestures, no dramatic gesticulations. Instead his quiet fingertips create cascading jewels in the softest sections. At the same time, his stillness at the piano camouflages great power. I can’t recall the last time a pianist was able to move me to tears with the beauty of their playing. Thies expressed the Largo with such aching tenderness, that I was deeply moved. The Allegro Vivace was executed with great grace and style. The audience responded with a resounding ovation.”

[Wendy Kikkert, Beverly Hills Outlook, April 5, 2004]

“Based on his victory in the 1995 Prokofiev competition and other local performances, we know that Thies has the chops to play any piece. Saturday night, he luxuriated in Chopin’s long, arching, spinning lines that came out in glistening strings of pearls. He never hurried, but the performance always moved forward with a purpose, that being simply beautiful music. Thies’s line of teachers stretches back to the great Russian romantic pianists Rosina and Josef Lhevinne; from across the ages, they must surely have been smiling Saturday night...as was Chopin.”

[Robert Thomas, Pasadena Star News, March 16, 2004]

"Thies played with aristocratic refinement and masterfully-judged rubato, whether in the serenely poetic Larghetto or the brilliant triplets of the Allegro vivace. Few young pianists I know can paint so many soft-toned colors with their keyboard, and Thies is one of them."

[Truman C. Wang, editor of Classical Voice, March 13, 2004]

“Thies played with a quiet grace, his many trills crystal clear and his sense of lyricism unsurpassed.”

[Karl Sayers, Daily Breeze, October 22, 2003]

“Thies gave a cohesive vision that was reflective, rhapsodic and graceful without being sentimental.”

[Andrew Buchanan-Smart, New Zealand’s Waikato Times, September 8, 2003]

“Thies produced a lush tone, fluid passage work and, most important of all, a fine sense of pacing and well-plotted drama.”

[Wayne Lee Gay, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, January 11, 2003]

"Thies played Mozart's lovely Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major with passion and panache."

[Juliet Schoen, Malibu Times, October 16, 2002]

“It was evident that Beethoven’s temperament was in his body and soul.”

[Kari Sayers, Daily Breeze, April 29, 2002]

“Pianist Robert Thies delivered these piano works with absorbing concentration...”

[Timothy Mangan, The Orange County Register, April 22, 2002]

“Compelling...wonderfully played by Robert Thies”

[Mark Swed, LA Times, April 19, 2002]

“Brilliant pianist took Pasadena by storm...reminding me of Vladimir Horowitz...Thies possessed a brilliant command of the keyboard and achieved his dazzling effects by fingers alone, using the pedal sparingly....”

[Truman C. Wang, Pasadena Star News, April 17, 2002]

“He took all its difficulties in stride, brought all the appropriate colors to its realization and tamed its vehemence as commandingly as he revealed its poetry...Thies mastered the musical materials and gave them life and clarity. This was a splendid performance, Brahmsian in breadth as well as sincerity and depth.”

[Daniel Cariaga, LA Times, December 18, 2001]

“Thies performed an electrifying version of the devilishly difficult Schoenberg Piano Concerto. Thies not only played by heart this score of intricate harmonic knitting, but did it with conviction and drama. The theatrical sensitivity of Thies gave new light to the solos and with great criteria evoked, fluently and masterfully. It was by far the best interpretation of any Schoenberg piece I have heard.”

[source unknown; November 2001]

“Clearly a favourite already, Thies displayed formidable technique and precision-turned accuracy, with some enchanting colours and turns of phrase.”

[Heath Lees, New Zealand Herald, October 1, 2001]

“Robert Thies flew in, and with only 48 hours' notice played Rachmaninov's Concerto No 2 with such assurance that it seemed as if he had been preparing for months. At times haunting, morose and foreboding, at others gentle and passionate, the music had a strong advocate in Thies.”

[Tara Werner, New Zealand Herald, September 24, 2001]

“By turns otherworldly, then full of life, Mr. Thies’s fingers literally flew around the keyboard, exhibiting an electrifying and technically brilliant performance of this witty, eclectic work.”

[Dorian, Beverly Hills Outlook, August 7, 2001]

“Thies’ flawless fingers danced up and down the keyboard throughout the work, blending fiery drama with tuneful lyricism.”

[Kari Sayles, Daily Breeze, May 21, 2001]

“El punto culminante fue la actuación del pianista estadounidense Robert Edward Thies, quien tocó esplendidamente el Concierto; pero lo que definitivamente hizo que el público se volcara en aplausos y en vivas, fue el encore que ofreció este pianista...”

[Ricardo Pacheco Colin, Crónica; Mexico City, April 24, 2001]

“En cuanto al solista Thies, quien ofreció una excelente actuación, Mester opinó: ‘Este señor es un genio, él no conocía esta obra hace tres semanas. Thies ha tocado con nosotros tres o cuatro veces, y todo mundo está enamorado de él.’”

[Ricardo Pacheco Colin, Crónica; Mexico City, April 24, 2001]

“Thies gave an outstanding performance. He was in full control of the score from beginning to end, and even in the loudest passages he never pounded the piano. He really sang in the quiet sections, and his jazzy rubato in the second movement was just right. In the Gershwin, Thies again demonstrated formidable technique and sensitive, subtle musicianship. As in the Copland Concerto, he projected the jazz elements with a flair, and he was no less effective in the songful passages, in which he drew a beautiful tone from the piano.”

[Peter Bergquist, The Register-Guard, Eugene, February 24, 2001]

“Thies took the higher artistic path, creating rich contrasting textures, while achieving an almost orchestral separation of sound through an exquisitely varied touch, transparent lines, and a rounded tone that could wail in the softest passages and whisper in the loudest.”

[Las Cruces Sun News, January 24, 2001]

“Thies plays with intensity, skill and sensitivity.”

[Sarah Bryan Miller, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 26, 2000]

“As an interpreter, Thies beautifully articulates the music with clean-cut technical fluency and sort-edged tone. Everything is meticulously controlled and there is a sense of serene confidence and sensitive flair in his approach.”

[Los Angeles Times, June 1, 2000]

“At the [‘Emperor’] concerto's end, the audience rose to their feet in unanimous appreciation for Thies's characteristically intelligent pianism.”

[Leonne Lewis, Peninsula News, October 28, 1999]

“His ‘Emperor’ was also a thoughtful and intensely moving interpretation, especially the lovely adagio movement, which became a long, intimate reverie.”

[David Wallace, Daily Breeze, October 25, 1999]

“In a display of absolute perfection, Thies presented pianism without exaggeration. He showed his artistry in every category of his repertory...”

[Frank J. Plash, San Bernardino County Sun, March 13, 1999]

“Thies played the [Shostakovich] concerto with a calm, streamlined assurance, and brought energetic punch, without forced harshness. Thies is a no-nonsense pianist: he plays the music without mannerisms. Thies played with homogenous purity...”

[Leonne Lewis, Peninsula News, January 28, 1999]

“And Thies was breathtaking. His technique was dramatic in the intense opening Allegro, meltingly tender in the elegiac Andante, and brilliant in the finale.”

[David Wallace, Daily Breeze, January 26, 1999]

“...In a simply astonishing performance of Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto... Thies delivered a commanding, big-boned, yet sensitive interpretation, tender in the concerto’s Andantino movement and displaying a blazing technique in the climaxes... The audience responded with a justified roar to what was certainly one of the most exciting performances of the season.”

[David Wallace, Daily Breeze, May 12, 1998]

“The glorification of the entire festival was without a doubt the USA pianist Robert Thies’s rendition of the gem of the music world, Peter Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto...The listeners in Liepaja applauded endlessly asking Robert Thies to sit again at the piano...”

[Fricis Plostnieks, Kursas Laiks, LATVIA, March 11, 1997]

“...he is a gifted and insightful interpreter in friendly communion with the music. The results are consistently lively, pointed, and pulsively directed. Note his name.”

[Timothy Mangan, LA Weekly, May 14, 1996]

“He played [Mozart] with unerring, warm-toned refinement. In a self-contained, unpretentious solo, Thies revealed clean, thoughtful passages, full of muted shades, judicious glimmers of power, and touches of playful contrast.”

[Susan Bliss, Los Angeles Times, April 30, 1996]

“...Thies made his enormous technique the servant of the music...this performance was one of the best Savannah Onstage has yet offered, presenting a superior musician on his way to a major career.”

[Sterling Adams, Savannah News-Press, March 11, 1996]

“The young musician seemed never at a loss for ideas, instilling every phrase with nuance, direction, and vitality. Though his presence was constantly felt, the performance was not about personal display; Thies projected his thoughts on the music and his physical involvement with it, creating a detailed narrative in the process. He phrased warmly, inflected buoyantly, voiced purposefully... Let’s hope we hear him again.”

[Timothy Mangan, Los Angeles Times, April 12, 1994]