

At the Beginning of a Career

IT HELPS THAT MUSIC IS IN THE FAMILY

Report and photo by Bill Price

Josh Luxon-Robinson, a young pianist from Yorkshire, England, performed an afternoon piano recital at the Arts Center July 16 that included music by J.S. Bach, Chopin, Mozart, two pieces by Tchaikovsky, two by Rachmaninoff, and a ferocious, no-holds-barred sonata by Prokofiev described as “ridiculously technically difficult.”

Then, once he finished this list of heavy-hitter composers, the pianist lightened the atmosphere for his audience with an encore of George Gershwin’s “The Man I Love.”

He was rewarded with a standing ovation.

Josh, a youthful 20-year-old who is spending part of his summer in Sandisfield, only became serious about his music a few years ago. For a youngster to have progressed that fast to master the music he performed in July is remarkable.

He has a musical lineage. His grandfather, Sandisfield’s Ben Luxon, is a retired British baritone with a worldwide following whose career included a long association with the English National Opera. In fact, Josh said he thinks he has a bit of his grandfather’s “tunnel vision,” that when he starts something he pushes on until he’s accomplished the task.

Josh and his family are visiting for about three weeks at Ben Luxon and Susie Crofut’s home at the top of the hill in Sandisfield Center. He is accompanied by his mother and father, Rachel and Dean Luxon-Robinson, and his sister, Safia Luxon-Robinson.

When Josh was in Sandisfield a year ago, he and his grandfather performed Richard Strauss’ “Enoch Arden,” a melodrama based on an epic poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. “It was a fantastic and character-building experience learning the music and performing with my grandfather,” he said. “After two performances here in the States, we took the work to Wales to perform at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, a concert that sold out and was quite a success. I look forward to our next venture.”

Josh had taken lessons for several years during his childhood, with the usual foot-dragging of a kid being pushed to learn to play. But he did keep on until about four years ago when he was invited to perform at a local music festival. Entering many classes, he said he was surprised that he won in every category. This vastly increased his interest in music, realizing that he had talent and could take it further.

The interest was enhanced when he was chosen to represent the music festival in a regional championship. He said that he chose a “rather easy piece” and played it well enough but when he heard much more difficult pieces being played by others in the recital he thought, I want to do that. He decided to buckle down.

He has now completed his second year of a 4-year program at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff, which will lead to a Bachelors in Music – after which he may seek a Masters in Music. He credits his piano teacher, James Kirby, with his rapid progression.



“It’s all about the music and finding what you love,” he said.

The long spate of Berkshire rain and high humidity this summer caused concern that some parts of the Steinway S on which he would perform might have swollen and could have sounded flat or sustained longer than they should have. But with Josh at the keys, the 1930’s Steinway performed very well.

“It’s the work of the tuner, David Locke,” Josh said. “The piano was gifted to the Arts Center in 2018 and wasn’t really to a performance standard, apparently. David completely rebuilt the insides, replacing the strings and hammers. He mentioned that the only thing that hasn’t changed inside is the keys! It’s a great instrument and fits the hall very well.”



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