

3-24-11 Pascale

We found our way to Assas street (6th arrondissement, our old neighborhood) to the University of Paris where there is an amphitheater to hear Denis Pascal play Liszt.

The entry was pretty unassuming.



Inside it looked like a student union building and was under construction. The Amphitheater is obviously also a large lecture hall. The seats have a writing surface and there are signs permitting students to use their laptops but not allowing them to plug them in.



The concert was part of a series and many people in line held an orange ticket. I asked and was told that they are season subscribers.



After the tuner, a professor stood at the lectern and started a lecture about Liszt and his sojourn in Switzerland where he lived in Geneva in an illicit relationship. I later learned that she was a noblewoman. They had several children. At the birth of their first child Liszt wrote a piece that had a theme of tenderness (played for us by Denis Pascal) and a theme of church bells (demonstrated by the pianist) and a theme of ecstasy (played by Denis

Pascal.). The professor explained that Liszt was such a technically proficient pianist that his pieces were too hard to be played by the pianists of his time. So he had to make transcriptions of his works that were easier. Mr. Pascal played the original versions for us and it was clear why he had to transcribe them down. Only a real artist with great skill could play many of its passages.

I found that in the tender portions, I was moved to tears. It seemed remarkable to me that he could get so much emotion out of the piano. It was quite an exhibition of proficiency and artistry. We were thrilled with his performance and the instructor was excellent and very relaxed in his explanation to us of the time and occasion of the writing of the pieces that were played.

The concert was at mid day so we walked to the Luxembourg Garden and enjoyed the early spring there. It is wonderful to experience that garden at different seasons



We found a little shack selling crepes and drinks and stopped there for lunch.

While we were there a couple of mallards came begging. The clerk in the store came out with bread for them and they ate delicately, not like ducks usually do. I saw the male stand back and let the brown female take her choice first before he started to eat. I finally got a picture after they went back into the bushes.

