

Pianist Tazaki a pleasure

By MAGGIE STEARNS

Etsko Tazaki's concert on October 2 at Fairfield University was an enormous pleasure. Not only was it a chance to hear a remarkably gifted pianist repeating the program she offered in a major New York recital three weeks ago at the 92nd Street Y, but it was proof that by engaging Tazaki and other artists of her caliber for the "Evenings of Music" series the university has musically entered the heavyweight arena, and that's bound to enrich us all.



Born in Japan, Tazaki came to this country on a Fulbright to study at Juilliard, and made her New York debut in 1972; the last time I heard her she was pulverizing pianos as artist in residence at Washington University in St. Louis about six years ago. She was a powerful player, steely and muscular in contrast to her small size and warm manner, who was clearly capable of putting the heel of her hand with one whack through the Manhattan phone book. Since then she has had a major career in this country and in Europe, and her playing at Fairfield University was world class; she's still got all the muscle, but with warmth and freshness that were 'I thought' missing before.

She began the program with four Schubert Impromptus, taking a while to adapt to the quirky action of the university's brand-new Steinway, but warming to the music and the instrument so that by the time she reached the G flat and the A flat impromptus she was spinning long and-almost effortless lines. It was lovely music, played with intelligence and power.

Completing the first half were Three Movements from Stravinsky's Petrouchka ballet, murderous pieces in which Tazaki not only did with two hands everything the orchestra usually does, but at the same time illuminated whole new

landscapes within undeniably familiar music, and why wasn't everybody grinning? I sat there beaming idiotically like the Charles Addams character, marooned in a sea of high seriousness, while Tazaki threw Roman candles all over the room. It was terrific.

The Liszt B minor Sonata, one of the Matterhorns of the literature for piano, formed the entire second half of the program. It is a whole vast musical civilization where artist and listener meet like Livingstone and Stanley, moving on new ground; Tazaki had clearly lived with it for a long time, and gave it force and drama. For an encore, she played the good old Paderewski Minuet, which became a witty miniature in the hands of a competent grownup.

All in all, Fairfield University is giving this community a tremendous present; Tazaki will be followed on four Wednesday evenings at 8 by pianist Yefim Bronfman (November 19), cellist Gary Hoffman (January 28), violinist Hamao Fujiwara (February 18) and pianist Peter Orth (March 4), all of them young artists of international standing. The university has arranged buses to bring senior citizens from Bridgeport, and has provided tickets at an unbeatable price (\$5 for general admission, \$2.50 for senior citizens, and \$1 for any student from any school) especially impressive in contrast to the price (\$7, \$6 and \$5) for Etsko Tazaki's identical recital at the Y. "Evenings of Music" is one of the better cultural deals to be had here.

And then, of course, with wide community support (there was an ample and enthusiastic audience on Thursday, but there's room for more) the university will be encouraged to go whole hog and put these concerts into the setting they deserve—a lovely, warm, resonant room with their brand-new Steinway out on an open stage and the audience in wide and comfortable chairs. But even in the Campus Center Oak Room the series is a generous gift to us all, and if Etsko Tazaki is typical of what's to come, we have ample reason to be grateful.