



introspective three years living in the woods of the northern Catskills.

“I was only going to be there a couple of months, but then I learned so much from being alone, and being away from the world, that I decided to stay on. I didn't think I would stay on for three years, but I did,” said DeGaetano, his voice still carrying a strong hint of his NYC background.

He added that because of having had “so many, many gifts, both personally and professionally over the past year” he believed it appropriate to play a piece he hadn't performed very often during his career.

DeGaetano played several pieces from Chopin, including his well-known “Polonaise in A-Flat.” He also talked of how the Polish-born Chopin changed the world's understanding of the piano.

“We then moved into the Romantic age (the early 1800s), when the actual piano that we have today was built for the first time. And the reason for that was the steel frame - before that it couldn't be cast, so pianos had a wooden frame. And the wooden frame could only hold the strings so hard, and then they would break,” he said. “So most pianists never really developed the muscles to be playing these big pianos. They just developed their fingers.”

Not so with Chopin, who was a child prodigy. His “Nocturne in Eb” was written when he was just 12.

“He understood that there was a flexibility involved in the motions of the hands, and the wrists, and the muscles of the chest of the body. He just had this natural understanding of how to approach this big instrument,” DeGaetano said.

Ilko Spin, of Auburn, is an accomplished pianist himself, and has rarely missed a performance since the program's inception in 2002.

“It's great that the Adams Foundation, and the Cayuga Arts Council, offers the Auburn community such high-level solo classical piano, some of the most difficult music written for the piano. Technically and mentally, it's very, very difficult.”

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