

Pianist Anton Kuerti

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Winnipeg Free Press**Kuerti and Beethoven -- a match made in heaven**

By: Holly Harris Posted: 02/19/2011 1:00 AM |

Anton Kuerti, one of the greatest living pianists, showed how it's done at the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's latest Masterworks concert. The internationally renowned artist dazzled Friday night's crowd with his interpretation of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto in G major, Op. 58*.

At 72, the Austrian-born pianist possesses the power of a musician half his age. His awards include the Governor General's Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award as well as being named an Officer of the Order of Canada. **Every time he performs is a celebrated occasion. This one was no different.**

Beethoven's three-movement concerto received its Viennese première in 1808, performed by the composer himself. It brims with both fiery bursts of temperament and limpid introspection.

After the first movement, *Allegro moderato's* opening hushed chords, Kuerti proceeded to display his famous razor-sharp attack and fierce intensity. Yes, he sits unusually low at the keyboard and his pedalling technique is unique. But it doesn't matter, for you know you're in the hands of a true master as he performs with the conviction and artistry honed over a lifetime.

One highlight proved to be his heart-stopping cadenza at the movement's end, marrying an easy rubato with lightning-quick changes of mood. He then launched into the *Andante con moto* with its achingly beautiful theme. Kuerti's ability to enter deeply into the music made this a treasure. The pianist's sparkling delivery and technique captured the joviality of the third movement's jaunty *Rondo: Vivace*.

Not only is Kuerti a brilliant artist, the crowd also had an opportunity to see his generosity of spirit. Immediately following his performance, he quickly popped the lid so that the orchestra's players could be seen during their bow. Even the musicians -- to whom Kuerti blew kisses -- appeared astonished. The second half of the concert featured Anton Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7 in E major*. The concert repeats tonight at 8 p.m. at the Centennial Concert Hall.

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