

Artist Management

**Pianist Anton Kuerti**  
**with the Montreal Symphony and Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos**

*“An interpreter of the utmost probity”*

## **Old pros pack the punch**

By ARTHUR KAPTAINIS, Gazette Music Critic April 14, 2011

Much court is paid to youth in classical circles these days, but on Tuesday night, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and Anton Kuerti, a pair of pros with almost 150 years between them, drew a big crowd to hear the MSO in Place des Arts. The results were suitably distinguished.

Which is not to say fusty or stately: Debussy's *La Mer* got an unusually febrile reading, quite unlike the soft-sell offered by Daniele Gatti and the Orchestre National de France two evenings earlier.

The *Play of the Waves* was vigorous and the *Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea* proceeded at a martial rhythm. Still, Charles Dutoit evoked more atmosphere in this score. So has Kent Nagano.

Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* in the 1919 incarnation - another MSO hit - sounded more idiomatic. Frühbeck (who terminated his brief reign as MSO music director in 1976) wields a sharp and steady baton; the fierce offbeats of the *Infernal Dance* were a happy byproduct. But there was horizontal texture as well, notably from the bassoon and horn.

**Kuerti, 72, played Beethoven's Emperor Concerto, a frequent vehicle for the Torontonians, especially after he generated some headlines in 2008 by playing it on short notice in Boston with his conductor son Julian. True to the Kuerti norm, the calibre of thought was high. Ornaments seemed spontaneous and musical, not mechanical and showy. The middle movement, paced quickly, was noble.**

**An interpreter of the utmost probity, this Toronto pianist plays in high definition, so a few faults could be heard. This had little effect on an impressive performance, with the orchestra a respectful partner.**

Neither the conductor nor the soloist is known to suffer fools gladly. Frühbeck, 77, issued an imperious stare at latecomers after the first movement of the Beethoven. There was, however, a bright side: no intrusive applause.

The repeat on Wednesday marks Kuerti's last encounter with the mediocre acoustics of Salle Wilfrid Pelletier. Anyone who happens to be in Toronto April 30 can hear him play Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 in Koerner Hall, an excellent facility. Leading the Ontario Philharmonic is a Montreal native, Marco Parisotto.

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