

## REVIEW

# Fiery soloist highlights Beethoven concert

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Special to the Record-Eagle

TSO Summer Nights continued Friday and Saturday at the City Opera House with guest pianist Aviram Reichert returning for the fifth time before Traverse City audiences in an all-Beethoven concert.

There are ample reasons to call Aviram Reichert back to our town. He thrills audiences wherever he goes, and ours is certainly among them.

He has played a broad range of concertos, but this time was the first Beethoven — in this case, Piano Concerto No. 5, "Emperor." The strength and dexterity of his hands make him an ideal candidate to perform this work. It requires tremendous balance between left and right hands because Beethoven called for so much where they are working in tandem in scales and arpeggios at rapid tempos.

I have heard this concerto

many times with various artists at the keyboard. All of them had that skill, but most I have heard before were perhaps more relaxed about the first movement. Reichert's approach seemed to be fierce and determined, leaning forward into the tempo, driving himself and the orchestra. Thus, the movement had an energy that grabbed one's attention. His trills were like torches burning through steel — heat focused to a fine point. His two-handed runs and arpeggios left a trail of burnt rubber. When he completed one of these events, his hands leapt from the keyboard with a flourish. I was seated in the balcony and able to watch his hands over his right shoulder, and the position enhanced the musical effect for me a great deal.

I enjoyed the exchanges between the soloist and the strings. The second movement opens with a lovely, pensive theme played by

violins and violas, with the heartbeat plucked by cello and bass sections. The movement is one of Beethoven's most beautiful. It is not a virtuosic movement, but rather one of simplicity and lyrical delight. The piano is underscored by quiet wind and string accompaniment. The effect is incredibly soothing and tender. And this fiery pianist lays down his flame thrower and adds to the lyricism that leads up to the sudden shift to the final scherzo and allegro without a break between movements.

Reichert's playing of the final movement was more of the fireworks and excitement that marked the first movement. Even though it does not contain a virtuosic cadenza like most piano concerti, the composer's demands on the printed page are very like a cadenza. He and music director Kevin Rhodes work so very well together. Reichert's tempos are met with Rhodes' approval. They boogie along

quite joyously to the rousing conclusion. Clearly, the audience was as pleased as Rhodes.

Upon the soloist's return for another bow, he offered a very brief but absolutely delicious playing of Alexander Scriabin's "Album Leaf," a one-minute jewel that showed more of Reichert's heart.

After intermission, he and Rhodes returned to the stage for a short interview and a chance to answer questions from the audience.

The concert began with Beethoven's Overture to "Fidelio" — his one and only opera. The horns, in this case, Gene Berger and Mary Beth Orr, provided some stunning moments especially in the quiet parts, while the rest of the winds and strings galloped along merrily through this happy piece.

Prior to the music, Kevin invited Marlene Bevan, a hearing specialist, to comment about Beethoven's

early loss of hearing. Beethoven's tragic life — his hearing loss and lifelong illnesses and suffering that brought an early death — actually was a significant contribution to the greatness of his music. Out of it came the most adventurous and daring music of its time because he was no longer locked into the sounds of the classical period, post-Mozart. Inviting someone like Bevan to add more to the program, along with Kevin's intermission interviews with the guest artist, have been met with enthusiastic audience approval.

The concert closed with Beethoven's great Symphony No. 5 in C minor. There were a number of unfamiliar faces in the orchestra strings and I noted moments in the symphony when there was some unfortunate pushing, suggesting to me that there were enough new musicians unaccustomed to the conductor's tempos and expression requirements to result in an uneven perfor-

mance. Precision that we have come to expect (and did hear in the previous concert) was at times lacking.

Here again, the horns played a large role in the success of the work. All the woodwinds, brass and timpani contributed significantly. Moments of brilliance came from clarinetists Jeanmarie Riccobono and Nathan Williams, oboist Lynn Hansen, flutist Nancy Stagnitta and bassoonist Lauren Murphy. The woodwinds and horns as an ensemble were absolutely superb.

Clearly, it was not a bad performance, just a notch below what we have heard so much of during this past season. Some of the regulars had other commitments, but will be back for the next concert. TSO Summer Nights has been a tremendous success and hopefully it will become a permanent part of the symphony season.