

Vladimir Ashkenazy pianos

by Heather Myers

The considerable reputation Vladimir Ashkenazy has acquired over the twenty years of his concert and recording career heightened the anticipation of his performance in the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium on Sunday, February 19. But international recognition, abundant and reliable though it may be, was irrelevant after Ashkenazy's opening number, a strikingly original interpretation of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata", furnished first-hand proof of his exceptional talent.

The first and third movements were particularly arresting—the 'Adagio Sostenuto' nothing like the maudlin, overstated version often heard, rather softly persistently searching—the 'Presto Agitato' breathtakingly exciting, driving and urgent without being in the least belligerent or jarring. The short second movement which came across as a bright interlude—the octaves light, not ponderous—completed a conception of the piece



melodies emerging from shimmering profusions of harmony; at the time of listening, the uniqueness of each was remarkable.

A program exclusively chosen from the Romantic repertoire could have been narrow. But the opposite effect was achieved by this outstanding pianist. Beyond the technically dazzling, Ashkenazy's playing was a true synthesis of craft, emotion and intellect.

Given the enthusiastic response of the audience, and Ashkenazy's evident energy, it is reasonable to hope that he will return to the Cohn in the near future. But in the meantime, his recordings, which include the excellent set of Beethoven piano concerti with the Chicago Symphony, are available at most record stores, or for penniless devotees of piano-playing at its best, obtainable on loan from the Regional Library.



VAN CLIBURN

"The legend is a giant".

This headline from one of Canada's leading critics symbolizes the esteem in which Van Cliburn is and has been held since his stunning victory at the worldwide Soviet Tchaikovsky Competition of 1958. His world tour of 1977-78 is completely booked, which is the norm for this great and beloved, uniquely North American artist.

Van Cliburn conducted by Victor Yampolsky, performs with the Atlantic Symphony during its seventh Metro concert pair of the ASO's 10th Anniversary Season, Monday and Tuesday, March 13 and 14, 8:30 p.m., Rebecca Cohn Auditorium. For ticket information, contact the ASO Box Office, Dal Arts Centre, 424-3895.

absolutely his own and at the same time more in keeping with the composer's original marking, 'Sonata quasi una fantasia', than its popular title.

The expectations set up by the "Moonlight" were well satisfied in the remainder of the program. Chopin's Polonaise-Fantasia in A-flat major, opus 61 was personal, the statements of the themes never repetitive. The Bacarolle in F-sharp major, opus 60 displayed an astounding range of sounds, from a crash to a caress, and though the intention in one passage was not quite clear, it made the work all the more compelling for its undeniable newness. Here, as throughout the concert, Ashkenazy was not offering a pat reworking, a finished product. Though clearly in command of the notes his playing was electric because one felt there was an element of discovery in every phrase, making it unrepeatable.

From Beethoven and Chopin, Ashkenazy went on to play the Etudes-Tableaux from opus 33 and eight Preludes from opus 23 and 32 by Rachmaninov. In each of the four Etudes he captured a distinctive mood. While in retrospect the eight Preludes tend to become a blend of spectacular sounds and movement characterized by effectively contrasted legato and staccato, feather-light trills and beautifully voiced

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