**Beethoven on the McNulty New Graf Fortepiano with Kristian Bezuidenhout**

The last days of November 2024 brought a spectacular celebration of Beethoven's genius to life through unique performances by Kristian Bezuidenhout and Philippe Herreweghe on a new McNulty copy of a Graf fortepiano. The concerts, held at two iconic venues, showcased the synergy between authentic historical interpretation and the enduring power of Beethoven’s music.

**25 November 2024 | Musikverein, Vienna**

In the prestigious Großen Musikvereinssaal, Philippe Herreweghe conducted a pure Beethoven program with the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées and Collegium Vocale Gent. Kristian Bezuidenhout’s interpretation of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58, performed on the McNulty fortepiano — an authentic recreation of a Graf instrument from Beethoven’s era—stood out for its sincerity and artistry, reflecting his deep familiarity with and mastery of this historical instrument.

Bezuidenhout’s subtle and nuanced playing revealed the fortepiano’s unique sound palette, from crisp, articulate accents to delicate, introspective phrases. As an encore, he offered a deeply moving performance of the Largo from Beethoven’s Sonata in E-flat Major, Op. 7, creating a moment of profound silence and reflection in the hall. The audience was captivated by the intimacy and authenticity of the performance, which stood in stark contrast to the grandeur of modern concert traditions.

The venue itself added to the historic charm of the evening. The Großen Musikvereinssaal, known for its unparalleled acoustics and architectural splendor, provided the perfect setting for this period-inspired interpretation. The interplay of the orchestra and soloist brought to life the emotional depth and innovation of Beethoven’s music, leaving the audience in awe.

**26 November 2024 | MÜPA Budapest, Hungary**

The following evening, Herreweghe and Bezuidenhout brought their Beethoven program to Müpa Budapest. The concert featured the same dynamic collaboration between Bezuidenhout’s fortepiano and the period-accurate performance approach of the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées. Together, they delivered a vibrant and fresh interpretation of the Fourth Piano Concerto, emphasizing clarity, texture, and the interplay between soloist and orchestra.

Müpa Budapest—a hub for cultural excellence in Hungary — provided a modern yet fitting backdrop for this historically inspired performance. The audience was treated to a unique auditory experience, where the fortepiano’s historical authenticity shone through. Bezuidenhout’s performance highlighted the subtle nuances and intricate details of Beethoven’s composition, breathing new life into the familiar concerto.

The concert also included insightful remarks from Herreweghe, who shared insights about the historical context and musical intent behind Beethoven’s works. This educational element enriched the audience’s understanding and appreciation of the performance, making the evening both enlightening and entertaining.

**Reflections on the McNulty Graf Fortepiano**

Both concerts were a testament to the capabilities of the McNulty Graf fortepiano in conveying the spirit of Beethoven’s music. As noted in reviews, the fortepiano’s sound — dry yet resonant, combining clarity with a distinctive metallic timbre reminiscent of a harpsichord — offers a distinctive perspective on Beethoven’s compositions. Instead of delivering the lush, sustained tones of modern pianos, the modern reconstruction of a period instrument compensates with its ability to produce sharp, dynamic contrasts and articulate phrasing, akin to the expressiveness of strings.

This instrument, meticulously crafted by Paul McNulty, is a faithful reproduction of a Graf piano from the early 19th century. Its design and tonal qualities allow performers like Bezuidenhout to explore Beethoven’s music as it was conceived, providing listeners with an authentic window into the composer’s sound world. The fortepiano’s delicate yet impactful voice allows for an intimate connection between the performer and audience, a quality that resonated deeply in both Vienna and Budapest.

Bezuidenhout’s **extensive experience with McNulty** fortepianos and his profound understanding of Beethoven’s music made him ideally suited to showcase the Graf fortepiano. His partnership with Herreweghe, a master of historically informed performance, brought a refreshing vitality to these beloved works.

**Program:**

* Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58

**Performers:**

* Piano: Kristian Bezuidenhout
* Orchestre des Champs-Élysées
* Conductor: Philippe Herreweghe

These concerts underscore the importance of historical instruments in reviving the soundscapes of the past, offering modern audiences an opportunity to experience Beethoven’s music as he might have heard it. The McNulty Graf fortepiano continues to play a crucial role in this revival, bridging the gap between history and contemporary performance.

Looking ahead, the legacy of historically informed performance grows stronger with each such event, fostering a deeper appreciation for the richness and diversity of musical interpretation. The collaboration between Bezuidenhout, Herreweghe, and the McNulty fortepiano exemplifies how artistry, craftsmanship, and historical insight can converge to create performances that are both timeless and transformative. Audiences left these concerts not only entertained but also inspired, carrying with them a renewed love for Beethoven and a greater awareness of the historical context that shaped his masterpieces.