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## Seen and Heard International

### Keyboard Titans: Fleisher Conducts, Angelich Plays Beethoven

by Simon Thompson, November 26, 2011

***“This whole evening brought both playing and conducting of the highest order... he (Fleisher) brings a vast wealth of experience to his interpretations, bringing an immeasurable richness to the music”***

The SCO brochure named this concert Keyboard Titans and, with both Leon Fleisher and Nicholas Angelich on the same billing, it's not hard to see why. "Titan" carries unfortunate connotations with it too, however, and when he first shuffled onto the stage I was worried that the 83-year old Fleisher was going to deliver an evening of heavy-handed stodge, a suspicion worsened by the seemingly interminable pauses between the opening chords of Coriolan. Not a bit of it, however! As soon as Beethoven's Allegro began **Fleisher injected a shot of adrenaline that brought the piece entirely into the full flush of life**, helped by the distinctive colour of the SCO's natural timps and trumpets. **This whole evening brought both playing and conducting of the highest order.** Fleisher has turned to conducting late in life, but **he brings a vast wealth of experience to his interpretations, bringing an immeasurable richness to the music** on offer tonight. Mozart's Jupiter symphony was momentous while remaining light on its feet, with a threatening vein of darkness running through the slow movement more prominently than most conductors would allow. The finale was **absolutely dazzling**, revealing Mozart's full contrapuntal skill with astonishing clarity, helped by transparent orchestral playing that opened up all the inner textures.

Beethoven's Second Piano Concerto, the Cinderella of the set, got a reading of delicacy and poise, culminating in an exhilarating gallop through the final Rondo. However, Angelich's playing made an incredible difference, not least in his arrestingly thoughtful playing of the first movement's cadenza. This then led into a truly great reading of the central Adagio. I don't think I've ever heard this movement sound so poetic or so suggestive of such profound beauty. **As an unadvertised treat, Fleisher and Angelich joined forces for a four-handed performance of Dvořák's tenth Slavonic Dance, a reading of subtlety and sparseness that was utterly distinctive of a superb evening's music making.**

Leon Fleisher