

Fabulous fluency

Michael Traub

Anton Nel's piano recital formed part of the recent Johannesburg International Mozart Festival, as well as being the first concert for 2014 of the long-running Johannesburg Musical Society.

The performance of Mozart's *Sonata in D major, K.311*, was slightly spoiled by a repeated mannerism – the dying away to a cadence, instead of leading strongly towards it. This made the music sound effete. Fluency, though, was not in doubt. Much more absorbing was *Green* by the American composer Alan Fletcher (born in 1956). This was the South African premiere of a piece composed in 2003. Its style was a kind of contemporary Impressionism – much like the mature works of Ravel. Nel played it with complete empathy. It was good to hear something new and worthwhile.



CONCENTRATION. Anton Nel in rehearsal for his Johannesburg International Mozart Festival performances. Picture: Supplied.

The first half of the recital closed with the *Sonata in G minor* by Schumann, not often heard, though it is the best of the three sonatas by the composer.

Nel made light of the technical difficulties, but the music still sounded as if it had too many notes. *Estampes (Woodcuts)* by Debussy is a suite of three pieces, each very different from the others in content.

info

Johannesburg International Mozart Festival

★★★★☆

- ▶ **Recital:** Anton Nel
- ▶ **Programme:** Music by Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Debussy, Alan Fletcher
- ▶ **Venue:** Linder Auditorium, Parktown

In this rendering, *Pagodas* came off best, its glassy iridescence well conveyed. Both *Soiree In Granada* and *Gardens In The Rain* could have been more colourfully realised.

The closing work was Beethoven's *Waldstein Sonata*. This work gives the pianist a thorough athletic workout through its transcendental technical requirements.

The *Finale* was taken at an unvarying tempo whatever the difficulties. Two encores followed: *Widmung (Dedication)* by Schumann-Liszt and the *Scherzo-Valse* by Chabrier.