

# A performance par excellence

## Pianist, Martijn Van Den Hoek's first performance in the UAE mesmerises audience

Marvellous piano pieces echoed in the Emirates Auditorium of the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, last Monday, taking the audience into a dreamy, mysterious, and most of all, a romantic journey. Dutch pianist, Martijn Van Den Hoek performed for the first time in Dubai and mesmerised the audience.

The piano recital was the first event organised by the recently established Dubai Concert Committee, and included works by Haydn, Weber, Meyerbeer, Gounod and Liszt.

Christopher Wilton, British Consul General and Chairman of the Committee, told *Gulf News* that this is the first of a series of concerts organised by the Committee. "The reaction of the people invited to the concert was very satisfactory," he said, looking at the enthusiastic crowd waiting to enter the auditorium. "We expect to draw more crowds, once proper publicity is given to our events," he added.

The chairman said that the Dubai society had always been dependent on the Abu Dhabi Concert Committee, but with the growing trend towards art in Dubai, a similar organisation had to be established. Though Dubai is well-known as a commercial centre, it's now moving towards promoting more cultural events. Dubai has it all, Wilton said.

The artist, who is in the UAE for the first time, gave a similar performance in the capital earli-



Martijn Van Den Hoek... a master of classics

er. He said he finalised the deal to come to the UAE 'by accident', but was very happy to be here.

"The UAE has a touch of Asia, a touch of the Middle East, and a

touch of an enchanting, something I have never encountered before", he said.

The pianist began his musical education at the Rotterdam Conservatory, and completed his

studies there in 1975.

In 1978 he was awarded the *Prix de excellence*, allowing him to pursue his studies in Moscow, Budapest and New York.

Among the several prizes he won at international competitions, are the first prize at Franz Liszt Competition 1986, and the Netherlands Music Prize 1987.

Since then, he has appeared all over the world, giving recitals as well as orchestra concerts.

His repertoire embraces 400 years of music. Among the seven CDs he's produced during the last several years, his recent interpretation of Chopin's second *Piano Concerto* in a version for string quartet and piano, has aroused much interest around the world.

In addition to performing concerts, Martijn leads master classes for young talented musicians.

*Choreography of Piano Playing* is the title of the many conferences, and recitals he and his wife have given internationally. After an extensive research they completed a study on the problems of posture and muscle co-ordination in musicians.

Many young and old musicians eventually suffer from posture and muscle problems, the musician explained, adding, "Music is a top-sport, but till five years ago, there were no specialised staff to

deal with the problems associated with practising music".

"In the classes, I try to direct the attention of my students towards dealing and avoiding these problems," he said, explaining that teachers often take it hard on the youngsters, giving them long training hours to prepare them for competition.

"Musicians must always be conscious of their movements and expressions, since expression is always reflected in the audience. In music, body language is very important," he pointed out. "It's like being an actor, trying to convey a message to the audience. You have to know when to reflect certain moods, and when to pause to let it sink into the souls of the crowd," he added.

Since 1992 Martijn has been leading the 'Romantic Piano Series' at Schlosz Niederleis in Lower Austria. Using original restored instruments, from around 1850, he attempts to recreate the authentic atmosphere of Central Europe's musical life between 1835 and 1885.

As part of the Committee's programme for the year, a string quartet will be performing at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza on January 17. Admission to the concert is free of charge.