



By MAX KOH

HE has been called a global rising star not seen since the days of composer Franz Liszt in Hungary. His virtuosity on the keys has won critics and fans alike all over the world.

Certainly the good news about him came long before the Hungarian virtuoso pianist Adam Gyorgy arrived in Kuala Lumpur for his performance at the Wisma Bentley auditorium.

Earlier this month, Gyorgy wowed a 3,000-strong crowd at the legendary Carnegie Hall, a dream for all musicians, where he reputedly received a 10-minute standing ovation. It was his third time performing there.

"It was unbelievable. Our team was amazed by the response," exclaims Gyorgy who, being a member of the elite Steinway Artist community, places him in the company of piano greats such as Lang Lang, Vladimir Horowitz, Artur Rubinstein and Krystian Zimmernan.

"It's really amazing that Steinway, which of course is akin to a Rolls Royce in the piano world, would choose me to become their ambassador. I'm honoured and humbled to find myself among such greats."

A chat with Gyorgy reveals his key in remaining down to earth: "All that I strive to do is to become a better musician and a better person in life. Once you are comfortable with staying at the same level, then you are sliding down."

The programme that KL evening included Bach's *Sheep May Safely Graze and Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, Chopin's *Ballade In G minor*, and Liszt's *La Campanella* and *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*.

Gyorgy begins his programme by improvising on popular tunes such as *Somewhere Over The Rainbow* and Keith Jarrett numbers, something that is not usually practiced by his

What drives Gyorgy the prodigy

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contemporaries.

"This actually helps to draw the audiences in. After all, music is a language to convey emotions and thoughts. Where words fail, music begins."

Gyorgy says that this reflects his personal view on music: "I believe there are no walls between classical and popular music. I speak the same language of music."

Gyorgy also firmly believes in playing music that you love. "People always ask me what my favourite piece is. Actually, all these are my favourite pieces. If not, how can people believe what you are playing?"

Gyorgy started playing at the age of four: "As a kid, I started to play melodies of popular music on the piano by ear even before classical training."

Considered a child prodigy just like Franz Liszt, Gyorgy was accepted into the Bela Bartok Conservatory at the age of 12. He later attended the Franz Liszt Academy and continued to win numerous awards in Hungary, Austria and Italy.

In October 2006, he debuted at Carnegie Hall for the first time. Gyorgy also became the first Hungarian pianist to be signed with a US label and has released a series of CDs and a DVD since.

While Gyorgy travels around the world, he maintains a strict order of discipline. He does not

smoke, drink alcohol and exercises regularly.

"Apart from music, sports play a big part in my life," says Gyorgy who jogs regularly and takes the chance to play soccer in every city he is in.

"What few people realise is that the physical and mental fitness is linked. I regularly go biking and running while playing the piano pieces in my head. This is a form of brain training where there is a lack of oxygen just like when you're playing onstage."

"Imagine, you're thinking about the fugatos in your head while biking. It certainly makes it easier when you're playing onstage," he says with a laugh.

How does he feel about the constant comparison to Franz Liszt? "People always want to put a parallelism but I just focus on becoming a better musician."

"To quote Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger: 'Experience is what you learn from experience.' You must constantly strive to improve yourself."

