

# YORKSHIRE POST

## TODAY

### WINNING STYLE: Antti entrances the judges

BY HOWARD WILLIAMSON



THE bookies' favourite, Antti Siirala of Finland, lived up to expectations and carried off first prize in a "phenomenal" Leeds International Pianoforte competition final.

He won a £12,000 cheque and over 100 concert engagements "enough to keep him busy for three years" and also scooped the Audience Award voted on by TV viewers, radio listeners and the capacity crowd at Leeds Town Hall.

Twelve hours after the event he faced the Press and admitted he had celebrated by drinking too much. "I only had five hours' sleep," he said, "I was so excited. It was a very stressful situation," he said, "but it went quite well for me. It is a big win, as this is considered the most important competition in Europe. The standard was really amazing. I have friends who have contracts with major record labels and even they couldn't get into the competition. And I heard people in the first round who played flawlessly and still didn't get through to the second round."

Antti, 24, who played Beethoven's concerto number Four in G in the final, said he would have a few days off before his next concert in several days' time. Dr Fanny Waterman, founder of the competition and chairman of the jury, said the

quality this year had been phenomenal. "Any one of the six finalists might have been a first prize winner in another year," she said. She admitted that the jury found listening to music 10 hours a day was a test of endurance but said the format of the competition would not be changed. "I do not think it is fair," she said, "to bring someone over from, say, Japan and listen to them for only 20 minutes. We have to give them time to show their talents."

There was praise from all the finalists for the competition, the organisers, the hospitality they received and the reception of the audience.

Ukrainian Igor Tchetuev, 23, who was many people's choice for the Audience Award, said: "It has been a joy for me to play in this hall."

Semi-finalist Boris Feiner, 22, of Israel said: "The competition has been marvellous. The organisers are really the best. Transport, accommodation, even the food was great."

Artur Pizarro of Portugal, the 1990 winner, who was commentating for television, said either Antti Siirala or runner-up Evgenia Rubinova, 25, of Uzbekistan, was worthy of first prize. He said of Miss Rubinova: "She is beyond competition prizes. She is an amazing artist." As well as her £6,000 second prize, she was later rewarded with the promise of a concert engagement in Leeds.

How they finished 1, Antti Siirala, Finland; 2, Evgenia Rubinova, Uzbekistan; 3, Yuma Osaki, Japan; 4, Igor Tchetuev, Ukraine; 5, Chiao-Ying Chang, Taiwan; 6, Sodi Braide, UK/Nigeria.

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