



# OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

**WINNER Sir Neville Marriner**

*The renowned pianist  
Murray Perabia salutes  
his distinguished colleague*

**N**eville and I have worked together a lot down the years. We recorded the two Mendelssohn concertos for CBS – I hate to think what year that was, probably the mid-1970s! We worked together often when he was with the Minnesota Orchestra – we did the Schumann Concerto and the Beethoven concertos – and then in London with the Academy we did all the Beethoven concertos for video. As a concerto partner he’s a wonderful support and very experienced, so when he’s working with a young player he can also tell them if things will work or if they won’t.

He has always done his homework but is also open to other ideas. He is very accommodating and you always feel very comfortable with him there. Neville is very cooperative and friendly – he has a great sense of humour which makes the rehearsals very enjoyable and he creates a wonderful atmosphere.

What’s extraordinary about Neville is how he gets his unique sound – the ‘Academy sound’, perhaps. I don’t know how he does it, it’s some sort of magic, and he gets them all to play to the best of their abilities. There’s no dictatorial business about it, it’s very natural music-making in a very

concentrated way and he creates a sound that’s alert and vibrant and has a real vitality to it.

I think because he started the Academy actually playing as Leader, the musicians can empathise with

him, and they don’t feel he’s leagues above them: he’s one of them. When I work with the Academy *without* Neville, I can sense his imprint on the ensemble. The ‘relaxed, disciplined’ approach that he has cultivated is always there; you don’t feel it’s a machine, you don’t feel it’s anything artificial. There’s a kind of relaxed atmosphere – fun but at the same time disciplined – and that’s something I very much appreciate.

Neville knows what’s good on record. He understands what works, so to speak. So sometimes that means pushing the tempi a little bit because he knows that will sound more vibrant on a recording, whereas it might sound rushed in a concert.

He brings out the instruments that need more attention – say a bassoon solo – by changing the dynamic, and on a recording it works, whereas in a concert it might not. If I had to single out one thing about Neville, it would be his sense of humour – it just makes working with him so enjoyable!



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