

Friday night concert at the Lublin Philharmonic - Review

Dorota Gonet



Avri Levitan - the Israeli violist - performed Bela Bartok's concerto with the Lublin Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Piotr Wjatkowski on Friday, 25 May 2007. He played with so much positive energy that everyone surely felt the effect.

From the first bars he caught the audience's attention with the unusually rich sound of his instrument. The timbre of Levitan's viola is powerful and sparkling with colours. The artist perfectly at home in the piece, recalling the best traditions of Bartok's style: imaginative, suggestive, colourful.

The evening began with the premier performance of a work by Wojciech Kilar composed two years ago. „Ricordanza per archi“ ties back in with the composer's highland folk style ; using folklore scales, with repetitive tunes typical for Kilar, changes in tempo and dynamics. After the strings performed the Ricordanza, the full symphonic orchestra appeared on stage and the soloist of the evening – smiling, at ease and winning over the audience - Avri Levitan.

The artist gave a very modern character to this three-movements viola concerto, written just before the composer's death, de facto unfinished (the final draft, strictly according to Bartok's instructions, was accomplished by the composer's student and friend Tibor Serly). The 60-year old piece sounded up-to-date and interesting, particularly thanks to Levitan's bold interpretation -the artist used the written music as a sort of foundation. From the musical score he drew/delineated references to Bartok's nature – as a researcher of folk music and the excellent composer of the third piano concerto – composed simultaneously with the viola concerto.

Levitan's playing evoked the drama of Bartok's passing away, while being in the highly creative period of life („I only regret that I have to leave with a full suitcase“ - said Bartok before his death), moved with its nostalgia and rejoiced with energy. The changing mood in the music didn't allow us any fatigue, and Avri Levitan himself played with so much positive energy that everyone surely felt the effect .

The orchestra conducted by Piotr Wjatkowski accompanied the soloist very well, expressively and with an excellent feeling for proportion. Thanks to that the performance felt very authentic which consequently gave one the opportunity to relish every sequent layer of the rich colour and wonderful sonic thoughts.

For the encore we received a true rarity: „Liebesleid“ by Fritz Kreisler - Avri Levitan invited musicians of the orchestra: Nurlan Alimbajew (violin), Artur Andrzejewski (viola) i Maria Błaszczak-Szost (cello) to join into the performance.

In the second part of the evening, the orchestra presented us with Beethoven's Sixth Symphony

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„Pastoral“. Here again we were given a rich colourful sound, so much different though from the Bartok concerto. The overwhelming sense of peace of the widely sketched themes was disturbed only by the sound of “Thunder” (Fourth Movement), however, no one got scared, despite the “lightnings” and “storm”. As usual, it was very pleasant to listen to the bird sounds (very dainty Second Movement) and dancing rhythms (Third Movement), as well as the calm evening song of the final movement.

After the restless and fascinating colours of the Bartok viola concerto, Beethoven's „Pastoral“ resounded somewhat naïve and official, but when the listener switched to those more pastel shades, he could also notice several moments of calm beauty in this music, too.

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