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Gewandhaus II

Strukturierte Leichtigkeit mit Camilla

Structured Lightness with Camilla

About 120 young musicians, aged between 12 and 18 years, took a seat on the Gewandhaus' Great Hall's stage on Friday night. They are all members of the El Camino Youth Symphony Orchestra from Palo Alto, California, and they are all US Americans.

Such a huge orchestra can sound rather noisy, one may think – and is going to experience the first surprise right in the first piece, Samuel Barber's Overture to "The School for Scandal": Under the light, clear and yet sweeping baton of the conductor Camilla Kolchinsky, the brass produces a full but, at the same time, immensely transparent sound. The solo oboe snuggles up to very light violins, delicate cheerfulness sounds full of fine irony. Who would have thought that so many instruments playing at the same time can be so quietly!

Hannah Pauline Tarley plays the solo part in Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's concerto for violin and orchestra in E Minor op. 64. The violinist – aged only 16 – elicits a lot of sensitive sweetness from her violin's strings, being a virtuoso nearly in passing: youthful light-heartedness meets enormous knowledge here. And the orchestra shows structured lightness again. In Pablo de Sarasate's "Navarra" for two violins and orchestra op. 33, Tarley scintillates in that tricky piece together with the concert master Timothy Yu who is of the same age.

In the concert's second part, after all, it becomes really loud – but only when it goes well with the music of Peter Tchaikovsky's Symphonie No. 4 in F Minor op. 36. And the audience is going to experience the second surprise: More than 100 young people belonging to twelve different nationalities are all of one Russian soul. The inner conflict between despair, hope and joie de vivre in Tchaikovsky's life's confession is seldom such a moving experience as with the El Camino Youth Symphony Orchestra. The deeply internalized enthusiasm and passion cannot really be seen in the young musicians' disciplined and self-controlled faces. But it can be heard all the more: Wonderful bassoon, clarinet and flute solo as early as in the Andante sostenuto, straight melodies in the Andantino, where delightful string and woodwind instruments fancifully wind themselves around, Russian elemental force forcing its way in the Scherzo and spreading in the opulent Finale. There is never-ending applause and cheering in the Gewandhaus' Great Hall, acclaiming the fantastic Americans quite rightly who would thank for it giving two encores.

Birgit Hendrich

The photo's caption:

Sweeping baton: conductor Camilla Kolchinsky