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„Mit Dirigentinnen ist das wie beim Frauen-Fußball“

„As for woman conductors, it is just the same as for women's soccer“

Guest performance in the Leipzig Gewandhaus: Camilla Kolchinsky about the El Camino Youth Symphony Orchestra from California

Tonight, the El Camino Youth Symphony Orchestra (ECYS) is going to give a guest performance in the Leipzig Gewandhaus under the baton of Camilla Kolchinsky. *Birgit Hendrich* talked to the conductor.

Question: A lady on the conductor's stand is rather rarely to be seen...

Camilla Kolchinsky: It is not that rare today, is it? There are a number of woman conductors now. During the last years, more and more women have got into that domain that used to be a typical men's one. For me, however, in the beginning, it was very difficult to get the opportunity.

So, how it was for you?

I had applied for study for four years before I was admitted to the conducting studies and I was told then I would have to give it up if my results were not satisfying ... Well, I was the best. But I had very good teachers! Even so, if I am the best, they promised as a woman conductor I would have no future. Amazingly, it became true, I was a conductor! After all, I appeared with the Bolshoi Theatre. And people have got used to see a woman conductor on the stand. Life changed. As for women conductors, it is just the same as for women's soccer: Only some years ago, they would say that women and soccer do not suit each other at all.

Now, you are on concert tour with the El Camino Youth Symphony Orchestra (ECYS).

Yes, I have been conducting the ECYS for 14 years now. This year, we gave a guest performance in Poland for the first time ever and will go to Germany giving concerts in Potsdam and Leipzig.

How young are the musicians in your orchestra?

In the Symphony Orchestra, there are young people at the age from 12 to 18 years: They are all still in school age. The ECYS was founded in 1963 in Palo Alto, California, comprising only 18 members. Today, there are almost 500 kids playing in six orchestras. The mission is to give children from the age of six up the opportunity to play in an orchestra and to perform challenging standard orchestral repertoire. The children play regarding to their musical education level in the different ECYS ensembles. It starts with beginning orchestra to develop the feeling of ensemble playing. We also have woodwind and string ensembles.

What is so special about the El Camino Youth Symphony Orchestra?

In the Senior Symphony Orchestra play the best of our senior students. We rehearse once a week and study a new programme including the great orchestra works every two months. We already did all Beethoven symphonies as well as symphonies by Brahms, Sibelius or

Tchaikovsky. In the ECYS, we have got excellent young musicians, brilliant soloists – but what shall I tell you about it. You should listen to it! You will hear it by your own in the Gewandhaus.

@ tonight, 8 p.m. Gewandhaus, Great Hall. El Camino Youth Symphony Orchestra playing works by Barber, Mendelssohn, de Sarasate and Tchaikovsky. Tickets: tel 0341-1270280, www.gewandhaus.de

extra box **“Zur Person”**:

Personal details

Camilla Kolchinsky graduated her studies at the State Music Conservatory of Moscow and completed the doctoral level program in conducting at the State Music Conservatory of Leningrad (St. Petersburg). She appeared regularly with the National USSR State Orchestra, the Moscow Philharmonic and the Bolshoi Theater. In 1976, she came to the West. Since then, she has conducted renowned orchestras such as the Philharmonic Orchestra in London, the Israel Philharmonic or the Swedish Radio Orchestra in Stockholm. Dr. Camilla Kolchinsky is the El Camino Youth Symphony’s Music Director and conductor of the Symphony, Sinfonietta and Galbraith Honor Strings. The charming Russian keeps her age to herself ...

photo of Camilla Kolchinsky / caption:

“Well, I was the best”: Camilla Kolchinsky will conduct in the Gewandhaus tonight