

martinů in liestal

the orchester liestal & mirjam tschopp performed the rhapsody-concerto

WHEN I SAY, "Martinů has accompanied me my whole life", that's only a slight exaggeration: at the age of ten I heard his music on the radio and absolutely wanted to play it. My teacher was surprised by this, but knew of my passion for rhythm and strange sounds and supported me as much as he could: in a very short time I learned the *Sonatina*, the *Arabesques* and the two *Trios for two Violins and Piano*. As a 15-year-old, I fell in love with the initial cadenza of the 2nd Violin Concerto and also studied that piece. Later on, the double and triple concertos and numerous chamber music works were added. And so there is no composer who has accompanied me similarly long and of whom I've played as many works. I can no longer remember what first fascinated me about Martinů's music as a child. Today - 30 years later - playing Martinů feels to me like coming home.

But none of Martinů's works has ever meant as much to me as the *Rhapsody-Concerto* for viola! It is as if it told a whole life story... For me, the *Rhapsody* was also the reason to seriously study the viola -



and to this day it remains one of my favorite works ever. But what is the reason for this fascination?

The *Rhapsody* combines the best elements of Martinů's music in a rousing manner and challenges the viola without ever going beyond the limits of this instrument. The depth of Martinů's music lies in the harmonic sound shifts, in the flow of the melodies and in its motoric quality. This is a transparent music that remains sensual even if it always follows an inner logic. The dark, wistful, even rough viola adds an additional component to these characteristics. The moods change very fast between extremes: from sometimes humorous, but often harsh, even aggressive-intense and "groovy" sections directly to deeply sad cantilenas which radiate hope and light. This accounts for the seemingly free rhapsodic character of this work and is, in my eyes, the reason why this piece is always a great success with the audience.

And so was the case also in Liestal: together with the Orchester Liestal (OLi), one of the oldest and most ambitious amateur orchestras in Switzerland. In weeks of very intense work, we prepared the *Rhapsody-Concerto* and performed it on 7 and 8 November 2015 under the baton of Roberto Fabbroni with great success.

The OLi, located in the beautiful, small town near Basel where Martinů lived in his late years, has always been open to recent literature. Nevertheless, Martinů's music posed a very special challenge: his rhythmically difficult writing at first caused many members of the orchestra find the work unplayable. However, as soon as it began to sound, as soon as there was a sense for the dynamics of the work, the rhythms lost their frightening complexity and the beauty of this music became apparent. Nonetheless: until the end everybody had to be very attentive and very present.

For me personally, this project was a very special one: hardly ever has a performance of this work made me so happy. Not only because these 50 amateur musicians, with utmost seriousness and admirable dedication, gave their absolute best (and they were really good!), but also because there was a special energy behind everything, an energy that enabled a true dialogue between my solo part and the orchestra during the concerts.

I am convinced that a composer has really connected with the audience precisely in the moment when he is not played by only the great stars of the music world. And so I hope - no, actually, I am sure - that Martinů would have enjoyed this beautiful project very much!

Mirjam Tschopp, violinist and violist,
member of IMC, November 2015

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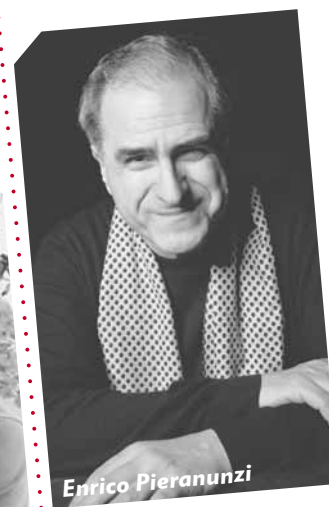
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20 years



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