

Virtuoso to the Extreme Daniil Trifonov in the Stadtcasino

Basel. The AMG concert series 'World Orchestras' focuses on international guest orchestras. Anticipation was particularly high in Basel's Stadtcasino on Tuesday. The excitement was due in part to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, but in even greater part to Daniil Trifonov, the Russian pianist who has shot to fame after winning the International Tchaikovsky Competition five years ago. The bar was set very high right from the start – first by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. What the musicians presented under their Austrian conductor Manfred Honeck in Haydn's first 'London Symphony', Hob. I:93, exceeded all expectations. Noble innocence and mysterious wit were two sides of the same coin in this interpretation. The play with the tempo was particularly convincing so that the seemingly well-behaved minuet seemed slightly hypertensive, the finale quivered nervously, and the largo cantabile sometimes came across as overblown, while at other times it flowed on in triplets.

Like a murderous engine

The way to Liszt's Piano Concerto no. 1 was not far off anymore. Here too there were depths into which the soloist then descended. The breadth of expression with which Trifonov did this was breath-taking: it was possible to understand his arpeggios as absent-minded playing, and his trills as the twinkling of stars that was continued by the triangle. But the never-fading flood of sound also became the symbol of an inner pain that took with it everything in its path. The tension became so great that the cascades of sound positively froze.

However, there was also a fly in the ointment: the woodwinds seemed somewhat pale beside the soloist (with the exception of the flute), the third movement lacked a dash of terpsichorean lightness and the brass players threatened to overpower the pianist's performance towards the end. That did not change the audience's exceptionally positive reception, which was rewarded by a flittingly light encore by Trifonov.

The high standard continued in Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. The orchestra hauntingly interpreted a work characterized by mortal fears. There was interim applause after the third movement, in which the folkloric marching motif developed into a murderous engine. The *adagio lamentoso*, the final movement, was the fitting lament.