

Daniil Trifonov in Frankfurt Rehearse, Shoot, Tune

Maybe it is a sign of uninhibited musicality: rehearsing the tricky sections of the upcoming performance loudly on stage in the presence of the audience before the start of the concert as the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra did in Frankfurt's Alte Oper. It is rare to experience something like this in such patent innocence. Everyone for themselves, from the violinist, to the heavy brass and the percussionist, who put on a complete rehearsal of his contribution – quite a patience-trying part of the programme when presented as a solo performance. Taken as a whole, the cacophony of the short cuts from Beethoven's Coriolanus overture, Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto and Tchaikovsky's Pathétique could almost have passed as a poly-stylistic brutism and therefore as the first piece of the guest performance.

Despite the noisy rehearsal, the first four violins of the 117-year-old orchestra entered the stage at decent intervals and in a dignified manner, one by one, in strict hierarchy, taking their places from the second spot on the left to the first on the right.

In Supersize

Manfred Honeck, born in Austria and the orchestra's principal conductor since 2008, placed emphases during the Coriolanus Overture that came like a bullet from a gun. The character overture composed in 1807 to accompany a contemporary drama about a hero embroiled in turbulences and resignation was presented in articulatory supersize and perfectly exhibited the orchestral mechanics.

The star of the Pro Arte concert came into play with Rachmaninoff's piano concerto: Daniil Trifonov. The 25-year-old, now with a beard covering his delicate face like a ghost of Russian-melancholy pallid genius, usually sat with his head dropped on to his chest, laconically and directly operating the keys unmoved, without digressions, with the perfect technique of his hands. With such a mass of sound whirling around, this could have been the austerity of rigid inwardness. In addition there was a broad orchestral spectrum of such volume as to make the soloist almost inaudible at times.

The evening ended with Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, which showed up with a high degree of manic form-frictions in the first movement, thanks to the American orchestral potency. The terpsichorean second movement was somewhat inconspicuous; the suggestive sound of the scherzo came across as somewhat stiff, but at times also seemed to have escaped from an always too strident quick-march. The adagio lamentoso took the audience into deep musical abysses.

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