

## **Drama to the Point of Breathlessness**

### **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Daniil Trifonov**

He is quick to rush to the concert piano, bows deeply and starts quite suddenly with the solo opening of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto: Daniil Trifonov, a musician who has won numerous awards and been showered with both hymns of praise and criticism by the music community. It was not just Trifonov's technical brilliance that was impressive, it was also how empathetically and intelligently he accompanied the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in the first movement when the usual roles of an instrumental concerto become switched. During the slow movement Trifonov opted for a transparent approach, thereby achieving a maximum of naturalness. During the final movement he put his foot on the accelerator, at times being slightly ahead of the Pittsburgh musicians in his urge to forge ahead, which only served to increase the titillation of this suspenseful music. With the drama of a massive ritardando he then created an acute breathlessness prior to the concluding maestoso.

Conductor Manfred Honeck demanded that his orchestra deliver precise articulation – that much already became clear during the lashing opening chords of Beethoven's Coriolanus Overture. During Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony this produced unusual but attractive percussive moments. The brass sounded typically American: garish, sharp-pointed and harsh. This was impressive and, in the second movement in particular, broke through the bacchanal sea of strings, giving the pathos a threatening dimension. Honeck was also masterful in the austere development of this movement, starting from silence and ebbing back to silence. The audience thanked the guest musicians who reciprocated with two encores, including a clarinet improvisation of the Bayerischer Defiliermarsch.

### **A Shot from a Pistol**

**Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Anne-Sophie Mutter**

For the final stop on their European tour the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and their conductor Manfred Honeck played in the sold out Philharmonie on Saturday. The concert got off to a stormy start with Dvořák's Carnival Overture, whose vitality Honeck enhanced with gripping percussion fortissimos. Just how much the orchestra and its long-standing Austrian musical director are in harmony with each other was evidenced during Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. It is rare for the dynamic differentiation in the Pathétique to be this vivid. In

the first movement, after the quintuple pianissimo for the clarinet, Honeck produced a forte that exploded like a shot from a pistol. He made as much room for the feastful melodies of the strings at the start of the second movement as he did for the opening theme of the third movement, which was embarked on as light as a feather. Anne-Sophie Mutter was awaited with excited anticipation. For her performance with the PSO the violinist picked Dvořák's concerto. Be it the main theme with its Slavic hue, the rousing rhythm, or the dreamy secondary motif in the first movement – all of these different nuances come confidently to Mutter, flowing from her hands with a naturalness that is refreshing for such a global star. Even the most virtuoso and technically demanding passages sound completely effortless for her.

In chamber music sections, Mutter regularly communicates with the individual musicians, merging the solo voice with the sound of the orchestra, thereby fabulously managing the tightrope walk between being a soloist and being a member of the orchestra. Excited applause, lasting for several minutes, several encores and standing ovations for the PSO, Honeck and Mutter!

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