

Hamburger Abendblatt, 28 October 2019

### **Unchallenged and exaggerated**

Lang Lang's short performance with a Mozart concerto and the Pittsburgh Symphony at the Elbphilharmonie

By Joachim Mischke

At this very spectacular, but above all very special concert evening there was nobody in the spotlight who did not deserve sympathy. For very different reasons, however. With a fast-paced, brilliant performance of Shostakovich's Fifth, at their debut in the Elbphilharmonie the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra made it clear that the division of the top US orchestras into "Big Five" - without Pittsburgh - and the rest is unfair and too narrowly considered. The brass was dynamite, as it is proper for many of these orchestral turbines from the New World; the audible fun of the show's possibilities was immense.

### **Lots of beautiful moments, wonderfully accomplished**

The sarcasm that Shostakovich composed into the Finale of the Fifth got a hint of Las Vegas flavour, but the desperate, Mahlerian middle movements were exquisitely crafted and dynamically exhausted to the limit of the possibilities this hall can offer an orchestra with good nerves. And Mason Bates' "Resurrexit", ordered by Pittsburgh in 2018, which opened the evening? Pretty, whatever. A scoop of avant-garde globules with a tinge of film music, 15 minutes of New Music for an audience that does not like listening to New Music at all, enabled to feel better afterwards for a brief moment, because everything was so nicely harmless and nothing much, and most certainly somehow appealing.

But probably - and therefore unfortunately - only a small part of the audience may have come to the big hall to see how well the Austrian has his Pennsylvania business under control in the Shostakovich. Most of them had come to experience what it is like and what it sounds like when the most famous pianist in the world wants to reinvent himself.

[The rest of the review is entirely about Lang Lang, the only reference to the orchestra is: There was much soliloquy in the second movement, oh s the orchestra was permitted to assist.]