

## Heroes and Anti-heroes: Brett Dean at the Grafenegg Festival



(nmz) -

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[...]

Dean's music is so direct that even the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, touring Europe with its chief conductor Manfred Honeck, performed one of his works in the Wolkenturm-Arena. *Komarov's Fall* (2006), the third part of the orchestra triptych *Three Memorials*, depicts the death in space of the cosmonaut Vladimir Mikhailovich Komarov. Motoric textures hint at the spaceship while glassy strings hang weightless in the atmosphere. Percolating woodwind builds up the tension before a woodblock suddenly interrupts everything. Celeste, flutes and barely audible strings hover in the void.

After that, the star pianist Yuja Wang appeared with an idiosyncratic interpretation of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto. Her extremely short mini-dress doubtless aroused as much attention that her playing, which was, actually, virtuoso. Honeck's interpretation of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, and the thoroughbred commitment of the musicians were breathtaking. A profound tension pervaded the performance from beginning to end. This was even retained during the lively dance-like playing of the Sardinian waltz in the *Allegro*. The orchestra was also generous in giving two encores: an entr'acte from Bizet's *Carmen* and the Gallop from Khachaturian's *Masquerade Suite* with a witty cadence by the solo clarinetist, who winked at the audience with quotes from the music of Johann Strauss and from *The Sound of Music*.

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