

Theatre and Philharmonic Orchestra
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Eye-to-Eye with the Concert Master

Cello star Daniel Müller-Schott at the 6th Philharmonic Concert in the Heidelberg City Auditorium

By Rainer Köhl

The road from Baroque to Classical is a gradual and flowing one sometimes determined by the sounds of the instruments. The warm, round, luscious tones which Daniel Müller-Schott released from his wonderful Gofriller-Cello of 1727 in Haydn's Cello Concerto at the 6th Philharmonic Concert in the City Auditorium in Heidelberg – that was pure baroque.

With tones of sumptuous fullness, exceedingly hedonistic and almost sweet, the musician charmed tremendously sensual swelling tones from his instrument: There was (in the slow movement) a yearning and indulgence in accordance with all artistic rules of baroque enjoyment. There, he let his solo sing like a quiet, sweet madrigal. And, in the first and last movements, the virtuoso temperament of Müller-Schott broke through in an absolutely powerful manner, with spider-web-fine sounds like a violin in high ranges, and dashing verve and fire.

During the performance, he communicated exceedingly reactively with the Heidelberg Philharmonic, always eye-to-eye with concert master Thierry Stöckel. The orchestra found itself audibly inspired by the cellist and played the music with easy excitement, fully awake and sensual. Daniel Müller-Schott gave thanks for the enthusiastic applause from the audience through Ravel's ravishingly enticing and sensuously played "Habanera".

The evening began with Erik Satie's "Parade". This exceptional ballet music describes a circus scene, whereby three men try to lure passersby into a circus show and three artists provide samples from their program. The young American guest director Scott Parkman splendidly brought the colorful richness of the musical score to its fullest, letting the musicians initially play comfortably and appreciatively, only to then boast powerfully with amusingly parading, marching and waltzing rhythms. The noise of a large city (including typewriter, wheel of fortune, and a pistol shot) created a burlesque room for itself in perfect tutti sections and ponderous and (satirically) important sounding brass parades which come up in spades with a round, lush sound.

The main piece after the intermission was Rimski-Korsakov's "Sheherazade". Calmly and circumspectly, Scott Parkman created undulating tutti with lush sounds, omitting, meanwhile, all the whipped cream which one normally hears. The director instead formed harmonic and tonal elegance in detailed filigree work, wonderfully light and delicate in floating lyricism.

He paid the most attention to the quiet segments through which great expression and subtle tension were woven. The fairytale-like magic of this sumptuously carousing music was held free from all sugar coating without forfeiting sensuality. Parkman didn't make a global bravura performance of it, and yet there was enough puissance in the presentation.

The Heidelberg Symphonic surpassed itself with pithy march rhythms and rousing folklore. Equally voluptuous and quizzical were the sounds of the third movement. Parkman had them play the fourth movement in full temperament, and the Philharmonic brought great virtuosity at rapid tempi into play, crowned by fully sounding tutti expansions.

All instrument groups were very well prepared, with magnificent solos from the brass and the cellos. Special recognition goes to concert master Thierry Stöckel who let his violin solos glow iridescently in colorful and fanciful singing.