

Yury Revich – In Step With the Times

by Renate Publig



Audiences testify to young violinist Yury Revich's astounding musical maturity. He is at home in all great concert halls of the world, has been decorated with several renowned awards such as the ECHO Klassik 2016. He already curates his own Vienna concert series – although: to merely talk of concerts would be falling short; one of his central concerns being to interest a young audience in culture with new forms of presentation.

Revich is the scion of a violinist dynasty; his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and his elder sister played this instrument. And so, it is not surprising that he received his first violin lessons at the age of five: 'At that age one naturally wants to try out everything, including the violin. And the fascination with this instrument has remained!' Revich studied at the Central

Music Academy of the Moscow Conservatory before moving to Vienna at the age of 17. 'Nowadays I live here, this city provides so many opportunities – not only musically! Here we find good food, modern music, baroque music, exhibitions ...'

Through the Performer's Mirror

If the programme includes pieces Revich newly prepares he stays true to one rule: He does not listen to other musicians' performances as he considers it essential to find his own interpretation with as little extraneous influence as possible. To gain more complete access to the individual works he studies the times of the piece's creation and the biography of the composer. 'I try to fathom the style in which the piece was played at the time of its creation. Some elements, some fundamentals I keep, but I don't want to perform a "copy" of the past, it's important to me to interpret works in the form I feel today. I don't want to exclude performance techniques and idioms developed in the meanwhile!'

Audience members experience music most memorably when they hear the piece according to the composer's intentions, but through the 'mirror' of the performer. 'Only to play notes, without any personal point of view – that's not enough for me. It reminds me a bit of fashion shows where the models present the clothes without "filling" them!'

In Step With the Times

Revich dedicates a lot of his time to the contemporary repertoire: 'Learning contemporary pieces is often more difficult because of the playing techniques, the harmony. It would be more comfortable to continue to perform always the same couple of pieces; but that would mean an arrested development.' Revich also discounts the argument that one has to practice contemporary works more: 'For any expressive interpretation one needs to prepare intensively. At the moment, I'm in the process of studying Paganini's 24 Caprices, in an arrangement with orchestra. Or the works of Johannes Brahms – they're anything but easy! But – I can't say that I do practice Brahms, but not contemporary music. I'd simply neglect an entire and diverse spectrum!'

He especially enjoys the opportunity of exchange with the composers about their pieces. This is also how the collaboration with Johanna Doderer developed: 'In the project "Ganymed goes Europe" in the Kunsthistorisches Museum the subject matter was the combination of optical and acoustical impressions; musicians performed a piece of music in front of a certain painting. I played a piece by Johanna Doderer, with whom I have since come to work closely, in front of Pieter Bruegel's "Procession to Calvary". Doderer is a highly interesting person, I find her works and the collaboration with her very inspiring. This is also why some of

her compositions will also make appearances at the next concert of my series "Friday Nights". He also wrote the cadenza to Johanna Doderer's 2nd violin concerto, 'In Breath of Time'. This work will be performed in November 2017 – played, however, by violinist Natalia Sagmeister

Need for Strategic Action

Although a satisfying number of excellent young artists are devoted to furthering contemporary music one still meets a certain reservation from the organizers to actually include these works in the programmes. 'In Austria, the festival Wien modern, a marvellous institution, is dedicated to contemporary music, but performs mostly music that demands from its audience a certain kind of experience. Inexperienced listeners draw the conclusion that contemporary music is "way-out". This is aggravated by the fact that many people attend one or two concerts per year, preferring to hear music they know and like. They are shocked when something contemporary is part of the programme. And this is why one needs "transitions", conveyances, passages; to make the audience used to new sounds one should include 20th and 21st century music that remains tonal.' The young musician shows a special interest in Friedrich Cerha's **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra**. Hopefully this article is read by a director who decides to program this masterpiece which is performed far too rarely!

Revich pursues this strategy in projects he helms himself. In autumn 2017, e. g., he is the 'artistic director in residence' of Alpenarte Schwarzenberg, where he has the opportunity to make programmes for four to five concerts: 'In my concerts there will be performed baroque and romantic pieces, but also contemporary works. Every member of the audience should be able to find something suited to their own taste, at the same arousing their curiosity about works from other styles.'

Friday Nights

Revich incorporates the fact that people are frequently more intensively approachable by addressing more than one sense in his 'Friday Nights' series: 'This series exists for three years. The events are neither pure concerts, nor exhibitions or performance shows, our term is "concert of arts"; we offer a kaleidoscope of music ranging from the baroque to the contemporary eras. Both young and established artists find their rostrum; musicians, actors, dancers, visual and performance artists; once a year we even include fashion. Not in the sense of a classical fashion show, but in the sense of an integration of clothes as an artistic expression. This year the series consists of five concerts; the last one is on 19 June in the Belvedere; once again we will include many art forms: apart from music, theatre and dance we present an installation. The setting is in front of Gustav Klimt's painting "The Kiss". Every year we have two young "artists in residence"; this year we present double-bassist Dominik Wagner, who, of course, will be performing the double bass ballade by his father, Wolfram Wagner.'

Financing this series is a difficult endeavour by the limitations of public funding: 'Of course it takes time until a concert series

is able to establish itself; one needs to be quite tenacious. Without private sponsorship it would be impossible to finance a series. But many very prominent artists support us by participating, such as Ferhan and Ferzan Önder, Christa Ludwig, Maresa Hörbiger and Angelika Kirchschlager!'

Social Commitment

Apart from his musical and cultural-political commitments Revich is active also in many social projects; thus, he has been 'Young Peace Ambassador', he made a short film about 'Homeless' and organized a gala concert for the Austrian Autism Federation (Autistenhilfe). 'As an artist, I am in the process of developing my career, there are so many plans and dreams to realize. But apart from that it is impossible to look away from reality, from the many problems under the sun. The individual often feels not to be able to do much, but perhaps one reaches a wider audience as an artist. The key is "awareness", to make aware of problems! Let's take, for example, autism: therapeutic treatment is many times more efficient in enhancing the quality of life if it occurs at an early age, before 11. This, of course, needs an early autism diagnosis, but our insurances don't pay for this!'

Film and Leisure

Whenever the opportunity to express himself becomes too narrow for him, Revich engages in the medium of film: 'Film is my hobby; the dramaturgical grasp fascinates me. On YouTube you can find two of my films; the music, too, is by me. To film opens up various possibilities, the combination of moving picture and acoustical perception.'

It is clear that leisure time is an important subject, as with any successful artist. 'I think it is a blessing to be able to play the music I love. But occasionally it is important to me to take half an hour just for thinking. Exit from the rhythm, abstract the daily routine. I also like to compose. But it is also important to meet friends and to exchange views – and my circle of friends doesn't only consist of musicians. There are often parallels to the most varied professions, one only has to look for them!'

