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Slider Ultima oră

German supreme discipline

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The concert in the Philharmonic Hall, which took place on Thursday, November 10, 2022, featured Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, that all-time masterpiece of symphonic composition whose fourth movement is famous for the Ode to Joy, which was adopted centuries later as the European anthem.



Because the daily and even twice-daily rehearsals, which had begun the previous Saturday, were out of the ordinary, the musicians saw them as something of an ordeal. Even if they were initially put out, they also remembered that years ago, when Konrad von Abel came to conduct the same tumultuous work, the rehearsals went on for two weeks — at the end of which the audience was treated to a breathtaking performance the like of which had never been heard in Craiova.

So patience and prudence were therefore called for, because the German conductor Maximilian Haberstock clearly knows what he wants; though he is just 18 years old, he has astonishing strength of personality. It can be difficult when someone so young looks at you and says: „That's not good.“ For musicians who have played all their lives, it is not easy, after thirty years in the profession, to be told that there is a different way to interpret a work. Unlike us, Maximilian is a descendant of Beethoven. He feels what Beethoven felt and invites us to follow him, to reproduce in sound the oscillations of the composer's soul. This is no mean feat but sublime when it succeeds. And thus with tact and professionalism, Maximilian Haberstock managed to transform a hundred individuals—orchestra plus choir—into a homogeneous body that vibrated at the highest artistic level, something these musicians had not experienced for a long time. In the end, they were proud of, and delighted with, their resounding success.

Maximilian is breathtaking, he is fantastic! What I mean by this is that Maximilian Haberstock—pianist, composer, conductor—is a genius. Reading, after the concert, about his professional development, I learned that he is a pianist who debuted when he was six, that he won a prize for the best symphonic work composed by a young person, that he was invited by the German president to perform in a gala concert at thirteen years of age, that he has his own chamber orchestra and puts on concerts in order to raise funds to enable poor children to attend school. After the concert I expressed the following wish to him: “Maximilian, over the next ten years you must become the best in the world!” Modestly, but looking at me with big eyes that sparkled with joy, he replied: “I hope so! It's difficult but I'll do my best to get there!”





And now a little about what we heard and saw during the evening. Firstly, Maximilian Haberstock worked on the basis of a well-thought-through concept, and in so doing guided the orchestra and choir to the highest levels of attainment - a young man transforming the mature adults he was working with, all of whom were strangers to him, into living instruments in his hand. In order to achieve this he arrived with a written work schedule, set out by day and hour, and orchestral materials containing handwritten performance instructions for every musician. Unprecedented! Secondly, he came with a complete German interpretation that was unfamiliar to us. From the very beginning the stage was full, with orchestra and choir present from the outset and conveying an image of solidity: a wall of musicians strong and resolute, rising up powerfully, confidently and with dignity ready to conjure into existence this work by the incomparable Ludwig van Beethoven. I happened to know that for the first-ever public performance, planned by the titan of Bonn himself, three orchestras and three choirs had rehearsed for an entire month and that the magnificent, unparalleled performance had sent the audience into raptures. And I said to myself: "So that's how he does it, moreover he knows exactly, and as if innately, what he wants."

And then the young Maximilian Haberstock showed his true class by standing immaculately on the podium and conducting from memory with no score before him. What self-confidence! Of course, this had been preceded by an enormous amount of hard work. Musical phrases had been repeated dozens of times, with every instrument finely nuanced until, the day before the performance, everything was perfect and had been internalized by the musicians. [...] The musicians looked at him with a mixture of awe, love, and respect when they realized what they had achieved through all their hard work. Maximilian had waved a magic wand and opened up the path to perfection. [...] He knows what high standards are and is uncompromising in his pursuit of them. This is how he has managed to achieve so much already.

I listened to the gentle beginnings of the symphony, which emerge from the depths like a mist, like a dream, and asked myself: are these the first stirrings of life, intimations of nature, or the birth of the people to which composer and conductor belong? I have listened to different interpretations and ascertained that only the Germans have this school of initially such withdrawn, reserved expression, which then builds, develops into something all-embracing, dominates, and is ultimately triumphant.

Something amazing happened on stage: through the interpretation he elicited from them, the conductor had immersed the musicians in the melody and its magic. This unleashed an enormous energy that permeated the room and gave full power to the music. It was not just sound; emanating from that music was soul and thought and life. Maximilian Haberstock understands the musical magic with which the composer has encompassed the entire history of mankind and that of his own nation. But more than that, the young conductor has the power to enable the orchestra to recreate all this in a way I have not witnessed for a long time. Years ago, when Misha Katz conducted Shostakovich after the interval, I wondered whether a different orchestra had come on. But this time the magician is only eighteen! [...]



