

ST. GALLER TAGBLATT
25 January 2016

Tablas Conquer the St. Gallen Tonhalle

ST. GALLEN

Unfortunately, St. Gallen will no longer often experience orchestras travelling from such distance to perform here, as after this season, Migros Kulturprozent Classics will cut St. Gallen's Tonhalle from its tour plan. So we must enjoy it now while it lasts.

Enter Zakir Hussain

The Symphony Orchestra of India concert under Zane Dalal Friday evening was indeed pure enjoyment. Even a composer, in flesh and blood, had journeyed here to deliver an interpretation of his own work:

Following the spirited performance of Smetana's "Bartered Bride," room was made on stage for a type of platform on which Zakir Hussain seated himself with his tablas.

Tablas are Indian kettledrums, which are played using the fingers on both hands, at times even the palms of the hands. They are used in tandem, but sound differently. The smaller drum is played with the dominant hand.

A Colourful Sound Painting

And Zakir Hussain's "Peshkar," a concerto for tabla and orchestra, did indeed commence with the sound of drums, evoking at times a romantic playfulness, and at other times displaying dazzling jazzy rhythms. It became audible that this man previously had worked together with musicians such as Van Morrison, Joe Henderson and, in particular, the guitarist John McLaughlin.

Hussain dexterously integrated the individual instrument groups, and here and there made room for the solo instruments of the orchestra to blossom. A colourful sound painting unfolded in front of the audience, who listened attentively to this unfamiliar music- and at the end - showed its appreciation with a standing ovation, quite uncharacteristic for St. Gallen. The ovation was of course predominantly directed at Zakir Hussain, who had been able to cajole such a variety of sound out of the small drums with his incredibly virtuosic hands.

Béla Bartok at the End

The applause at the end of the second half reached almost the same level of enthusiasm. Zane Dalal shaped Béla Bartok's "Concerto for Orchestra" with extreme care, true to the sensuous and serene beauty, which makes this masterwork of the 20th century an 'experience'.

Rolf App

Translation: Olav Balslev