

## Seen and Heard International

Switzerland **Stravinsky, Mozart, Purcell and Ellington**: Geneva Camerata, Yaron Herman (Jazz Piano), David Greilsammer (Piano and Conductor), Batiment des Forces Motrices, 16.01.2014



**Stravinsky** – Dumbarton Oaks

**Mozart** – Concerto for piano K 543

**Purcell** – The Fairy Queen (Suite arranged by Massimo Pinca)

**Mozart Ellington** – Improvisations

In a world where classical music has regular Freudian angst about its future and where orchestras have to fight for their survival, Israeli born pianist David Greilsammer has been associated with some mind-provoking entrepreneurial ventures. He mixes baroque and contemporary side by side such as scheduling Scarlatti and Cage on the same program or performing in unusual places like the Geneva Airport or the Geneva's "Usine" (which normally hosts Rock and Electronic music events).

His latest and boldest initiative has been to secure support for the Geneva Camerata, a new ensemble where he has selected each player with the goal of broadening and mixing repertoires and styles. In these days when art funding can be in limited supply and where artists still tend to believe that everything is secondary to the preparation for them to perform, one has to admire the chutzpah this represents.

Such a visionary attitude has led Greilsammer to develop a faithful public in Switzerland. While this week was an unusual busy one for Geneva's music lovers with the presence 3 days apart of the Vienna Philharmonic, The London Symphony Orchestra and The Basle Chamber Orchestra, the hall was full for his concert.

The first half of the evening was not fully satisfactory. Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks* was taken very seriously and the humor of the piece was missing. Mozart's K. 543 piano concerto benefited from some nice crisp playing from Greilsammer but there were too many "visible" tempi changes and his overly refined cadences broke the youthful pulse with which he had begun.

The second half was more satisfying. The orchestra which had played the Mozart using baroque techniques was much more at ease with the Purcell. They were in their element with more color and a steadier pulse. This time however, Jazz work was played in between the various pieces, first by Massimo Pinca, bassist of the orchestra and then by Jazz pianist, Yaron Herman. The same mélange was then repeated with the slow movement of Mozart's K 415, started by Greilsammer who then let Herman play jazz pieces accompanied by the orchestra's soloists. The entire ensemble finished with a delightfully energetic Ellington piece before giving an encore on the same principle with the second movement of Mozart K. 330 Sonata. The Jazz pieces were not played after the Purcell or Mozart was finished, but rather in the middle of it when a specific rhythm or chord allowed for a change of mood.

For such a collage to work, much depends on the artists. There was definitely quite a lot of work for all this diverse music to flow effortlessly. Yaron Herman proved to be a superb pianist. He had plenty of tones, swings and drive. The Purcell piece was more an ostinato until a violinist switched places with the *Konzertmeister* and delivered a bluesy part "with feelings". In the Mozart – Ellington, the clarinetist, who played with brilliance and similarly enjoyed himself tremendously, accompanied Herman. I would not say that it was a rediscovery having Mozart played in this radically different way but these were enjoyable performances that made one want to hear more, either of Herman or of Purcell for this matter.

So this was an unusual concert, a brainy first half that took itself a little too seriously and a second one more relaxed and fun. It was also a quite a long evening, starting at 20:00 and finishing at 23:00 (with many concertgoers living outside of Geneva). The Camerata's first season has some ambitious programs that will include music from Lully, Purcell to Carter's Flute Concerto and Ligeti's violin concerto. They will also play in hospitals and perform Bach's Brandenburg Concerti at Geneva's Museum of Art and History, each concerto in a different room. They will collaborate with dance groups and visual art artists ...

These events will allow us to see if Greilsammer's wager will work and if indeed it will take classical music out of its cozy corner. In these days, when initiatives are rare, this one certainly deserves our attention.

***Antoine Leboyer***