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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

A Masterful Evening of Choral Splendor

Vienna Concert Hall, 30.06.2024 [ENA]

The ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien and Wiener Singakademie Perform Orff's "Carmina Burana" which was a masterful evening of choral splendor. The performance of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana" by the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, Wiener Singakademie, and an exceptional trio of soloists under the baton of Tobias Wögerer was a tour de force that left the audience at the Vienna Concert Hall enthralled.

This event, which also featured Francis Poulenc's "Gloria" as an opener, showcased not only the technical prowess and emotional depth of the performers but also the timeless power of choral music. The evening began with Poulenc's "Gloria," a work that, despite its mid-20th century origins, felt timeless and vibrant. The ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, under Wögerer's precise and expressive direction, brought out the full spectrum of Poulenc's orchestration, from the jubilant brass fanfares to the serene woodwind passages. The Wiener Singakademie, prepared meticulously by Heinz Ferlesch, delivered a performance that was both robust and nuanced, capturing the contrasting moods of the "Gloria" with ease.

Alina Wunderlin's soprano solos were particularly notable. Her voice, clear and radiant, soared effortlessly above the choir and orchestra, bringing a sense of purity and devotion to Poulenc's melodic lines. The interplay between the soloist and the choral sections was seamless, a testament to the careful preparation and innate musicality of all involved.

The transition to Orff's "Carmina Burana" was marked by an anticipatory hush in the audience, a silence soon filled by the thunderous opening "O Fortuna." From the first notes, it was clear that this performance would be something extraordinary.

The Wiener Singakademie, alongside the Mädchen des Chorus Juventus and Wiener Chormädchen, prepared by Stefan Foidl and Daniel Erazo respectively, created a wall of sound that was both powerful and precise. The combined choral forces were nothing short of spectacular. The Wiener Singakademie's deep, resonant voices provided a solid foundation, while the Mädchen des Chorus Juventus and Wiener Chormädchen added brightness and clarity. The balance between the choirs was impeccable, allowing the intricate polyphony and dynamic contrasts of Orff's composition to shine through.

Each section of the choir was responsive to Wögerer's direction, executing sudden shifts in dynamics and tempo with a cohesiveness that can only be achieved through rigorous rehearsal and innate musical

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sensitivity.

The trio of soloists - Alina Wunderlin (soprano), Caspar Singh (tenor), and Daniel Schmutzhard (baritone) - brought their own unique strengths to the performance. Wunderlin, already notable from her role in Poulenc's "Gloria," continued to impress with her versatile voice. Her rendition of "In trutina" was particularly moving, her voice embodying the delicate balance of desire and restraint that the text suggests.

Caspar Singh's tenor was a revelation. His "Olim lacus colueram" was delivered with a combination of technical precision and dramatic flair that captured the humor and pathos of the roasted swan lament. Singh's clear, ringing tone and impeccable diction brought the character vividly to life, eliciting both laughter and sympathy from the audience.

Baritone Daniel Schmutzhard was equally compelling. His robust and versatile voice was perfectly suited to the diverse demands of Orff's score. From the defiant "Estuans interius" to the playful "Ego sum abbas," Schmutzhard navigated the emotional landscape of the piece with ease. His command of the stage and his ability to convey the text's meaning made his performance deeply engaging.

The ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, led with vigor and insight by Wögerer, provided the perfect instrumental complement to the vocal forces. Orff's score, with its driving rhythms and colorful orchestration, demands both precision and passion, and the orchestra delivered on both counts. The percussion section deserves special mention for its role in bringing the visceral power of the piece to life. The relentless rhythms and dramatic crescendos were executed with a precision that added to the overall impact of the performance.

The strings and woodwinds were equally impressive, handling the lyrical and intricate passages with finesse. The brass, too, played their part in creating the grand, imposing soundscapes that characterize much of "Carmina Burana." Under Wögerer's baton, the orchestra maintained a perfect balance with the vocalists, ensuring that the text and music were always in harmonious dialogue.

One of the most striking aspects of this performance was how relevant and contemporary Orff's "Carmina Burana" felt, despite its medieval roots. The themes of fate, fortune, and the fleeting nature of life resonate as powerfully today as they did when Orff composed the work in 1936, and indeed when the original texts were written in the 11th and 12th centuries. Wögerer's interpretation did not shy away from these themes but embraced them, drawing out the emotional intensity and universal human experiences embedded in the music.

The choice to juxtapose Poulenc's "Gloria" with "Carmina Burana" was inspired. Poulenc's work, with its

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sense of spiritual joy and reverence, served as a perfect prelude to the raw, earthy vitality of Orff's cantata. This programming decision highlighted the contrasts and connections between the sacred and the secular, the eternal and the ephemeral, themes that were subtly woven throughout the evening.

Tobias Wögerer's role in bringing this complex and ambitious program to life cannot be overstated. His clear vision and meticulous attention to detail were evident in every aspect of the performance. From the broad, sweeping gestures that unified the ensemble in the climactic moments to the subtle cues that guided the soloists through their most intricate passages, Wögerer's direction was both authoritative and supportive.

His deep understanding of both Poulenc and Orff's music allowed him to draw out the best from the musicians and singers. The result was a performance that was cohesive, dynamic, and deeply moving. Wögerer's ability to balance the various elements – orchestra, choirs, and soloists – ensured that each was given its due prominence while contributing to the overall artistic vision.

The performance of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana" by the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, Wiener Singakademie, and a distinguished trio of soloists under the baton of Tobias Wögerer was an unforgettable evening of musical excellence. The combination of Poulenc's "Gloria" and Orff's magnum opus provided a rich, multifaceted experience that showcased the versatility and emotional depth of the performers.

The meticulous preparation and inspired execution by all involved, from the choirs to the soloists to the orchestra, resulted in a performance that was both technically superb and profoundly affecting. This concert not only highlighted the timeless power of choral music but also reaffirmed its relevance in addressing the human condition. It was a testament to the enduring power of music to move, to challenge, and to inspire.

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