

Generosity and humanity



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Violinist Christian Tetzlaff

In line with its commitment to making a meaningful contribution to the local community, JTI supported a concert given by the Vienna Philharmonic at the Victoria Hall on January 14, conducted by Riccardo Chailly. Organized in partnership with APRAM¹ and CAECILIA², the program featured works by Bruckner and Sibelius, including the latter's great violin concerto performed by Christian Tetzlaff. The world-renowned soloist talked to INSIDE Geneva about musicianship, emotion and humanity.

You started playing the violin at the age of six. Did you always know you wanted to become a professional musician?

At 11, I knew that was what I wanted, though it may not have appeared so. I played in four youth orchestras – it was a wonderful experience to perform with 100 people of my own age, and I loved touring. The social aspect of music making remains important to me to this day. It's about communicating emotion to your audience. By the time I was 14 or 15, I was practicing three

hours a day and was fearfully proud of the fact, although many musicians practice much more.

So how much should an aspiring musician practice?

It's a mistake to force young people to spend all their time working; otherwise it's easy to develop a love-hate relationship with an instrument. Schumann, Brahms, Bach – they're all about life lived to the full, pleasure and passion, and to express that, a musician must have experience of life!

The great Sibelius Violin Concerto arouses profound emotion – did you choose this piece for the program yourself?

Yes. The Sibelius Violin Concerto is an enormous pleasure in every sense. It has the longest, most magnificent melodic lines and is a great challenge, both physically and emotionally. By the time the last movement arrives, you have already given the piece your all – yet you have to go on. It's a wonderful combination of physical exertion and emotional depth.

What was it like to perform at the Victoria Hall?

It was my second time there – the first was with Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra in 2005, when I performed Beethoven's Violin Concerto. I play about 100 concerts in all the world's major cities every season, so you can imagine I have to deal with all kinds of venues. In rehearsal there was a lot of echo in the Victoria Hall, but during the concert with the audience, it was just right. It's an exciting, architecturally attractive hall with lively acoustics.

Have you worked with the Vienna Philharmonic and Riccardo Chailly before?

It was the fourth time with the Vienna Philharmonic, but I had never performed with Riccardo Chailly. The orchestra had given four performances of the Sibelius Violin Concerto with Leonidas Kavakos before I joined the tour. Obviously, he plays differently to me, and there was only limited time for Riccardo and I to get to know each other, which is an unusual state



Geneva's Victoria Hall

of affairs, to say the least! At the rehearsal, each of us said what we wanted. By listening very carefully to one another, we found a new way of working together, without having to compromise. I was very pleased with the result.

Judging by the frenetic applause, so was the audience. What do you think characterizes a good soloist?

A good soloist, in my opinion, is someone who is able to cast a spell over an audience while never forgetting that he is transporting a message. The measure of a good soloist is if a listener says, "That's the most beautiful piece I've ever heard" – and not, "That's the most beautiful performance I've ever heard." It's also reflected in the soloist's relationship with the orchestra and conductor; those small but ever-important details; dynamics; being free in one's interpretation – but sticking to the rules. It's not only about beauty, but also about generosity and humanity.

What are your favorite works and composers?

I have so many! To play, my favorite is the Brahms Violin Concerto. It's like a symphony with a soloist. I've performed Beethoven's Violin Concerto 270 times, so evidently it's one of my favorites, but I also love Bartók and Berg.

What are your projects for the near future?

Every year I perform with a variety of ensembles, my own string quartet, other chamber musicians, and I teach. I also work with the six major American orchestras, and the three London ensembles (London Symphony Orchestra, London Philhar-

monic, Philharmonia) – so I'm kept on my toes. This year I will also be making a CD recording of the two Shostakovich Violin Concertos with the Helsinki Symphony Orchestra, and in 2015 I will be Artist in Residence with the Berlin Philharmonic. I have no immediate plans to perform in Geneva in the near future, though I do hope to have the opportunity to get to know the city soon. □

¹ APRAM is the Association pour la Promotion et le Rayonnement de la Musique of Geneva, which supports local musicians.

² CAECILIA is an artist management agency active in Geneva and Zurich.

CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF

Born in Hamburg in 1966, he began playing the violin and piano at the age of six, and made his concert début at 14 years old. He studied at the Musikhochschule Lübeck and with Walter Levin at the University of Cincinnati.

Tetzlaff is much in demand as a soloist with the world's major orchestras and is highly praised for his recordings, which include the major concerto repertoire, Bartók Sonatas, and the three Brahms Violin Sonatas. Christian Tetzlaff has received several awards, including two Diapasons d'Or, the Midem Classical Award, the ECHO Klassik prize, and several Grammy nominations.