

International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn Soirée with prizewinners on May 7, 2010 at Beethoven-Haus Bonn

General-Anzeiger Bonn
May 11, 2010
By Mathias Nofze

Competition winner performs “Blumenstück” at concert in Bonn

Our thoughts returned to the final of the last Beethoven Competition as the three prizewinners, Einav Yarden, Jordi Bitlloch and Hinrich Alpers, met up once more. Where the competition was the compulsory element, this Prizewinners' Soirée was the freestyle program, and all of them used this freedom in their own way.

Jordi Bitlloch, for example, emerged as a fervent Messiaen aficionado. He followed Beethoven's F major sonata from opus 10, whose opening movement came across as slightly sedate, with two of the twenty “Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus” (a two-hour piece altogether).

His advance program notes showed how much Messiaen's music means to Bitlloch, who was second in the competition and also won the audience prize. In the “Regard de l'Esprit de Joie” and the “Première communion de la Vierge” he displayed all his virtuosity and musicality.

Einav Yarden, placed third in the competition, focused on the relations between Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Beethoven. She kicked off with the very succinct G major sonata from Beethoven's opus 14, played with an almost improvisatory feel.

The fact that a few runs got the better of her in the heat of battle made very little difference. She gave us Bach as a Romantic composer ahead of his time in two Rondos, in which her witty playing revealed the spontaneous and associative side of the music. The same was true of Beethoven's Eleven Bagatelles, opus 119.

And finally the competition winner, Hinrich Alpers, showed his reverence for Robert Schumann, who was born 200 years ago this year, with a wonderfully sensitive interpretation of “Blumenstück.” The rest of the evening belonged to Beethoven, in the shape of the A-flat major sonata, opus 110. Alpers gave an unusually coherent account of this giant work, whose stylistic range from recitative to fugue gives it the feeling of ‘music about music’. No detail escaped his organically unfolding playing.

It is not always so clear to the listener that the fugue theme in the finale is played on the upbeat. Then came the magnificent finale of this fugue, a triumphal passage that Alpers' commanding playing turned into a spellbinding event.