

Aziz Shokhakimov Dresden Staatskapelle Debut

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PLOWED DEEPLY IN MUSIC

By Karsten Blüthgern

The young conductor Aziz Shokhakimov amazes at the head of the Staatskapelle with Beethoven and the new resident composer, Lera Auerbach.

The young Uzbek, Aziz Shokhakimov, winner in 2010 of the second prize of the Gustav Mahler conducting competition in Bamberg, made his debut as conductor of the Staatskapelle. Among his prior conducting experiences are the National Orchestra of Uzbekistan and the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Russia.



Carrying on a dialogue with the musical past -- is that possible? Yes, and not just that. Playing Bach, Beethoven and all the standard works and rarities of classical music is always a kind of conversation. At least it should be the responsible attempt.

Aziz Shokhakimov, just 22, is very young to lead a dialogue. Last year this young Uzbek impressed the musical scene by winning a second prize at the Gustav-Mahler conducting competition in Bamberg. This was no overnight achievement; already about ten years ago Shokhakimov was assistant conductor of the National Orchestra of Uzbekistan. Nevertheless his spontaneous excitement upon receiving the jubilation in the State Opera on Wednesday in the Semperoper was notable. To conduct at such a podium is not yet a routine for him. And the members of the Staatskapelle seemed freshly moved, when at the end of the premiere performance Shokhakimov made them rise, one section after the other, to receive their applause, just as all great conductors do.

Now noisy, now relaxed.

He follows their leadership not just superficially, however. First there was a hearty and thorough dialogue with Beethoven's symphonic debut, conducted from memory. Spotless performances of this symphony in C-major are common enough these days. But Aziz Shokhakimov saw something trulent in the score. Here he approached a thumping climax -- there he produced relaxed songfulness. The Finale was striking in the unleashing of undreamed-of energy. Many only scratch the surface with excessive tempo, but here there was real depth.



Artist Management

Composers, too, confess to conversing with their predecessors, when they write music; for instance, Lera Auerbach. Born 1973 in Chelyabinsk (Ural) and now living in New York, she is this season's composer-in-residence with the Sächsische Staatskapelle. Her debut in this position, the "Dialogue with Stabat Mater", premiered in 2005 by Gidon Kremer, subtly comes to terms with that surely most famous setting of Mary's lament, i.e. Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's (1710-36).

A Requiem for Dresden

Only solo instruments -- violin: Joerg Fassmann, viola; Sebastian Herberg; vibraphone: Christian Langer -- are involved in the performance of Auerbach's forty-minute dialogue, which is subtle, many-layered, and its beginning has to break through a brittle crust of dissonances. Thereafter, however, Pergolesi's original clearly predominates. Contemporary sounds return after a short interval. The word-bound, narrowly religious context of the weeping mother at the cross here yields to a universal grief -- a grief that results from the question what has happened to the world since. The ending is given over to the soloists. A loud throbbing of the vibraphone is followed by a widely arched violin motive, that fades away, over the viola's noisy tremolos, like a picture gradually dissolving behind an eternal flame.

She has yet to join the Kapelle, because she is working on this season's main composition, a "Dresden Requiem." Its premiere in the Frauenkirche is slated for February. But well before -- mid-September -- she'll be a guest member at the Shostakovitch event in Gohrisch. For apart from composing both music and poems she is a first-class pianist.