

Pressespiegel

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Played with a freedom not heard for years Neue Philharmonie Westfalen blossoms under the baton of guest conductor Brandon Keith Brown

GELSENKIRCHEN. For quite some time the Neue Philharmonie Westfalen (NPW) has not sounded as liberated as this, played with such refreshing exuberance in a symphonic concert as it did under the baton of the young US guest conductor Brandon Keith Brown.

Two years ago this protégé of his Zürich-based countryman David Zinman and the even more famous Lorin Maazel won third prize in the Solti conducting competition, awarded in Frankfurt. At the NPW's sixth symphonic concert in the *Grosses Haus* (main auditorium) of the *Musiktheater im Revier* he **demonstrated an incisive feel for accurately highlighted details. And with Brown this is splendidly combined with an infectious joy in making music. The African-American conductor tackles the great European music tradition with a refreshing lack of inhibition, free of false reverence.**

The main beneficiaries of this approach were JS Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel, whose 300th anniversary is being celebrated this year, and still more the titanic **Beethoven, brought down by Brown from his pedestal to eye level, to rapturous applause. Yet Brown also provided proof of his exceptional qualities with two Schumann rarities.**

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Second Symphony in E flat major (Wq 183), one of the Hamburg works, was written in the 1770s, in the same era as the *Sturm und Drang* plays. With gloriously pulsing strings and delicate blends of woodwinds reminiscent of the Late Baroque, the Philharmonie brought the musical stature of the most gifted of Bach's sons into sharp relief. **Brown explored the abrupt changes of mood, the surprise**

elements and the stark contrasts with precision.

The wealth of disruptions and the unpredictability of the piece proved to be revealing parallels to Beethoven's Eighth Symphony at the end of the evening. **Preserving the tension but without overdoing the *fortissimo* discharges, Brown savored the ironic fury with which Beethoven railed against all the listening habits of his time. And he left room for details that are too often carelessly glossed over, such as the coquettish cavorting of the bow in the brief solo by the cellist Bernhard Schwarz.**

The 51-year-old pianist Matthias Kirschnereit, born in Dorsten and now a professor in Rostock, proved an ideal partner with his preference for clear articulation. In the G major *Konzertstück*, Op. 92, Schumann's distaste for virtuoso conceit suits Kirschnereit's unpretentious playing style. Poetic flourish remained well under control, as if the pianist feared anything too self-indulgent. Similarly, in Schumann's Concert Allegro, Op. 134, Kirschnereit avoided a smooth *legato* in favor of the dynamic élan of the runs, the escapades of the extended cadenza, and eloquent phrasing. As an encore he played the penultimate piece from Schumann's *Kinderszenen* (*Kind im Einschlummern*) as a transcendent reverie.

Info The concert will be repeated next Sunday at 7.30 p.m. in the *Ruhrfestspielhaus Recklinghausen*. Tickets; Tel. 01805-14 77 99 (ecotel, 14 cents/min. from T-com).