

Poetic prizewinner: Pianist Julian Trevelyan in the Ansgar Church in Kiel

Because he is one of the selected candidates of the Van Cliburn Competition in Texas / USA, the young Briton Julian Trevelyan, multiple prize-winner of the Geza Anda Competition in Zurich, had designed his programme for the "Klassisch beflügelt" concert of the Musikfreunde Kiel even bolder. A coup?

The value of the great music competitions, which rank the most promising talents worldwide like the medal winners of Olympic Games, is and remains controversial. Because often enough, even for outstanding artistic personalities like Vladimir Ashkenazy, Mitsuko Uchida, Fabian Müller or Igor Levit, it is "only" enough for second prize.

Perhaps the 23-year-old Briton Julian Trevelyan showed a little too much individuality in the final of the particularly demanding Geza Anda Competition in Zurich, which led to the Audience Prize but to a slight devaluation compared to his friend and high-flying competitor from Schleswig-Holstein, Anton Gerzenberg (who was also a guest of the Musikfreunde Kiel in 2011).

In cooperation with the Steinway Prizewinner Network, Trevelyan now presented a modified programme on 19 February in the concert series "Klassisch beflügelt" in preparation for his happy admission to the US Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, which is held only every four years and begins in Fort Worth in a good 100 days.

Special heavyweights are needed in the repertoire. Ravel's "Scarbo" from "Gaspard de la Nuit" is considered one of the most technically difficult pieces ever. Franz Liszt's epoch-making Romantic B minor Sonata, for its part, combines pianistic pitfalls with great architectural demands.

Julian Trevelyan's interpretation of both was enormously rich in colour and tension, thoughtful in detail but never aimless in the grand line. The spookiness of Ravel was just as captivating as the transfiguring redemption that Liszt promises several times out of gloomy brooding. It was not an everyday occurrence that the aristocratic Englishman had a particularly pithy creative power at the ready in the left hand, while the right hand was rather fascinating in the seemingly weightless spread of sound mists, trills and tone cascades.

Already at the interval, the audience in the Ansgar Church, which was quite well attended, was extremely enthusiastic - in the truest sense of the word. This was followed by Franz Schubert's last piano sonata in B flat major. Trevelyan professed to see a direct line of tradition between all three works, which is easily debatable. In fact, he found common denominators in their respective motivic structures in the low bass and in the diverse flickering of the harmonies through his interpretations.

However, it remains to be seen whether the Beethoven-oriented grandeur of the work from Schubert's Todesherbst can be achieved when it is arranged in such a delicately romanticised and richly shimmering intimate manner. In any case, Trevelyan, who was full of imagination and who used the acoustic conditions with a keen ear, succeeded in a lyrical, poetic interpretation that reached the audience emotionally. The sympathetic Briton thanked the audience for their ovation with a wonderfully light-footed and elegant "Partita" movement from Bach's Leipzig "Clavierübung" as an encore.