

Mittelschwäbische Nachrichten, June 11th, 2022: A musical homage to Rose Ausländer. Concert "Musical Spring in Swabia's Baroque Corner" at the Vocational College of Music Krumbach (Author: F. Cook/AZ)

As part of the "Musical Spring in Swabia's Baroque Corner", guitarist Stefan Barcsay and the composer and pianist Barbara Mayer gave a concert in the concert hall of the Vocational College of Music Krumbach with a special, noteworthy programme. This interesting evening was dedicated to the theme "Throw your fear into the air – a homage to the Jewish lyric poet Rose Ausländer". Consequently, musical works were presented which took as their subject the poem "Still you are there" or the line from it that runs "Throw your fear into the air" by the poet who was born in the Bukovina.

Stefan Barcsay, himself assistant professor for guitar at the BFSM Krumbach and initiator of the project, has for years placed his artistic focus on performing works specially composed for him by contemporary artists. Besides the Munich professor Dorothea Hofmann, the Cuban Daniel Toledo Guillén and the Ukrainian composer Viktor Kaminsky, Barcsay was thus also able to persuade the winner of the Young Artist Award for Composition from the town of Augsburg, Barbara Mayer, to join his project. Mayer who studied at the Salzburg Mozarteum, composed a cycle "Throw your fear into the air" consisting of seven "fantasia sparks" for guitar and piano, especially for the occasion, a varied, multidimensional work that echoes individual verses from the poem.

In a skilful blend of experimental, contemporary techniques and widely differing timbres, collage-like sections, quasi-meditational chanting but also virtuoso passages, the particular contents of the poem were set to music in an extremely creative fashion. In the second movement, for example, "The coy premonition of the thrush", Mayer cleverly combined the thrush's song transposed for the capabilities of the guitar with the initial motif of Chopin's Funeral March. Snare drum and tambora effects complemented the enigmatic and very well thought-out sound pattern that is at all times closely linked to Ausländer's own biography. The systematic inclusion of number symbolism which Mayer applies even to the tiniest details such as the arrangement of bars or the choice of intervals for any particular movement, reveals the many layers of meaning to this ingenious composition.

As interpreters, Mayer and Barcsay showed themselves to be an ideally matched duo who even managed to master the most challenging passages with a fascinating lightness of touch and carefully elaborated on the wide range of moods in the work.

The two works that followed for solo guitar from Hofmann ("Still") and Guillén ("Rain") concentrated mainly on the parameter of sound and offered a sparkling range of the most sensitive of colourations and delicate figurations which subtly encouraged listeners to engage with the theme of the poem. Barcsay was able to bring out these tonal subtleties with bravado with his empathetic style of playing.

"The flashing torches of Zeus" by the Iranian composer Hassan Farahani for solo piano proved to be an equally multifaceted work whose resonant and highly virtuoso passages Barbara Mayer was able to interpret with astonishing brilliance and verve. A polyphonic composition, the Fantasia and Fugue for guitar by the composer Viktor Kaminsky who lives in Lviv, enriched the programme with a further complex composition whose cantilena motifs Stefan Barcsay teased out of the woven fabric of voices in the work with a profound feel and impressive skill on his guitar.

The repetition of Barbara Mayer's cycle at the end of the concert gave the audience a perfect opportunity to reabsorb the content already heard and allowed the programme to come full circle. A thoroughly worthwhile event, in other words, which can be seen as relevant not only in a musical context when we look at the current political situation. (AZ)