

## **Press Review: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (17-03-09)**

### **Tailor-Made for Television**

#### **Glamour, Spirit, Ethos: In Bremen music films are shown to a broad public**

There was a very thin line between laughing and crying at this fifth edition of the "International Television Forum for Music" in Bremen. As part of a meeting of experts, German, French, Dutch and Canadian directors showed new and, without exception, emotionally charged films in which so-called serious music is the main focus or at least represents the motor of the story. At times one forgets that the genre is that of documentaries because the viewer is repeatedly taken along with the protagonists into exceptional emotional situations. For this reason films about musicians, composers, about people who experience happiness through an encounter with music, about children who are torn out of a threatening everyday life by making music, are tailor-made for television with its stories about human fates.

This also applies to "Sofia – Biographie eines Violinkonzerts". The film by Jan Schmidt-Garre recounts the realization of a violin concert of Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina, from the writing of the score to the encounter with violin virtuoso Anne-Sophie Mutter and all the way to the premiere in Lucerne in 2007. The documentary depiction thickens into a double portrait of two extremely different women: the glamorous, always somewhat overexcited violinist and the modest composer imbued with spirit. Both traits are visible in the film, occasionally in nearly agonizing detail.

The mixture of artistic glamour, creative spirit and emotional ups and downs crystallizes into a promising recipe for television music films. "El sistema", a film production on Venezuela's revolutionary music school system, adds the ethos of changing the world. Thanks to the vision of a single man, children and teenagers have been receiving instruction in playing musical instruments free of charge, thus protecting them better from poverty, violence and drugs than other institutions are able to, for thirty years. The film by Maria Stodtmeier and Paul Smaczny shows the everyday life of children who look for something salvageable in mountains of rubbish, tells about their fear of getting caught in a hail of bullets, for the music schools are located precisely in such slums. And this is where the switch is thrown: a feeling of belonging is created, excitement for the music – Beethoven or Bernstein – and the longing to keep moving ahead. Viewers can see the film, which will appear in the cinemas on 16 April, in Arte's programme at the end of October.

The significance that classical music has actually attained today on television is repeatedly a subject of discussion at the Television Forum. On ARD's Third Programmes, first and foremost Bayerischer Rundfunk, Südwestrundfunk, MDR and WDR, there is a certain constancy with music at a late hour. Particularly the more modern music has a difficult time. Schönberg's "Moses und Aron" and Henze's Requiem are played, but in Bremen the word "atomization" has often been heard in connection with the hidden places and times. A look at the neighbouring countries, by contrast, brought forth astonishment in three different cases. In England the series "Maestro", which with a prominent cast shifts between irony and artistic pathos, entices millions of viewers to switch on BBC 2 at prime time, and also a smaller format on "Sacred Music" on the culture channel BBC 4 is successful according to station standards.

Swiss Television is still wildly excited about ratings of 35 percent for a live broadcast of "La Traviata" from the Zurich railway station – opera as a happening. And under the caption "Folle journée" Arte France broadcasts live from a top-notch music festival in Nantes for eleven hours. The keywords for success are: live, public space, prominent presenters. Then it is possible to spark the excitement of a lay public.

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