

I secretly listen to old masters

Pavel Vernikov talks to Adam Banaszak about the sense of Henryk Wieniawski's music and the magic of the violin.

What is the magic of the violin all about?

Firstly, the violin imitates the human voice. Secondly, it is extremely difficult to play the instrument. The violin is called the king of instruments; its sound is truly enchanting. Stradivari built it in 1700; it has a longer life-span than a piano or a clarinet.

Has this year's Competition brought violin magicians?

I think that the level is very high. Yet I would be cautious to call anyone a magician soloist. In my opinion the technical standards have been set incredibly high. When it comes to the spiritual level, I'm afraid we've lost something. I guess, I'm quite pessimistic in this respect. I secretly listen to old violin masters, and I find them tremendously inspiring. Nowadays I sometimes feel as if I were in a circus. Violinists have the ability to perform unimaginable acrobatics, but I don't think we expect acrobats to provide vitamins for the heart. The Competition has brought splendid virtuosos, but will they become magic artists? I do hope so! Fashion has changed: what is now en vogue is external. Critics tend to use such adjectives as „stunning”, „phenomenal”, and I'd rather they wrote about the composer's individuality and the performers who are able to convey the uniqueness to the audience. The art was mastered by such eminent musicians as Rubinstein, Oistrakh and many others. They did devote a lot of time and thoughts to every single note and the composer's message. The young generation has no time for that; they are busy making a career and striving to win competitions...

What kind of individuality can we find in Henryk Wieniawski's music?

In a nut shell: in his works the phenomenal technique and intricate passages are secon-



Pavel Vernikov

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dary. What I do find in the music is the extraordinary love for life, a passionate heart and immense national pride. His passages are not merely an acrobatic trick! I know very few performers who can tell a story with these sounds. I'd even say it's operatic music, it's so unusually refined! Despite all the suffering Poland has had to face in its history, I sense the spirit of victory in Wieniawski's music. On the other hand, there is melancholy, nostalgia, love and boundless tenderness. It also features dazzling passages which pose numerous technical problems. Hence, in the maze of technical challenges, it's even more difficult to convey the real spirit of the music. Wieniawski's compositions go much deeper than we, teachers, suspect.

Let me ask a provocative question: will the

result of the Competition be surprising?

I don't think so. I don't expect the final verdict to be difficult to reach. The problem is that the laureates will carry the name of Henryk Wieniawski and his Competition worldwide. The question is whether they will become genuine Artists. I know I sound a little pessimistic. There used to be very few performers and many people eager to listen to them, and there were no records or CDs. Now we have plenty of performers and very few listeners.

Well, it's slightly different here...

I'm simply delighted by the fact that the concert hall is full. It doesn't happen very often! I'm certain that the winner will be a violinist of the highest order. In my opinion, the Competition is on the world-class level.

Translated by Beata Brodniewicz