

Lars Vogt Interview Transcript

Lars Vogt:

What a fantastic programme I have: Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel*, Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto and Schumann's Third Symphony. Three such amazing pieces leading us through one of the most substantial times of musical history. But doing Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4 is always a huge challenge and it's one of the great, great challenges for pianists. For me it's maybe in a way the central piano concerto.

In Beethoven's works you can see a huge development. You have these three phases – early, middle, and late – that are really quite distinctly different. He's really gone a long way in his artistic life. It reflects so many things, like Beethoven does so often, reflects a lot of things from the past, and has a vision so far out into the future that even to us it's still absolutely miraculous what he has done. The psychological journey from these opening chords on the piano to this struggle to victory in the last movement is just an incredible thing, and to be playing that with the Philharmonia Orchestra – for me one of the best orchestras in the world – is just a huge privilege. And working with Sir Charles Mackerras: it's the first time for me, we've never worked together. I've obviously heard so many things about him, so many wonderful things and so many exciting things, and to be working with such a legend of the music world is just absolutely amazing. Particularly he has so much to say, and in spite of being a legend his mind is so fresh; that's just a real inspiration I think.

It is true that as an artist you have to let out really intimate things and display them out there in public. I think my wonderful colleague Manny Ax [Emanuel Ax] said once that you have to have this mixture of being extremely sensitive and also have a certain defence around you, because especially in an arts life you are also going to be attacked, whereas you also need to know when it's necessary to let something in, also something difficult or something critical or something painful. Ultimately I would, especially on stage, I would always go for opening up. That's what people want, they want a personal message, they want to know what does this person really feel about this music and who is this person, and there's no better way to find out than by listening to them making music.

London's an incredibly exciting city and it's such a fantastic new experience for me. For 15 years I've lived in the countryside in Germany and I've always lived in Germany all my life, so it's the first time that I've lived abroad, and I've been living here for nearly two years now. It's very exciting, it also has definitely its difficult sides to it but on the other hand when something exciting is going on... I went to hear Radu Lupu playing with Muti with the Philharmonia, for example, or I went to hear the French programmes with Charles Dutoit, so I really get to listen to fantastic things and wonderful programmes; the Philharmonia in particular have some exciting things going on.