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Towards Modernity with Energy

The "Rising Stars" Went Up at the Philharmonic and Sparkled

By Stefan Rütter

The "Rising Stars" Jennifer Frautschi (violin) and John Blacklow (piano) appeared on the stage of the Philharmonie in Cologne wearing jeans and t-shirts. However, the violinist clarified immediately that this informal attire was not part of their approach to music-making, but that the airline had lost their luggage at the airport. One did wonder, though, whether the casual outfits didn't go much better with the relaxed and uninhibited style of their playing anyway.

Next to Beethoven's c-minor sonata op. 30 no. 2, the Americans spotlighted various facets of modernity: from Janacek's rhetorically audacious Sonata and Stravinsky's dance-inspired Divertimento to works by the contemporary composers Oliver Knussen and Steven Mackey, both of whom weave popular and plebeian elements into their musical language with a steady hand. The young team offered a precisely rehearsed and well-balanced presentation, in which the greater quantum of energy was unmistakably on the side of the violinist- she led, and her partner followed.

This symbiosis stood all the tests. Jennifer Frautschi's big and luminous tone found a secure base in John Blacklow's rhythmically unflinching and discreet playing. It was a pleasure to listen to this sporting and vital music-making, liberated as it was from pressure and weightiness.