

Dramatic scenes in the Göttinger Town Hall

Nicholas Milton fired up the Göttinger Symphony Orchestra to powerful eruptions and extraordinary outbursts of drama. The musicians intensely followed his emotional, yet very precise conducting. This gave rise to a gripping interpretation which is rarely experienced in this overture. ... And what Nicholas Milton and the orchestra made of the 5th Symphony by Peter Tchaikovsky was an inspiration: powerful rhythms, ecstatic lyrical themes, sudden interruptions ... absolutely enthralling. In music that has been heard so often, one rarely experiences new and lasting interpretations. On Friday evening, however, this was certainly the case! Fervent Bravo calls and never-ending applause rewarded the conductor. Nicholas Milton roused massive emotions in the audience and also in the orchestra. If Milton as the guest director of the Göttinger Symphony Orchestra were also a candidate in the succession search for the chief conductor position, then one can only speculate that he would certainly have conducted himself with this concert into the leading group of candidates.

Jens Wortmann, Kulturbüro Göttingen

Exposing the nuanced colourations, lush suspensions and explosive driving forces that unified this program, Milton proved an astute judge of tempos and was impressively lithe in his pursuit of the first half's evanescent themes and idiomatic flirtations. ... No doubt reflecting insights gained on the front desk, his cues are precise and intentions clear, with animated gestures sweeping and cutting the air without rest or hesitation. Responsive to the energy on the podium and in Gershwin's score, the orchestra was soon swinging: brass slurring through languid blues and joining with a flawless percussion section to punch out jaunty dance rhythms, the winds revelling in impressionistic sultry jazz hazes and optimistic flurries, and the strings luxuriant and silky. ... Working without score, Milton again impressed in the Saint-Saens, his direction majestic and suave. String phrasing was superbly drawn out and the winds were exceptionally well-blended. Full of gravitas, Milton's reading conveyed the symphony's drive and dramatic sweep yet remained nuanced, softer dynamics and fine details of orchestration approached with as much care as thundering tutti passages.

Eamonn Kelly, *The Australian*

Whatever scintillates and delights is here in super-abundance. From Milton, everything sparks and thunders. ... the sprint to the finale's finish could hardly be more joyous or exhilarating. Orchestra and conductor let their hair down and relished every bar of this delectable fin-de-siècle virtuoso fling."

Bryce Morrison, Gramophone, August 2015

There is cause for major celebrations in Canberra this year as the first CSO concert for 2015, with its packed auditorium, indicates that the city has matured as a cultural capital. It has long been said that a city has truly come of age when it can support its own symphony orchestra. How splendid to see so many people turning out to hear the musicians bring to life repertoire that traverses three countries, evoking something of the spirit of each. ... Without doubt, the pinnacle of the evening was Sibelius' Symphony No. 5 ... a ray of starlight ... cohesion and discipline of a united sound and purposeful energy. Through the orchestra's combined musical intelligence the audience was admitted into the extraordinary imaginings of Finland's best-loved composer ... tempi were perfect, capturing the alternations between introspection and excitement. Exquisite woodwind sostenuto passages underpinned expressive, spacious pizzicato, the underlying resonances building to an organ-like throbbing ... a luminous performance of Sibelius' Fifth Symphony.

Jennifer Kingma, *Sydney Morning Herald*

Bravos for Debut Concert of the new Chief Conductor

Must an Australian conductor reveal to us the subtleties of Nikolaus Lenau, a poet normally known only to insiders? This was clearly the case as Nicholas Milton enlightened not only the State Orchestra of Saarland but the audience as well. This was a superlatively passionate interpretation - to this reviewer, present also at an orchestra rehearsal, the revelation was already obvious through the conductor's brilliantly perceptive observations and instructions to the orchestral musicians that cast new light on so many instrumental details of this composition. Here at work was clearly an extraordinarily perceptive professional, brilliant in every aspect of his craft. And the result was an amazing performance, absolutely convincing in its oscillations between turbulent agitation and the expansive bloom of lush orchestral sound that was always allowed to revel in the moment. This memorable presentation of Richard Strauss' Don Juan was already an unequivocal justification of the title for the new Chief Conductor's debut concert: "Welcome Nicholas Milton!" ... In Mahler's First Symphony, the conductor pulled out all the stops: moments of repose were exquisitely combined with a spacious conception of the whole, characteristic portrayals in the music were transparently

illustrated throughout, and ultimately, the orchestra's diverse sections were moulded into a cohesive single entity in a meticulously directed account ... a phenomenal performance by the orchestra and its new Chief Conductor.

Hans Bunte, Saarbrücker Zeitung

Under the emphatic, precise, yet enthusiastic and energetic direction of Nicholas Milton, the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra and Choir in magnificent form gave a glorious performance of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*. ... Milton's marvelous and riveting performance was wonderfully rich and magically descriptive; the adagio's deep-toned harmonies and spellbound arcs of melody conjured up an enchanted moonlit night and the wonder of blossoming passion ... A stirring, passionate performance of this hugely demanding choral symphony that had the packed house wildly cheering and applauding at the end.

Lynne Lancaster, Sydney Arts Guide

Under the highly motivating and inspirational conducting of the Australian Nicholas Milton, newly appointed music director of the Saarland State Theatre, the German Radio Philharmonic Saarbrücken presented themselves at their absolute best. A concert experience full of suspense, even in the most electrifying pianissimo, the performance of Beethoven's *Leonore Nr. 3* was as articulately presented as chamber music of the highest level. Milton's outstanding interpretation of Schubert's *Great C Major Symphony* followed - the work's famous "heavenly length" perfectly captured by the conductor with a basic pulse that constantly reinvigorated the musical structure and through an exquisitely balanced sound design breathed new life into the music.

Michael Dellith/Andreas Bomba, Frankfurter Neue Presse

In Rodion Shchedrin's *Concerto for Orchestra No. 3* ("Old Russian Circus Music"), Nicholas Milton knew exactly how to effortlessly steer the Stuttgarter Philharmonic to an organic interpretation of wonderful imagination and precision - like the orchestra, he received cheering applause and jubilation from the audience. The musicians of the Philharmonic, under the direction of their intoxicating yet meticulously detailed conductor, brilliantly brought out the grotesque, the roguish, and the sarcastic elements in Shostakovich's *Ninth Symphony*, with fantastic solo passages from piccolo, violin, and especially bassoon. Rapturous applause!

Stuttgarter Zeitung

This was a thrillingly driven, elastic and beautifully coloured performance of Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*. All four elegant movements vibrated with searing intensity and perfectly balanced energy and grace – the result of inspired and spirited direction from the supercharged conductor Nicholas Milton. In Beethoven's fourth symphony, we heard the work as if for the first time - an amazingly vital interpretation that was perfectly managed across all sections of the orchestra and revealed insights into the heroic aesthetic of the composer as well as illuminating the more genial aspects of his style. In between, the musicians paid tribute to Witold Lutoslawski with a sparkling performance of his "Overture for Strings."

Jens Voskamp, Nürnberger Nachrichten

With obvious delight, the musicians of Sinfonia Varsovia followed the precise baton of the much sought-after Australian Nicholas Milton. Sergei Prokofiev's "Symphonie classique", in a performance of unparalleled rhythmic flair and intoxicating charm made for a sparking Entrée. In Anton Rubinstein's *Piano Concerto No. 4*, the accompaniment was delivered with pinpoint accuracy and wonderful attention was also given to the secondary voices. The extraordinary strings of this orchestra left no wishes unfulfilled in terms of beauty and strength of sound and technical perfection in Witold Lutoslawski's early *Overture*. A radiant performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 4*, effortlessly communicated and glowing in pure musical perfection, was a glistening climax to the concert.

Egon Bezold, Nürnberger Zeitung

Volksoper Vienna: What a Carmen!

In this *Carmen*, the Volksoper has outdone themselves. The foundation for this success was Nicholas Milton at the podium of a highly spirited and ambitiously engaged Volksoper orchestra, supported by excellent Volksoper Chorus and a particularly well-supervised children's choir. One could not fail to perceive an infectious joy and delight in the music-making from all. This was a spectacular display of great voices and impressive characterizations – a wonderful, enjoyable evening at the opera with simply no weak points. ... With this impressive performance, the Volksoper has set the bar very high for a direct comparison with the house on the ring.

Der Neue Merker, WIEN/ Volksoper: CARMEN

This extraordinary performance by the beloved Nicholas Milton, who received a jubilant standing ovation, was truly joyful. Milton's music-making emits a contagious and completely intoxicating vitality and one highlight followed the next in this magnificent concert with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Malaga. In Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade, colourful exuberance overflowed with expressive artistry – this was exquisite music making of the highest imaginable quality.

Malaga Hoy

This was a superb, absolutely magnificent concert led by a charismatic Australian conductor who presented us with a glimpse of what our orchestra can be. It was one of this or any season's best concerts ever. ... A sensational performance of the Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade awaited us after the break – this was an unforgettable performance - the work has never before been heard with such intensity and expressivity. ... It was perfection in every aspect. Jubilant applause, bravos and standing ovations delivered at the end of each of the works of this wonderfully designed program. ...

The Australian Nicholas Milton was undoubtedly the main attraction of the evening - what absolute and masterful direction! He anticipated all entries, beautifully balancing every orchestral section; his gestures were clear and his artistic intentions perfectly modulated in meticulous detail. His concept of the dynamic and overall structural design was overwhelming. This was musicianship of unique mastery. Thanks to the extraordinary symbiosis of orchestra and conductor, we were offered a glimpse into what our orchestra can be, and what we hope it will one day become.

Alfonso Hermoso de Mendoza Urdiain, Malaga Hoy

The title of this Karlsruhe Masters concert, "A Hero's Life" was fully justified by a fantastic interpretation of Richard Strauss' tone poem of the same name, which highlighted the excellence of the SWR Radio Philharmonie. Conductor Nicholas Milton demonstrated extraordinary control and precision from the first moment of the concert. He succeeded in creating and sustaining a wonderfully refreshing aesthetic to Richard Strauss' Heldenleben. His fantastic and detailed approach to the instrumental consistency across the entire orchestral spectrum resulted in a rush of sound and emotion. The Australian conductor built up the most exquisite dark string sound, accentuating wonderful details but always with perfect control and a clear conception of the over-arching structure. The South West German Radio Philharmonic responded with a sound oozing with sensuality and warmth - always thoroughly and beautifully differentiated in terms of balance and tone, with strings, woodwinds and brass attaining the highest level of musicianship.

Die Rheinpfalz

Almost 40 years since its last performance of the work, the State Theatre of Innsbruck presents a stunning new production of Puccini's La Fanciulla del West“. The enormously successful premiere received unanimous and rapturous acclaim - a gigantic success accompanied by extended minutes of cheering. Nicholas Milton, presenting an exquisite „visiting card“ with this extraordinary debut for the company, inspired the Tiroler Symphony Orchestra Innsbruck to a performance of the highest level. Milton perfectly understands Puccini's richly colourful score with its wondrous echoes to the tonal languages of his contemporaries Debussy and R. Strauss - all of this revealed in the performance through an exquisite and energizing sound imagination. Most impressively - the monumental second act, with its sensual „Tristan“ colours makes a powerful impression in the powerfully sculpted love duet, and the spine-tingling poker scene was yet another magnificent orchestral highlight. And although the orchestra was of a massive size and power, it never once sounded too loud or noisy - a true testament to the sensitivity and abilities of the Tiroler Symphony Orchestra and undeniable proof of what can be achieved when the right man is standing on the podium.

Dietmar Plattner, DER NEUE MERKER

... a rhythmically powerful interpretation of Schubert's Great C Major symphony conceived according to an over-arching sense of the structure. With the smallest of gestures, the young, Australian conductor Nicholas Milton generated intense contact with the orchestra. He maintained suspenseful tempos throughout, which allowed the idyllic passages of the third movement and the shattering silences of the second movement to emerge even more dramatically.

Martin Wilkening, Berliner Zeitung

Under Nicholas Milton's direction, Gershwin's „An American in Paris“ was thoroughly controlled, but always came across with a perfect feeling for the interplay between European structural conceptions and the typically dance-like freedom which we associate with the American way of life. It was amazing how wonderfully thorough the Zimmermann Trumpet Concerto „Nobody knows de trouble I've seen“ was performed and how homogeneously the connection between these musical worlds was achieved. Milton's interpretation of Dvorak's New World Symphony had the plasticity and overall dynamism that this work requires. The second movement shimmered like an Indian summer and in the Allegro con fuoco, the musicians burned with the requisite fire of the movement's title, with the

symphony's main motive always majestically conceived. ... As the sound of the final E-Major chord dissipated, the auditorium exploded in frenetic applause.
Stefan M. Dettlinger, *Mannheimer Morgen*