

## A Duo for the Triad of Poetry, Sensitivity and Veracity Benedict Kloeckner and Danae Dörken release their duo debut album „Between Nostalgia and Revolution“



### Between Nostalgia and Revolution

#### Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

[1] – [3] THREE FANTASY PIECES OP. 73

#### Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

[4] – [7] CELLO SONATA IN D MINOR OP. 40

#### Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

[8] – [9] ADAGIO AND ALLEGRO IN A-FLAT MAJOR OP. 70

#### Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959)

[10] – [15] VARIATIONS ON A SLOVAK THEME H. 378

#### Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

[16] – [20] FIVE PIECES IN FOLK STYLE OP. 102

Benedict Kloeckner *Violoncello*

Danae Dörken *Piano*

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Two renowned young virtuosos of the New Generation, cellist Benedict Kloeckner and pianist Danae Dörken, are set to release their debut album as a duo. *Between Nostalgia and Revolution* features works by Robert Schumann, Dmitri Shostakovich and Bohuslav Martinů and showcases the duo's breathtaking ensemble sound that is characterised by their ability to oscillate between deep inwardness and exuberant playfulness.

"I will never forget that first moment when Danae and I began to play together. Her energy and sensitivity coupled with her ability to form the body of music in the moment evoked in me a feeling of ecstasy whenever we made music together. Ever since that first moment, I've felt like there has been an unspoken mutual understanding between us that can't be described in words." - The charm of the initial moment that blossomed into magical congeniality: in both the real and musical world there are but few encounters like this, between two individuals that just inherently seem to understand one another. Five years ago cellist **Benedict Kloeckner** ("it appeared as though his strings were merely an extension of his own vocal chords" - Mannheimer Morgen), a Neuwied native, and pianist **Danae Dörken** ("her playing was reminiscent of the first concerts of the young Martha Argerich" - Rheinische Post) of German and Greek descent experienced an encounter of that nature during their performance at the Festival in Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania. Since then they have become a **highly anticipated duo of the New Generation** in the classical music industry. As such, it could almost be considered overdue that these two acclaimed soloists and internationally active festival founders (Kloeckner founded the International Music Festival Koblenz and Dörken founded the Molyvos International Music Festival) record an album as a duo. After having recently performed the world premiere of the modern work "Two Hours on a Landscape" by composer Anno Schreier, it seems that their upcoming album is merely of symbolic nature. For Kloeckner and Dörken are staunch advocates of musical time travel that commute between the past and contemporary, that cherish both the challenges of the known and unknown, in short, that identify somewhere ***Between Nostalgia and Revolution*** - the title of the duo's upcoming debut album.

Three pieces by Robert Schumann make up the musical backbone of the CD. Schumann himself is regarded as a foresighted artist who was always in search of the new, all the while respecting the traditions of his predecessors. "It has always been a dream of mine, in collaboration with Danae, to combine works by Schumann with compositions of the 20th century that reflect his spirit of innovation, his affinity for music of the past, especially for the work of Johann Sebastian Bach, and share his commitment to subtle expression", remarked Kloeckner.

The album **opens with the composition *Three Fantasy Pieces Op. 73 by Schumann***. The ternion was written in light of the March Revolution of 1848 and was influenced by the volatile atmosphere of the time, while simultaneously maintaining a high degree of sophistication. The pieces are shrouded in melancholy and privacy, as is typical of Schumann's compositions. Schumann described the work as the musical manifestation of "tender, fragrant flowers that do not wish to triumphantly march through the parlour but instead aim to revitalise the mind in silent company."

The album continues with **Dmitri Shostakovich's *Cello Sonata in D minor Op. 40*** which was written more than three-quarters of a century (85 years) later. What seems like a logical continuation of the repertoire at first glance - clear references to classical and romantic era formal traditions and musical language - turns out to be a cunning strategy to highlight the dramaturgy of the CD. Only briefly, though, does the Russian composer reveal himself as a wolf in sheep's clothing, for the thematic development in the first movement ushers in the new era in all of its contradictory facets with everything from Shostakovich-typical irony to bitter (a)tonal sarcasm - nostalgia and revolution in four movements, one might say.

**Schumann's *Adagio and Allegro in A-flat minor op. 70***, which was written at the same time as the *Three Fantasy Pieces*, breaks with the tradition of virtuosity that was eminent throughout the composition of the 1948/49 revolutionary era. Piano and cello are equal partners in the composition that could be referred to as a psychological portrait of Schumann, the "Freud of the romantic era", as he was dubbed by Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Emanuel Klitzsch, who wrote a performance review of the work claimed "it is a piece reminiscent of the spiritual element of life that proves to be indispensable time and time again. The accuracy of the moods it evokes is striking and convincing."

Both nostalgia and the voice of the people reappear in **Bohuslav Martinů's *Variations on a Slovak Theme H. 378***, as elements of traditional Slovakian folk music are incorporated into the theme. Tradition, however, is disregarded in the almost revolutionary way rhythm is utilised in the variations, which are furthermore unconventionally structured. These factors enable the soloist to exploit the sound and technical potentials of the cello in a novel fashion.

The final composition rounding up the album is Schumann's ***Five Pieces in Folk Style Op. 102***. Thus the circle is complete, the album ending in the return to the dreamy inwardness of an imaginary folklore that doesn't require virtuosity but merely invites the performing musicians to collectively descend into the sphere of romantic desire, in which Kloeckner feels a deep sense of familiarity: "I have always had an intimate connection to the music of Robert Schumann. His cello concerto has accompanied me since the dawn of my musical education and remains a personal favourite to this day, it was the theme of my first CD and was the piece I chose for my debut in the Philharmonie in Berlin."

For their duo-debut album Benedict Kloeckner and Danae Dörken have managed to link five masterpieces, written over a span of 110 years, in both a dramaturgical and stylistic way, all the while showcasing the unique virtuoso and emotional depth of their playing. "Poetry, sensitivity and veracity" form the characteristic pillars of Schumann's, Shostakovich's and Martinů's compositions, despite the fact that these phenomena "decidedly contradict the circumstances in which the Slovak composer wrote this music. Perhaps it was written precisely for this reason: to oppose the misery and strife of this world with ardency and humanity. The degree of relevance this music has today was accurately described by Leonard Bernstein when he said: 'This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever'."

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