

A unique undertaking...

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Interview with ELŻBIETA PENDERECKA, originator and Director General of The Ludwig von Beethoven Easter Festival.

Q: What role does the Festival play in the promotion of Warsaw and beyond?

A: The last 13 years have proved that Poland can hold huge international musical events which are attended by music lovers from abroad. Each year we gain new listeners who divide their time between Lucerne and Salzburg, where similar Easter concerts are conducted. I must admit that people are amazed that we are able to put on a huge festival with such a small budget. Culture has always been our calling card. We should not forget that in these difficult economic times. Especially, when we know that Warsaw and several other Polish cities are vying for the title of the cultural capital of Europe in 2016. We cannot lose that contest in Warsaw...

Q: Well, yes, but is the global financial crisis bypassing the Festival?

A: This crisis will probably affect us also. However, we have very faithful sponsors, whom I would particularly like to thank. Two of the largest companies that support us have not even mentioned a reduction of their sponsorship this year. Usually, it is very dependent on the people who make the decisions in the various institutions, whether they understand the meaning of culture, the politics of culture... This is a particularly difficult time for those of us in Poland who promote and organise various cultural events. However, the format of our Festival will be nearly the same, and the programme that was devised initially will remain the same. Undoubtedly however, what is happening on the financial markets, and here I mean the current exchange rate of the zloty to the euro, has meant a 30% loss for us. It is really hard to imagine.

Q: Let's talk about the more positive artistic side. How is this year's Festival sh

aping up? Whom will we hear in Warsaw before Easter this year?

A: The 13th Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival will be held between March 29 and April 10. We have more than 30,000 tickets to sell. Among the festival music lovers in Warsaw, as well as at the concerts in Wrocław, Kraków, Gdańsk, and Łódź, we will have music lovers from Britain, France, Germany, Spain, USA and Japan. This year's Festival theme is: "Beethoven – Nature and Culture". We have attempted to create a programme around him. We want to draw attention to the first recital in Poland by Mariusz Kwiecień. Also, Anne-Sophie Mutter will play at the Festival this year. She is one of the greatest contemporary violists who will play with the Varsovia Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Krzysztof Penderecki. Anne-Sophie Mutter has been a member of the honorary committee of the Ludwig van Beethoven Festival from its inception. We will also have the English Chamber Orchestra with the exceptional cello player Arto Noras and pianist and conductor Ralf Gothoni. We will feature young artists, such as our Beethoven Academy Orchestra with conductor Michał Dworzyński and renowned Russian pianist Konstantin Shcherbakov. The arrival of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo for the first time in Poland will be a great coup. Princess Caroline with Prince of Hanover will accompany the orchestra. They are coming as special guests of our Festival. It will be a great event, not only in terms of the music festival. We will also have great pianists, such as Rudolf Buchbinder, who played at all our festivals, and this year will play the Beethoven piano sonatas. These recitals are very popular. Rudolf Buchbinder has his special audience in Warsaw. We will also entertain the fantastic Tokyo String Quartet, who will play six Haydn quartets. We will also have the Teresa Berganza mezzo soprano championships. That is an opportunity for young singers. Together with the National Art Gallery Zechęta in Warsaw we will be organising an exhibition with a music theme. An art exhibition under the title of "Invasion of Sound – Music and Visual Arts" will open on April 6. For the first time there will be a Festival music theme! It is being especially written by Jacek Ostaszewski, a Polish composer of theatrical music, known for his involvement in the avant garde Osjan Ensemble. This year's festival poster is produced by Bartek Materka, who is associated with Wilhelm Sasnal. In the past the posters were designed by Andrzej Pałowski, Ryszard Horowitz, Rafał Olbiński, and Wilhelm Sasnal himself. This all means that our Festival is a unique undertaking.

Thank you for the interview

Maciek Proliński

