



Martin Sieghart "Transitions "

Press Reviews

"Transitions" opens up a treasure trove of musical knowledge and personal experiences behind the scenes of rehearsals, concerts and orchestra life for the reader. All of this leads to the confession: "It is better to remain a seeker!"

Karin Schütze, OÖN

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"Martin Sieghart describes the continuous state of ecstasy often quite soberly and matter-of-factly, but also lost in reverie in the face of megalomania and perfidy, which are as much part of the business as magical moments of enchantment. In this way this autobiography becomes a spellbinding, stylistically many-faced mix of potboiler and fairy tale, dream vision, and anecdote. Perhaps its most fanciful moments are the most realistic ones."

Wilhelm Sinkovicz (Buchcover)

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"The to my mind particularly successful story about a genius pianist from Romania who performs in Vienna as a Heurigen musician reminds me of Bohumil Hrabal and Imre Kertesz. Bavarian Radio

Bayerischer Rundfunk during an interview.

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The major difference between Martin Sieghart and other conductors' autobiographies is the narrative imagination he indulges in by telling fictional stories. The biographical miniatures of invented people are fun to read and, in their inner truthfulness, they tell more of music and musicians than can be expressed in barren language. Thus, a distant ancestor once mentioned by his father inspires the story of the Romanian pianist Johann, who with his accordion becomes the star of Viennese Heurigen musicians. A young clarinetist makes an appearance and an ageing tenor makes an exit."

Ditta Rudle, Tanzschritte

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"It is not the worst books that, opened on a whim on the last page, captivate, as it were, from the end: "I had to learn to deal with time differently. I knew it only as something to be divided up, not as something to be experienced," writes Martin Sieghart in the chapter he calls "No Epilogue," which is influenced by the Corona crisis on the one hand, but also by the successful development of effective vaccines on the other. It is not the worst conductors who are Austrians, but who have earned their reputation abroad: Martin Sieghart, born in Vienna in 1951 with family roots that reach deep into the Innviertel and a cosmopolitan attitude, presents in "Transitions" an autobiography that takes a self-analytical look at decisive periods of his life and, it should be noted with all emphasis, is brilliantly written stylistically.

Once the book is started, one reads through the 315 pages in one go, and has been given biographical information along with plenty of food for thought. This book is so rich in insight that one does not know where to focus the reader's attention. Insights and experiences Musical: The realization that it is nonsense to separate Anton Bruckner's symphonies from Anton Bruckner's faith. How Sieghart approaches the composer Bruckner as a human being is more convincing than anything concocted in the way of theories to make music recognized as significant but with religious connotations understandable to our increasingly profane times. Then there is a wonderful chapter on Mozart, almost more of a Hoffmannesque short story, a brilliant chapter on Antonín Dvořák's Seventh Symphony, Gustav Mahler and Ludwig van Beethoven again and again. Sieghart succeeds in telling the music, he does not take it apart analytically, he does not get lost in the merely anecdotal, with him the music gains its own plasticity in the word, all at once the reader connects even works long known to him with new impressions.

Biographical: From solo cellist of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra to conductor - there are careers like this and similar ones. But Sieghart's narrative resonates with more. Hardly any artist has ever spoken so unpretentiously about himself, about successes, problems, failures, goals achieved and missed. But it is precisely this tension that makes the artist, in this specific case the conductor, interesting. It is much easier to stage oneself as a star on a high pedestal than as a musician in the struggle for works and interpretations. This ardor in dealing with works has, of course, always given Sieghart's interpretations the stamp of the extraordinary. Thus the reader experiences the conductor Sieghart at musical and biographical stations in his life (as if one could separate the two) and, last but not least, is also brilliantly entertained by the anecdotal episodes with whimsical composers, wayward musicians and all kinds of bizarre things on the important periphery of the vocation as a musician. And then there is the chapter "The Heurigen Singer," strictly speaking a narrative. It is wonderful. Should Martin Sieghart dare to make another transition and, in addition to being a musician, also become an author of stories - it would not be surprising after this book."

Edwin Baumgartner, Wiener Zeitung

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"A music/experience in 50 chapters" is the title of Martin Sieghart's autobiography. He describes not only his life as a musician, but especially his musical experience from childhood on. He saw the light of day in Vienna on March 12, 1951, but his family roots in the Innviertel are very important to him. The passionate musician shaped an era in Linz from 1992 to 2000 as chief conductor of the Bruckner Orchestra and director of the opera. There he also found his beloved wife, the soprano Ingrid Habermann. He makes guest appearances all over the world, holding chief positions in the Netherlands and with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, and he also works in his hometown again and again, preferably with his former orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

He was the solo cellist of the orchestra from 1975 to 1986 and has a broad musical education. He has long since given up the cello, but he still appears today as a pianist and organist. As an opera conductor, he devoted himself to very special projects such as "Mozart in Reinsberg" from 2002 to 2006 and the unfortunately short-lived "EntArteOpera" festival in the Linz Tabakfabrik from 2013 to 2015, where he dedicated himself to the so-called "degenerate music" of Schreker and Braunfels with the Israel Chamber Orchestra. From 2000 to 2016, he served as a charismatic professor of conducting in Graz. He has now used the time of the lockdowns to write his very readable memoirs. And Martin Sieghart can indeed write, with wit and spirit and a light but fine pen. Sometimes he jumps back and forth through the times and stations of his career, which is a joy thanks to his lively narrative gift. One reads and at the same time one believes to sit with the author at a table with a good glass of wine and listen to him. He describes private matters discreetly and often with a twinkle in his eye. The many musical people he has met, worked with and taught vividly come to life before the reader's eyes. Those he doesn't like so much are not mentioned by name. Sometimes not even those he likes, such as the very talented former fellow student who, as a Lower Austrian politician who now conducts only rarely, made the festival at Reinsberg Castle possible and who appears only as an initial.

But this Mr. S. is easy to guess. The downsides of the classic business hustle and bustle are not concealed; Martin Sieghart never liked the hustle and bustle from desk to desk, but had to go along with it at times. His amiable and pointed description of tours to Japan is delicious. His love of nature, which also includes food and drink, plays a major role. Again and again he inserts stories, often fantastic modern musical tales from the Heurigen singer to the TV commissioner, behind which real life is hidden. Touching is the reencounter with a student who seeks advice about the "Eroica", which is determined by deeply human feelings. At the center of Sieghart's book is the great love of music, of art in general. Nothing is dearer to this musician of the heart than to convey Mozart, Schubert, Verdi, Bruckner, Mahler and Johann Strauss in a musical way, to name a few of his favorites.

His repertoire ranges from Bach to the modern era and includes many rarities. He is always concerned with the timeless value of the works, not with the aberrations of their creators. Thus he champions not only Franz Schreker, but also Hans Pfitzner. In between, the audience is allowed to laugh heartily, because the greatest artists are also just people who put their foot in their mouths. But more should not be revealed here, but the reading is strongly recommended!"

Gottfried Franz Kasperek, Der Neue Merker

"I had to take a deep drag from a joint that students were showing me. I was proud to have survived without a coughing fit or circulatory collapse...". Martin Sieghart remembers his farewell party from the art university and writes in an email to us: "Teaching in Graz for 16 years, having spent a significant part of my work in this beautiful city - all that is already more than five years past, over, history". Not from. The 70-year-old Viennese has packed history and stories into the book "Transitions" and describes "A musician's life in 50 chapters", as the subtitle says.

Transitions are often tricky passages for conductors, but the former solo cellist of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and passionate pianist also manages them when writing, by dovetailing the factual with the anecdotal, the experienced with the dreamed. He talks about the Matura exam, with which "Also spoke Zarathustra" helped him, as well as about vacations on Lake Wörthersee (with Mahler, of course) or encounters with the greats of his guild like Piotr Beczala and what he learned from the old master Josef Mertin: "At the beginning of everyone Doubt stands in the knowledge. A very readable, kaleidoscopic autobiography - without a doubt."

Michael Tschida, Kleine Zeitung