

OVERCOMING TRADITION

BY CLAUDIA REYES SEGOVIA

The «Cello on the Rocks» concert happening on 23 November 2022 at Stadtcasino Basel was definitely remarkable in different senses. The first piece, *Konzert für Violoncello und Orchester* by Anders Hillborg – did it really feel like a cello concerto? The «Composer in Residence» managed again to transcend *classical music* as we understand it and proposed, probably, a different idea of a concerto, giving birth to a piece where the soloist part was in fact part of a big (chamber music) work. Nicolas Altstaedt was the perfect soloist chosen to perform a piece as this one. His way of being a soloist in front of an orchestra is based on real communication with all the different instrumental parts of the piece, interacting and reacting to the orchestra part as if it was a giant chamber music piece (this behavior, which is less common than many of us would like, of a soloist was evidenced when we saw Altstaedt joining the cello section of the orchestra in the second part of the concert). Possibly, that's why Krzysztof Urbanski went almost unnoticed in the first part of the concert, he just passed by helping with the communication between all the parts of this piece, letting all the leadership to all the musicians on the stage. After the break, the conductor who appeared in the scene was somehow different. By how he entered the stage you could already feel that now he would take the leadership to show us his side of the story of the masterpiece by Shostakovich. We could see how impressively he got on the podium without any score, willing to deal with this colossal piece and how when he raised his hands, all the energy on the stage was concentrated in them, and it was at this exact moment when he was ready to start his speech, without words, through dance into music. His version of the piece was full of energy, not only in the parts that could be obvious, but also in the most intimate moments, creating special occasions with just the perfect atmosphere for the naked themes of the winds, which the different wind soloists knew how to take profit of it and gifted us, the audience, with precious interpretations.

As I told in the beginning, the concert was remarkable in many senses, but from my point of view, what was absolutely impressive and what makes me think (again) about the role of a conductor, was how he managed the energy through his conducting dance/trance, not only regarding the musicians on the stage, but also with the whole audience, to truly influence our spirit.