

SISTEMAMUSICA

FILIPPO MARIA BRESSAN: "I adore Haydn because he is always surprising"

*by Angelo Chiarle*

A life under distinction. This title by theologian Lewis Benedictus sounds perfect to sum up the sense of Filippo Maria Bressan's career. He is a conductor, pupil of Karl Österreich in Wien, then specialized with Jürgen Jürgens and Eric Ericson. "Distinction" in the sense of discerning his own peculiar "vocation" clearly and pursuing it coherently. What you need to live with braveness, honesty and thankfulness, the famous Californian theologian subtitles. And these are the essential attitudes that shine through our interview with Bressan, conductor appreciated for his refinement and his eclecticism.

*From choir to orchestra: How was your conducting vocation born?*

I come from a very "singing" family, I studied Singing and I grew a passion for choirs. Later, studying in Wien, I chose a symphonic genre. Back in Italy, the fellowship with my group and my passion for ancient music made me put apart this kind of studies. I chose a decentralized kind of life to build up my own group, Athetis Chorus & Academia de li Musici, I made myself known as a choir conductor, working a lot for Rai in Turin. Some years ago, when I used to conduct also the choir of Santa Cecilia National Academy in Rome, agent Myung-Whun Chung told me that I was wasted as a choir master. So, I started again to conduct orchestras. I chose a classic and baroque repertoire, from Monteverdi to the German Romanticism. I often play Bach, Haendel, Vivaldi, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Mendelssohn.

*What do you manage to transmute of your particular approach to choir vocality in your work with the orchestra?*

That very strict definition learnt in Wien leaves a sign for the rest of your life from the point of view of conduction and consultation techniques. Vocal music has identical principles to the ones of instrumental music. Bach's rhetorical formulas in Cantata can be found also in the Overture. The attitude is obviously different but the intellectual approach is the same: lots of articulations, lot of phrasing, a taste for discovery of rhetorical formulas inside the musical speech.

*With Haydn as well?*

He's one of my favorite authors: his music is extremely ironic and very attractive. Haydn was able to combine an academic style, required from a composer at Prince Esterházy's court, with his ability to surprise, to invent something always original and new. These three symphonies are from the Sturm und Drang period. Haydn combines his contrapuntal technique always characterized by a great mastery with the will to captivate the public's curiosity through new, particular strategies. It is a sort of anticipation for Romanticism, as some dark tonalities, bold passages, very long emotional "externalizations" (for instance, in Trauer-Symphonie Adagio, which he asked for his funeral) show.

*What was the feeling with Turin Philharmonic Orchestra like?*

Some orchestras have a superficial and approximate way to live the group. This orchestra has got the uncommon characteristic that it is already a group, not only an ensemble of musicians. I found a beautiful atmosphere. The last time I conducted it, I found such a ductility due to the strong cohesion of the group. I am very curious to work again with them to conduct Haydn.