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Ava and Paul



Anna Stern:
"Wild wie die Wellen
des Meeres"
Salis Verlag 2018
320 pages; CHF 32.00,
approx. € 24.00

The main character in the novel "Wild wie die Wellen des Meeres" (Wild like the waves of the sea) is the shy, but headstrong Ava. During her natural science studies, she travels to a nature reserve in Scotland for an internship. She needs time away from her partner, the policeman Paul, who remains behind at home in Switzerland. Ava wants to break free from the constraints of the relationship and recover from childhood trauma at the same time.

The story in the book plays out on two levels. On the one hand, Ava's stay in Scotland is reported in the narrative present with impressive descriptions of the nature and her passion for birds. She gets to know some of the locals and deep friendships develop. On the other hand, the past is told retrospectively. The reader learns more about the trauma that she suffered, which is connected to the early death of her mother and then growing up in the same foster family as Paul. The two fall in love and move in together; however, Ava starts to feel trapped in the relationship. During her time abroad, Paul – who has remained behind – searches for the reasons behind her trauma.

When Ava has an accident during a solo hike through the Scottish mountains, Paul travels to be with her. She lies gravely injured in hospital, and he discovers that she is pregnant with his child. This is followed by anxious weeks as Ava lies in a coma.

The young author Anna Stern is an extremely talented newcomer on the Swiss literature scene. She has composed her novel with its two narrative levels very skilfully. The photos, sketches and handwritten entries scattered throughout illustrate the story and give it the feel of an authentic account. The book casts a spell over the reader. It is easy to read, despite the appearance of a large number of secondary characters. The narrative style is sober, but sometimes overly detailed during Ava's natural scientific excursions. On the other hand, the description of the landscape and nature in Scotland have a strong effect on the reader. And why shouldn't there be an unexpected, almost sentimental happy end for once?

Anna Stern, born in Rorschach in 1990, studied Environmental Sciences, and is currently working on her PhD at the Institute of Integrative Biology at ETH Zurich. She has already published two novels and a collection of short stories. In 2018, she received the advancement award of the St. Gallen Cultural Foundation and won the 3sat prize at the 42 Days of German literature in Klagenfurt. The author lives in Zurich.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

A chamber orchestra takes off



FOR SEASONS:
DG 2017

BACH & SONS 2:
Berlin Classics,
2017

JOURNEY TO MOZART:
DG 2018

Less than ten years ago, the past of the Zurich Chamber Orchestra (ZKO) was being cast in the best possible light. However, its future appeared to be unclear. Even in 2015, by which time Roger Norrington had been at the helm of the orchestra as principal conductor for four years and had spurred it on to outstanding performances, not many Zurich locals realised just how magnificent the orchestra really was.

It is difficult to understand as the ZKO was the contemporary 'straight-A student' among the Swiss orchestras of that time. And then when Norrington stepped into the hall one fine evening and said: "I'm done!", the ZKO indirectly experienced its big bang event. Everything was set up; it just needed a new leadership to say, "Let's get going!" In autumn 2016, the orchestra found what it was looking for in the violinist Daniel Hope, a world-renowned, ambitious musician who communicated with the public via many different channels.

CD recordings were just as much a part of the business for this artist as taking a bow after the concert. The ZKO had barely tuned its instruments for the first time before the microphones stood ready. Accolades for its performances came thick and fast after this, such as for the CD "For Seasons". At first, it is just an extremely lively recording of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons". However, then the year begins anew for Hope and his orchestra, and you set out on a twelve-part journey through the twelve months with music that ranges from the early 1800s to the present, and is continued in photographs and pictures.

The CD "Bach & Sons 2" is more moderate. Under the leadership of German pianist Sebastian Knauer, the ZKO shows itself to be a motivated baroque formation. The piano concerts of J.S. Bach are combined with those of his sons, Johann Christian and the wonderfully playful Carl Philipp Emanuel. The most beautiful ZKO CD is "Journey to Mozart", in which Hope explores the world around Mozart. "This CD is a reflection of the age as I see and hear it," he says. Hope plays and conducts works by Gluck, Myslivecek, Solomon and Mozart. Even the great Haydn is included. "Haydn's concert in G major is a jewel," enthuses Hope; "however, Mozart's is a revelation. Haydn's work remains rooted in beauty, whereas Mozart's takes off". Like the Zurich Chamber Orchestra.

CHRISTIAN BERZINS