

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 51 (2024)
Heft: 1: Behind the incense clouds, the dark corners of the Catholic Church appear

Rubrik: Sounds : "I notice much more than before that every evening has a power of its own"

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“I notice much more than before that every evening has a power of its own”

After 20 years at the top, Swiss star cellist Sol Gabetta is still infused with energy. She is also thinking about the next generation.



SOL GABETTA & PATRICIA
KOPATCHINSKAJA:
Sol & Pat, Alpha 2021

Sol Gabetta has just finished a month during which she played 16 concerts, her child is waiting at home and a journalist has a raft of questions for her. It's all in a day's work for the 42-year-old cellist, 20 years into her international career. She seems to radiate energy and has plenty to say as she shares her view of things.

Playing the cello still gives her more than enough energy: “I was very tired when I came home last week, but at the same time I was also fit like an athlete because I'd been playing the cello every day,” she remarks. Gabetta has also reached a new stage in her artistic journey – and that has nothing to do with her son having turned six years old: “I'm not

looking for quantity anymore; instead, I want more quality. All I want to do is improve my approach to the masterpieces. That's not so much because of my age; it's more due to my artistic experience. The tours have not become any less tiring but nonetheless I have a great family life.”

When she revisits Robert Schumann's cello concert, for example, as she did when touring during the spring with Estonian Paavo Järvi, chief conductor of Zurich's Tonhalle, she has to see some development: “The conductor and orchestra have to fit with me; they must also want to achieve something. Otherwise, I won't play with them anymore. There are pieces that I haven't played for years, because I feel I can't give the work a voice of its own. I need to retain an inner joy so I can see each concert as its own experience.” That way she can enjoy her work – making music – even more: “I notice much more than before that every evening has a power of its own. And I have become aware of everything that goes into a concert. This is why I now want a concert to be unique. I also care about the details – down to the lighting, which we experiment with at the Lugano Whitsun festival. It is a luxury, a gift, and I'm grateful for it.”

Besides Paris, Basel and Olsberg have also been home to Gabetta, who became a naturalised Swiss citizen in 2018. Gabetta's festival originated in Olsberg and has since spread to Rheinfelden and St. Peter in Germany. Still, that is no cause for alarm among the many friends of the otherworldly church in Olsberg: Olsberg will remain the centre of the festival. In fact, Gabetta opposes plans to expand the festival, which is something of a recurring issue in light of its enormous success.

What would interest her, on the other hand, would be an academy for young musicians, as Gabetta has noticed at her own festival how hard it is to sell tickets in the “Young Artists” category. There are no plans to stop showcasing young talent, but Gabetta remembers when things were different: “When I was discovered in Lucerne in 2001, there was always a big turnout for those concerts: people

were more curious to see the young artists perform. I'm lucky to have come up as a classical musician at that time. It would be harder today; the curiosity isn't there anymore. People have less faith in us, the festival organisers, actually bringing good people to play.” How could we fix that? It's hard to say, but one way would be to find a format where people are more amenable to trying something new. “Or



Zep asks Titeuf to save the planet



ZEP
"Titeuf 18
– Suivez la mèche"
Ed. Glénat,
48 pages, CHF 19.00

The character of Titeuf has hardly changed since he first appeared in 1993. He remains a ten-year-old boy – having started out as an eight-year-old – with a prominent cowlick sticking up from his otherwise bald head. By contrast, his world has turned upside down. In "Suivez la mèche" (which translates loosely as "Follow the thread"), the 18th volume in the series, Zep's childhood games have been superseded by smartphones. In the old days, "we climbed trees, ran down the street and drew attention to ourselves by playing the fool," Titeuf's grandmother tells him. This was also Zep's world, whereas now the streets are full of sport utility vehicles and throngs of people all engrossed in their phones. Having failed to make the

grade in maths, Titeuf is yet to receive his own phone. "Suivez la mèche" features two motifs: the degradation of our environment and the impact of the screen. "When I'm big, I will be a key influencer and I'll be able to fix the mistakes of grown-ups... and reduce carbon levels," states Titeuf on the back cover. As with every Titeuf edition, the cartoon sees the world from a child's perspective. The jokes do not shy away from sensitive territory. For example, Manu, a friend of Titeuf, is approached by a pretty girl called Emma on TikTok. The image is actually a front for a dangerous paedophile, as the two friends find out. "But I am your real friend," Titeuf reassures him. Titeuf has more or less given up on winning Nadia's heart. He has grown closer to Ramatou, a vegetarian. Not eating meat is a statement by the children to show their opposition to the plundering of natural resources by adults, claims Zep. As regards romance, the Geneva cartoonist provides Titeuf with another option: Thérèse. This slightly otherworldly girl irritates our hero, as she never gives him a straight answer. She also intrigues him slightly. In any case, Zep declares a fondness for this character. Not least because Thérèse does not need followers. "Suivez la mèche" has something for adults as well. Zep touches on the gender issue. Does the fact that he practises kissing on his image in the mirror make him homosexual, autosexual or double-sexual? That is the question. The role of the father also comes up in an amusing sketch, where Titeuf's father does everything he tells his son not to do. Zep was unable to save the world. The future is in the hands of Titeuf.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

maybe the artists should advertise their own concerts more as they used to do 100 years ago. Young people have to be better at self-promotion." And maybe the younger generation should also put their trust in the older and wiser Gabetta.

CHRISTIAN BERZINS