

SIGNUM saxophone quartet

POZNAN UNIVERSITY OF ARTS, Poznan

13TH June 2018

Fervent sleeplessness

I do not belong to the night owls and the sleepless nights of choice I did have just a few in my life. And yet I perfectly understand the organizers of the *Sleeplessness festival* that this nocturnal circle of associations has been combined with music.



There is something disturbing, but also beautiful in late listening. These are ideal conditions to fully enjoy the sounds, to immerse the vastness of music in undisturbed silence and loneliness.

The night has inspired many composers throughout history, I will only mention the creators of *Nocturnes* (including John Field and Fryderyk Chopin). *Sleeplessness* gathered Poznań listeners in the Atrium of the University of Arts to listen to the exceptional artists together.

The second concert of *Sleeplessness*, unlike the first one (Duo Haroni's), took place in a less intimate atmosphere. But also the music presented by the artists - Signum Saxophone Quartet and Matthias Bartolomey - required space, air and excellent acoustic conditions.

Bach was certainly not dreaming about the saxophone, after all, this instrument was created about a hundred years after the Baroque master's death. And yet his harpsichord *Italian Concerto* sounded phenomenal in the version for the saxophone quartet. The Signum musicians have mastered the complex art of counterpoint in a perfect way. In their phrasing there was so much breathing and liltiness, they so touchingly felt the slow passages of the central part, with such a logical precision they built a polyphony of vivid, energetic opening and closing parts that it was difficult not to reflect on the timeless and overinstrumental mastery of Bach's music. Ligeti's *Six Bagatels* introduced a completely different mood. In short forms, the musicians perfectly conveyed the insistent nature of this music. Strong accents (this is the perfect *piano* going into a sharp *forte!*), a play with timbre, expression, rhythm, exploration of the technical possibilities of saxophones, and above all perfect cooperation of musicians in the piece, where dialogue is understood in a quite avant-garde manner, gave a dose of emotion, after which falling asleep would have been impossible. Fortunately, before the interval Matthias Bartolomey joined the quartet. The performance of Astor Piazzolla's *Le Grand Tango* put their listeners on safe, though not sleepy tracks.

The second part of the concert displayed the sound of the cello more strongly. Bartolomey turned out to be a great melodist. Thanks to the unique musical imagination he built the poignant atmosphere of the romantic in spirit Ottorino Respighi's *Il tramonto (Sunset)*. In the next piece we returned to the eras of the old. In Joseph Haydn's *Cello Concerto No. 1*, the most important thing was the excellent sound balance between the cello and the ensemble. The thunderous applause of the audience was a clear sign for the performers to play one more, last piece. *The Nocturne* by Piotr Czajkowski. And again, instead of drowsiness, I felt fervent sleeplessness.

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