MAGIC SPELLS

PAU FERNÁNDEZ BENLLOCH

I'm always scared when I go to a performance where Wagner is somehow involved in it. There are always so many questions – or perhaps prejudices – to be asked. Will it be too long? Will it be too loud? Will the singers shout? Will it be too chauvinistic? Will it be too politically incorrect? Will there be a demonstration in the concert? Is it ethically correct to be sitting here listening to this music? Will it be simply too much?

Yes, it is definitely too much, but in that ‹toomuchness› is where the unavoidable cathartic wave of the ‹Gesamtkunstwerk› embraces you and you can let yourself go in those maternal arms that hold you meanwhile. The considerable amount of time that passes by – even more if you go to a performance of the complete opera – before Brünhilde, the real star of the show, comes into play, becomes nothing, thousands of a second, when she, surrounded by light and nature, sings to the sun and to the brook, to the tree and to the bird, in a mystical union that takes us all into one and which Siegfried has been forerunning us through his bird dialogs. We are no longer in the concert hall or in the opera house, but outdoors, experiencing the world through different eyes, hearing to it more deeply, altogether, being part of a cathartic ritual, which makes us all, also the listeners, be a nuclear point of the totalizing character of this work of art. The music flows organically, as seeming to depict the continuum of reality, a reality that is nevertheless sewed through small fragments of matter, or leitmotifs, while the singers no longer sing, they speak, they tell ancient stories and perform overwhelming rituals. Definitely, a piece to be experienced only live, like every meaningful human experience.

Sinfonieorchester Basel was in a state of glory under the baton of Mark Elder. The magic spell of the music made its way into us through sinuous strings and powerful brass and the singers were just the perfect cast for such a tour de force. A night to be remembered!