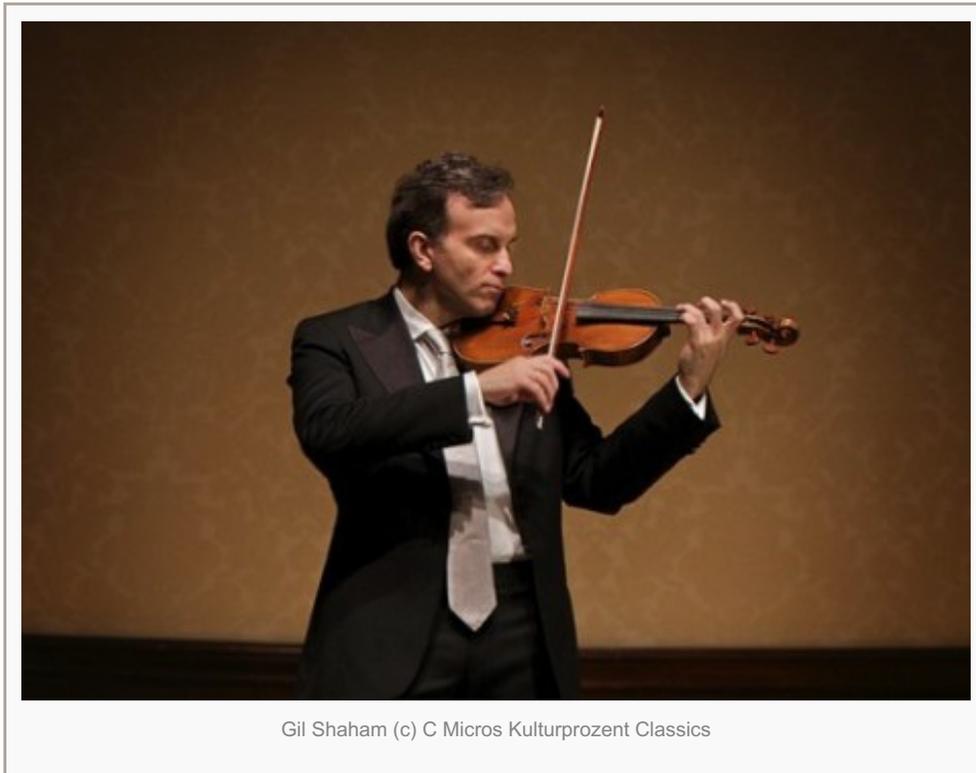


# Hailstorm Drenches Listeners and Affects Shaham's Intonation

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 **Switzerland Dvořák, Prokofiev:** Gil Shaham (violin), Chiara Enderle (cello), Tonhalle Orchestra Zürich / Lionel Bringuier (conductor), Tonhalle, Zurich 2.6.2017. (JR)



Gil Shaham (c) C Migros Kulturprozent Classics

**Dvořák** – *Waldesruhe* for cello and orchestra Op.68; *Symphony No.9 Op.95 (From the New World)*

**Prokofiev** – *Violin Concerto No.2 Op.63*

The capricious late spring weather played a not insignificant part in this concert: a hot humid day was followed by a torrential downpour and hailstorm during the concert, which could be heard as it battered the roof. The Tonhalle is due to be closed for three years, as of next month, for major surgery; the roof sprang an audible leak during the first half of the concert, causing listeners in the gallery to move seats and orchestra members to cast their eyes with concern to the heavens. The humidity in the hall also caused intonation problems for Gil Shaham and he had to re-tune his instrument after the first movement. The creaking air-conditioning in the hall (the environmentally-friendly Swiss prefer to call it air cooling) gave up the struggle and we started to swelter. Hopefully conditions in the new hall will be better.

The concert was sponsored by Migros Kulturprozent Classics, who usually bring visiting orchestras to town, but this time it was the “home” orchestra, the Tonhalle Orchestra, the sponsorship enabling them to travel round Switzerland – surprisingly, a rare event.

The orchestra looked relaxed and relieved that they have now found a worthy successor to David Zinman and Lionel Bringuier as new Chief Conductor, namely Paavo Järvi. No hard feelings I am sure between Bringuier and the orchestra; Bringuier will certainly go on to lead a top-flight orchestra before too long.

The sponsors take it as one of their chief aims, to promote young Swiss talent and this concert was the turn of 25-

year old Chiara Enderle on cello. She opened the concert with Dvořák's *Waldesruhe*, translated as *Silent Woods*. It is a lyrical and dreamy piece, evoking Bohemian woodland but not much else. Enderle, with eyes often closed, swayed gently to the rhythm of the piece. Enderle won the International Lutoslawski Cello Competition a few years ago and the Pierre Fournier Award in London; she also has a Wigmore Hall chamber music recital under her belt. She has clear musical talent and interpretative maturity beyond her years; she was however not quite loud enough and the piece, without pyrotechnics of any sort, was, I have to say, a mite dull.

Enderle was, of course, over-shadowed by the endearing Gil Shaham, who oozes style and bonhomie. Beaming throughout, he made the tricky Prokofiev concerto sound as easy as pie.

Shaham has a long history with this piece, playing it first when he was 13, having learned it from a score with fingerings by David Oistrakh. This is easily digestible Prokofiev, written around the same time as his *Romeo and Juliet*. We marvelled at Shaham's fingerwork, enjoyed the castanets in the Finale and looked forward to an encore of some dazzle. To our surprise, but to everyone's delight, he re-appeared with Chiara Enderle and played a duet – some gentle Bach.

Bringuier then gave us an electrifying account of the *New World*, expunging memories of Zinman and Jiří Bělohlávek in the same hall a few seasons ago. My thoughts did stray at times to the memory of Bělohlávek, who died two days earlier.

A beefier orchestra might have made more impact, but Bringuier's interpretation was faultless. The horns had a good night, the principal trumpeter less so. The Largo was not sentimental (wonderful playing by Martin Frutiger on cor anglais); the Finale was taken fast and never cloyed.

We enjoyed an interesting encore too: not unexpectedly a Slavonic Dance, but a movement from Dvořák's *Czech Suite*.

**John Rhodes**