

## ARTS OVERNIGHT

# Fischer-Dieskau Inspires Symphony To A Heartfelt Performance

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### MUSIC REVIEW

There was no checkered flag or starter's gun, but the Hartford Symphony's grueling, all-weather, multi-terrain marathon search for a music director began in earnest Tuesday night.

And the first contestant out of the blocks was Martin Fischer-Dieskau, a 45-year-old German maestro who put his stamp on what must be called a difficult and even eccentric program.

To get a couple of obvious but not especially relevant things out of the way:

a) Fischer-Dieskau is physically a figure from Central Casting — lanky, handsome and graceful, with better than average hair.

b) Yes, he's the son of famed baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, but he's strenuously and understandably trying hard at this point to forge a professional identity apart

from his lineage.

Tuesday's oddly obscure opener was Ibert's "Bacchanale," a kind of silly but still musically tricky trifle. Fischer-Dieskau injected what he could, and certainly gets high marks for doing his homework and learning the piece thoroughly.

In the Harp Concerto of the Argentine master Alberto Ginastera, the visiting conductor was a shade less comfortable. This is an immensely difficult, though frequently stunning piece, and the soloist, Emily Mitchell, turned in a fiery and highly personalized account of it.

But it seemed that the two could have used a little more time to work on transitions, balance and other such issues.

The glittering finale, including Mitchell's cadenza, had some brilliant moments.

The centerpiece of the night was the Berlioz "Symphonie Fantastique," and here the conductor's strengths were amply on view: expressive hands, a sense of theater and perhaps, most tellingly in this piece, a clear idea of what kind of sound he wanted in each of the work's five intense and feverish but

very different movements.

Not to sound overly dramatic, but there was a kind of Berlioz-like quality to this interpretation, with its youthful ardor and almost manic attention to detail. Indeed, at times the maestro closely resembled those silhouettes of the composer that one sees in music history texts, with the body language suggesting an almost ecstatic frame of mind.

Fischer-Dieskau is no mere showman, however. His elucidation of the "March to the Scaffold," which can sound like just a big tub of sound, was especially clean and

precise.

He sometimes micro-manages, and he's not above the periodic histrionic gesture. But he got the one result that mattered, especially considering the purpose of the evening: the players played their hearts out for him.

*The Hartford Symphony will repeat the above program tonight at 8 at The Bushnell.*

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