Casualness as a philosophy of life

Lorenzo Kamel – Jerusalem – 16 November 2009

On Thursday evening, 12th of November, I went to a concert of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra in Jerusalem. The Guest Director Kurt Masur from Germany conducted his showpieces from Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. The experience was very interesting, especially when compared to similar performances in Europe. The performance and the acoustics were of very high level.

First of all, the audience was dressed very casually – even in jeans and sneakers. This compared to Europe, where at such concerts, people dress very fancy. Many people came in late and missed the last bell that reminds the people to come in.

When the orchestra walked in, no one clapped his hands. This seems quite unthinkable in Europe. They did clap, however, when the conductor walked in.

This level of casualness continued in the break. In Europe, people drink champagne in the break – but there was no sign of any champagne. To the contrary, one could even buy popcorn, beer, coke and brezels there and the stand looked very much alike stands in the cinema. To me, this bereaves such a special concert of its magic atmosphere.

But I was very fond of my neighbor, who was about 80 years old and an immigrant from Russia. All the time during the concert, he "accompanied" the conductor in conducting, as well. Sometimes he even started to hum loudly and could at times get angry, when he thought the rhythm should be faster or slower at a specific point. This was quite funny to me, so I talked to him afterwards and he – Leopold - told me that had studied music in Minsk and had conducted a small orchestra in a city not far from Minsk. He knew Mendelssohn-Bartholdy by heart.

In all this was a very interesting experience – not only showed it a level of casualness, but also in a way of equality: no one tries to show a certain status. The music was beautiful and it was also impressive to see that a German conductor born in 1927 would get standing ovations in Israel in the year 2009.