

Schwarzwälder Bote

On stage with a jazz legend

By Sylvia Lorek

Chico Freeman and the big band of the Kepler-Gymnasium Freudenstadt offered a crowning finale to the FDS Musicdays in the well-attended gymnasium and festival hall.

Freudenstadt. There was pure jazz in the wonderful Bigband sound. Under the dynamic leadership of Christoph Ruetz, the young musicians of the Kepler Big Band achieved musical excellence. As a special guest they invited the American saxophonist Chico Freeman from New York.

Under the motto "Celebrating 20 Years: Bigband meets Saxophone Legend" there was a big three-part concert, where first the Bigband, then the Kepler Bigband with Chico Freeman and in the third part then the Trio Chico Freeman Exotica were to be heard.

The initial spark for the FDS Musicdays was born as a "crazy idea" together with Christoph Ruetz in the Children and Youth Center, said its director Siegfried Kögel, as he welcomed the audience. Right at the beginning, the young musicians heard the full big band sound with "Sweet Lucy". The young singer Luca Braccia thrilled the audience with his wonderful voice and the charming song "Fly me to the Moon".

Mareike Riegert unpacked her hammer voice on the song "Respect" and also let her hear on "Foggy Day". At "Heartland" Max Schulte impressed with a saxophone solo.

Steffen Langenmeier shows a virtuoso game

The young musicians had chosen a great challenge with Gordon Goodwin's "Count Bubba". A fast rhythm with swinging elements, in which the saxophones, the trombones and later the trumpets had their grand entrance - sometimes dialogizing, then again solo. The audience rewarded the performance with applause and cheers.

Then he was there, the big performance with the legendary saxophonist Chico Freeman from New York. Three pieces of Freeman had rehearsed the big band. Freeman played so pure and soulful that he almost put the audience in the jazz clubs of New York. The Kepler big band offered a harmonious sound, including virtuoso piano solo playing by Steffen Langenmeier.

Quiet came "The Essence of Silence" therefore. First in the heartbeat rhythm of the double bass with its uniform basic motif. Then Freeman set in with his intimately played saxophone. The highlight of the piece was Freeman's almost eternal persistence on a note.

A tribute to drummer Elvin Jones, with whom Freeman has worked for many years, was "Elvin". The Kepler big band shone with a top performance and a fantastic drum solo by Peter Wiediger. Just great was the saxophone duo of Chico Freeman and Maximilian Schulte.

To the surprise of Christof Ruetz and the Kepler Big Band, the musicians got a birthday cake for the 20th anniversary.

In the third part of the jubilee concert, the trio Chico Freeman exotica thrilled with his congenial musicians Reto Weber (percussionist) from Switzerland and Dominique Muzeau from France on bass.

Freeman, who alternately lives in New York and in Switzerland, is one of the legendary American saxophonists of the post-Coltrane era and has twice been nominated for the Grammy. For the third part of the evening he had with Reto Weber one of the most outstanding Swiss drummers of his generation.

In the end, the water drums splash

Weber began drumming with gentle rhythmic sounds on a kind of clay vase with his bare hands. In addition, the gently played saxophone passages by Freeman and the bass by Dominique Muzeau gave a very own sound.

Freeman had taken over the moderation and also brought one or the other anecdote or background information for the audience. Reto Weber invented his instrument, the hangh, explained Freeman. An instrument that looks like a wok and sounds like a reggae barrel drum. In Freeman's play "Rangoon" she was impressively used. In "Crossing the Sudan" Freeman based on a ride on a camel. "Back to Bonita" and "Dance of Light" were a musical tribute to Freeman's daughter.

It became exotic with the sounds of the African water drums, which fascinated Weber firstly with his hands, then with different mallets, thus generating very different sounds.

The water drums, which look like huge halves of pumpkin, were filled with water and then got smaller halves of pumpkin slipped over. Weber played on them so fast that in the end even splashed water.