

Thank you, Leonard Cohen

When I saw Leonard Cohen in September 2012 in the Arena di Verona, I realized that his physical state had weakened in the last years, but nevertheless his concert was fantastic as ever. I thought by myself: wouldn't that be the right moment to quit? „*Hey, that's a way to say goodbye*“. But Cohen went on for more than one year. He was driven, obsessed by his success and he was caught and carried by a wave of sympathy.

Four years before, Munich. It was said that Cohen had to tour again because a manager had stolen all his money. My suspicion, Cohen would play only in routine, was proven totally wrong. He was overwhelmed by the reaction of his songs, of his performance (and besides two videoscreens he did not need any show effects). I swear: it was not the money that motivated him. Maybe yes at the beginning of his tour, but the longer the tours lasted (ending up in more than 380 appearances), the stronger was his power to give his best. And that really was a lot.

Leonard Cohen, a real gentleman, enjoyed every moment on stage. He took off his legendary fedora again and again, honouring the spectators and his musicians. Wouldn't he be the kind of grandfather we all wish to have? Or, from a female view, the lover? Hundreds of sighs could be heard in the audience when he sang „*if you want a doctor, I'll examine every inch of you*“.

It was not only the effect of his songs, his poetry – it was the human kindness that made Cohen great in these moments. An intellectual, melancholic, wise person, but also one with a fine sense of humour. He was proud of himself, his musicians, his songs, but he never showed any sign of arrogance. More than a million spectators have watched his tours around the world. Not only ex-hippies with nostalgic feelings. Many very young people were attracted by the euphoric reception that surrounded his concerts. Of course, Leonard Cohen had deep feelings about the empathy, not really obvious for a man in his late seventies. In gratitude he said: „*thank you for keeping my songs alive*“ und he sang „*you'll be hearing from me long after I'm gone*“.

In every country, in every city, people gathered together in the community of „unified hearts“, they followed him like pilgrims, gathered together like a big family. A feeling that seems ‚old school‘ in times of mass communication and social media – but more important than ever. A feeling that produces goosebumps even many years later.

When I heard that Bob Dylan will be awarded with the Nobel prize, my first thought was: It's high time. But my second thought was: I would have preferred Leonard Cohen. The Swedish committee lost the chance to honour a great poet. As we now know, Cohen would not have had the chance to receive the award personally, but it would have given his life and his work the final appreciation.

But, also without the Nobel prize, his lifetime achievement has ended up in a great way. Supported by his son Adam, Leonard Cohen finished his last and highly acclaimed album „*You Want It Darker*“ despite his disease and pains. He died two weeks after the release. What an ending, writing these songs in the consciousness that the end is near!

The news about Leonard Cohen's death caused me sorrowful and melancholy feelings, but they changed very soon in gratefulness. I am grateful that he did not have to suffer too much – Adam says that his father passed away peacefully in his home. I am grateful having had the chance to meet this outstanding person and artist, not personally, but with deep emotional closeness. Leonard Cohen has given us all more than beautiful songs, he seeded a plant in our unified hearts that will grow forever.

So my request to all of you, friends and fans: „*your eyes may be full of sorrow, but your hearts shall be full of gratitude*“.