

THE SERAGLIO MOZART



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Pass the baton: Järvi Academy's conducting relay

By Mark Pullinger, 21 July 2019

Youth is a key factor behind the ethos of the Pärnu Music Festival. The Järvi Academy brings young Estonian musicians together, giving them the opportunity to work with international artists and members of the Estonian Festival Orchestra. In addition, there are conducting masterclasses where young participants from around the world study with the Järvi dynasty – Neeme, Paavo and Kristjan – and Leonid Grin. The Academy's

final concert combines the two; its symphony orchestra is helmed by many of the participating conductors who lead a movement before handing on to the next colleague: an elaborate game of pass-the-baton.



Edmar Tuul, Stephanie Childress and Yaroslav Zaboyarkin

© Taavi Kull

It makes for an unusual concert experience, where one does not get to hear any single conductor's complete view of a particular work. Stylistic differences can jar – hearing the three movements of Mozart's Prague Symphony given very different approaches can jolt the ears – and having a youth orchestra, which has probably never played the likes of Honegger's Third before, led by conductors at the same level of inexperience, does not always equate to polished results or inspired interpretations. But the opportunity to view so many young conductors developing their craft alongside such spirited playing from the Järvi Academy Youth Symphony Orchestra made for an uplifting evening that bodes well for the future of classical music in Estonia and beyond.




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The programme was eclectic. Mozart's *Symphony no. 38 in D major* was the only work that can be counted as a concert hall staple, although even that is becoming the preserve of period instrument specialists. Of the whole evening, the single movement that probably holds the greatest challenges to a conductor is the opening of the “Prague” with its imposing, slow introduction followed by its bustling *Allegro*. American Ian Niederhoffer didn't quite get the precision required at the start and his busy style sometimes got in the way, so his Mozart blustered a little too much. Taavi Oramo, with the same avuncular disposition as his father, Sakari, was much more contained in style, but immediately got the orchestra to dance in the G major *Andante*, bringing wonderful luminosity to the string sound. José Soares Filho conducted a vigorous account of the finale, its crisp tempi not always matched by crisp ensemble.



Triin Ruubel and Mari Adachi play Bruch

© Taavi Kull

Arthur Honegger's Third Symphony is subtitled “Liturgique”, each of its movements named after a liturgical text. It was very well played, Stephanie Childress building the tricky second movement climax deftly while Yaroslav Zaboyarkin brought real drive to the grimy brass perorations in the *Dona nobis pacem* finale.





Max Bruch doesn't offer the same challenges to conductors... or to soloists. However it's tarted up – for clarinet and viola, violin and viola, or for two pianos – his Double Concerto is bland and aimless, with too little contrast between the two voices. All three conductors were attentive to Triin Ruubel (violin) and Mari Adachi (viola), who brought great warmth to their playing, but one couldn't help feeling they had drawn the short straw in terms of repertoire.



Maria Seletskaja and the Järvi Academy Youth Symphony Orchestra

© Taavi Kull

It was good to hear music by Ester Mägi, at 97 years of age very much the “First Lady” of Estonian composers. Her *Bukoolika* (Bucolic) opened the evening, its ten minutes awkwardly bisected to accommodate two conductors. Maria Seletskaja brought grace and a sensitive ear for colour to the opening half, while Norwegian Eirik Haukaas Ødegaard's tight rhythmic grip impressed. Such is her natural poise, it was little surprise

to learn that Seletskaja was, until very recently, a ballet dancer. She sat in front of me in the second half of the concert, leaning forward, alert to every moment of the Mozart. And after Kristjan Järvi conducted the encore – an emotional, full-blooded account of Sibelius' *Andante festivo* – it was Seletskaja who was brushing away tears. My kind of artist.

Mark's press trip to Estonia was funded by Red House Productions



“Taavi Oramo... got the orchestra to dance, bringing wonderful luminosity to the string sound”



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Reviewed at Pärnu Concert Hall, Pärnu on 20 July 2019

PROGRAMME

Mägi, Bukoolika (Bucolic)

Honegger, Symphony no. 3, "Liturgique"

Bruch, Concerto for clarinet (or violin), viola and orchestra in E minor, Op.88

Mozart, Symphony no. 38 in D major, K504 "Prague"

Sibelius, Andante festivo

PERFORMERS

Triin Ruubel, *Violin*

Mari Adachi, *Viola*

Järvi Academy Youth Symphony Orchestra

Maria Seletskaya, *Conductor*

Eirik Haukaas Ødegaard, *Conductor*

Edmar Tuul, *Conductor*

Stephanie Childress, *Conductor*

Yaroslav Zaboyarkin, *Conductor*

Boon Hua Lien, *Conductor*

Holly Hyun Choe, *Conductor*

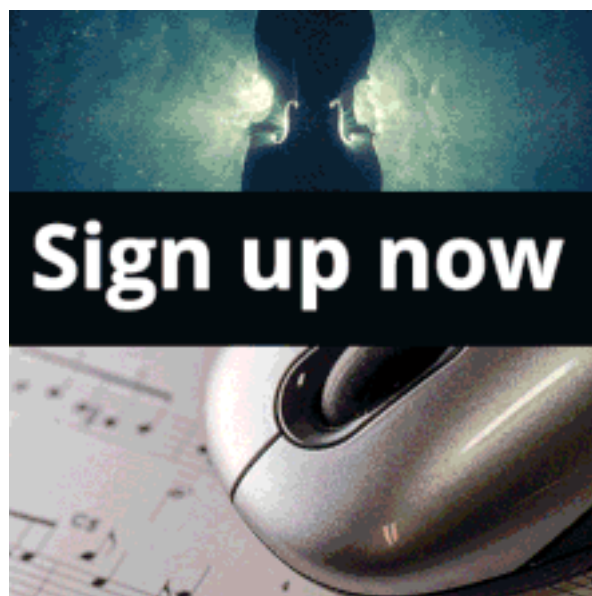
Dorian Todorov, *Conductor*

Ian Niederhoffer, *Conductor*

Taavi Oramo, *Conductor*

José Soares Filho, *Conductor*

Kristjan Järvi, *Conductor*



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Benjamin Poore, 1st December

The LSO served up a lively programme of genre-defying UK premières at the Barbican.



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Sam Johnstone, 14th June

Three concerts over one day at the opening weekend of Bachfest Leipzig combined Bach's music with that of composers from Rachmaninov to Sibelius, but nothing matches the unrivalled bliss of Bach's own music performed with total conviction.



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Crossing the Baltic Sea with Captain Kristjan Järvi

Leopold Tobisch, 2nd April

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Steve Reich's minimalist music has a big effect on the Salle Pleyel

Leopold Tobisch, 6th May

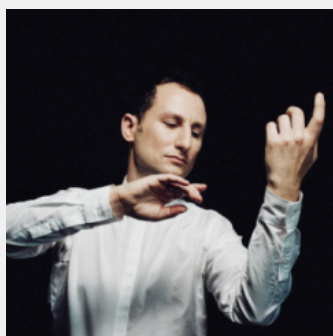
A rich variety of works by Steve Reich form an enthralling concert from Kristjan Järvi and the MDR Rundfunk orchestra at the Salle Pleyel.



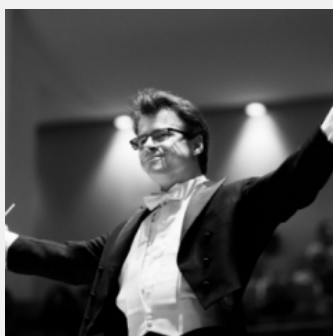
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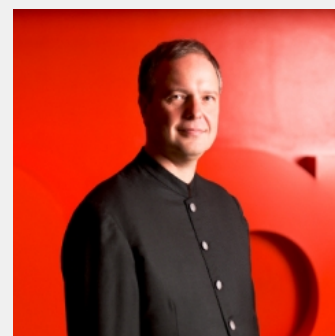
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Trust, spontaneity and commitment: Jakub Hruša at the helm in Bamberg



One of the players: Karina Canellakis on her journey to the podium



Leading from the front: Sakari Oramo interviewed



Mark Pullinger

Mark is one of Bachtrack's editors. He is Chair of the Music Section of The Critics' Circle and member of its Dance Section. An experienced opera critic, with a passion for Verdi, he can often be found propping up a standing place at the ROH. He also reviews concerts and dance, with a particular love for Russian and French repertoire. Mark contributes to Gramophone and Opera magazines and blogs at Beckmesser's Quill.

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