

Nurturing emergent talent: the Järvi Academy at work in Pärnu

By Alexander Hall, 15 July 2022

"It's the *next* generation, stupid!" For well over a decade now the Järvi family has dedicated itself to nurturing new talent. Without it, classical music the world over is doomed. The importance of the work of the Järvi Academy in Pärnu is twofold. First, young instrumentalists have an opportunity to master the skills of playing in an orchestra, coached by outstanding professionals. Second, through the conducting classes in which Neeme, Paavo and Kristjan all play a prominent part, aspiring conductors are given a grounding in the technicalities combined with the valuable experience of standing in front of an orchestra and working with it.



Nicolas Dautricourt and Kärt Ruubel
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This Järvi Academy gala concert had a dual focus. In the first half teachers and mentors played chamber music by four Estonian composers. If I have to single out one work, it would be the String Quartet written in 1985 by **Erkki-Sven Tüür**, in which the ear was constantly beguiled by the inventiveness. There was the arresting echo of Westminster chimes at the start, followed by fleeting glimpses of a landscape once inhabited by Janáček with sustained writing for the two violins in their highest register. Again and again, with *col legno* and *sul ponticello* effects, and strong dynamic contrasts ranging from a robust earthiness to haunting whispers, the musical territory travelled was considerable.

When encountered, visual surprises are no less remarkable. At the end of Tõnu Kõrvits' lament-like piece for oboe and violin entitled *Dreamers*, both players rotate slowly outwards until they come full circle once more, the music dipping away from consciousness.



The Baltic Sea Philharmonic
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With a large group of participants in this year's conducting class, making a choice of who does what in the final concert is invidious. Movements from two works by Ravel and Stravinsky were entrusted to seven different young conductors, with the final piece, Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances*, in the hands of the youngest, the 15-year-old Estonian Kasper Joel Nõgene. It strikes me as equally unfair to have to assess the quality of emerging talent on the basis of mere minutes of interpretation.

It was Konrad Lorenz who drew attention to the dangers of imprinting. This applies equally to those learning their craft under the guidance of leading *maestri*. The temptation is to be unduly influenced in body language and the manner through which musical energy is transmitted to the orchestra. All eight young conductors used a baton, but there was a depressing similarity of style, with the left arm rarely at rest and often mirroring the action of the right arm. I searched in vain for an occasional clenched fist, a slight stoop to indicate a change in dynamic level or the sweep of both arms for dramatic emphasis. Cueing was generally excellent including the all-important technical input to enable an ensemble, here the players of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, to work effectively. You can teach the technicalities, but you cannot teach personality. You either have it or you don't.



Kasper Joel Nõgene conducts the Baltic Sea Philharmonic
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Most of the specifically French style of Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, with its natural flow and eloquent writing for woodwind featuring those delicious touches of piquancy, was communicated satisfactorily. However, I have rarely heard such a ferocious attack at the start of the concluding *Rigaudon*. This was a enough to startle the crows, but it could be argued that this conductor demonstrated a very personal view of the movement.

In Stravinsky's Chamber Concerto *Dumbarton Oaks* I would have expected rather more spikiness to the orchestral textures, married to the composer's tell-tale cheekiness, not least from the gurgling bassoon. But Nõgene certainly conveyed all the exhilaration and fun of the final Bartók piece.

Alexander's press trip was funded by the Pärnu Music Festival and Visit Estonia

★★★★☆ ?



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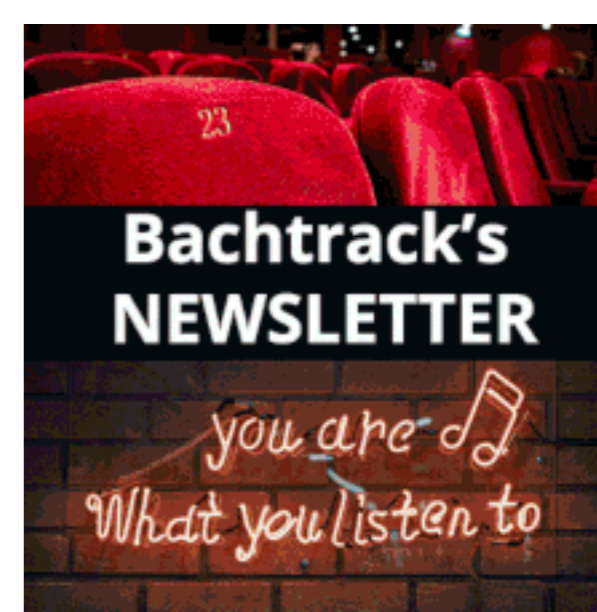
Reviewed at Pärnu Concert Hall, Pärnu on 14 July 2022

PROGRAMME

- Rääts, Piece Without Title no. 5, Op.122
- Kõrvits, Dreamers
- Kareva, Concerto Piece (for trumpet and piano), Op.11 no.2
- Tüür, String Quartet no.1 in memoriam Urmas Kibuspuu
- Ravel, Le Tombeau de Couperin
- Stravinsky, Concerto in E flat major for chamber orchestra "Dumbarton Oaks"
- Bartók, Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 68

PERFORMERS

- Baltic Sea Philharmonic
- Nicolas Dautricourt, Violin
- Kärt Ruubel, Piano
- Gregor Witt, Oboe
- Dejan Bogdanovich, Violin
- Fábio Brum, Trumpet
- Meeli Ots, Piano
- Eva-Christina Schönweiß, Violin
- Hans Christian Aavik, Violin
- Mikhail Zemtsov, Viola
- Marko Ylönen, Cello
- Aivis GreTERS, Conductor
- Valle-Rasmus Roots, Conductor
- Aleksandra Melaniuk, Conductor
- Ian Niederhoffer, Conductor
- Kristian Sallinen, Conductor
- Joshua Kirk, Conductor
- Jakub Przybycień, Conductor
- Kasper Joel Nõgene, Conductor



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Energy, rhythm, colour: Kristjan Järvi's extravaganza in Pärnu
Alexander Hall, 16th July
As an experience, this was quite something, with the music almost secondary and emotions carrying the day. The term minimalist could only be used to describe the rhythmic patterns.
★★★★☆

Kristjan Järvi bringt die Mitternachtssonne in die Elbphilharmonie
Stefan Pillhofer, 3rd July
Mit „Midnight Sun“ präsentiert die Baltic Sea Philharmonic ein spezielles Konzertkonzept, bei dem die Werke nicht einfach hintereinander gespielt wurden.
★★★★☆

Ein stürmisches Konzert mit der Baltic Sea Philharmonic in München
David Renke, 20th September
Die Baltic Sea Philharmonic bringt mit ihrem Programm baltischer Komponisten den Puls des Nordens in den Münchner Herkulesaal.
★★★★☆

Waterworks im rauschhaften Farb- und Tongewitter in Bad Kissingen
Michael Vieth, 11th July
Händels und Glass' Wassermusiken werden unter Kristjan Järvis Händen zu multimedialer Reverenz an das Lebenselixier Wasser
★★★★★

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Alexander Hall
Alexander Hall divides his time between London and Hamburg, having spent a lifetime writing in some form or other: fiction, academic research, educational materials and professional translations. He has been an avid concert-goer from his teenage years with fond memories of many of the giants of the past, including Klemperer, Karajan, Böhm, Bernstein and Carlos Kleiber. For him the symphony orchestra is one of the greatest artistic creations of all time.

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