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On Estonian new music at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century¹

Despite the impression of stylistic diversity, the course of Estonian new music seems to continue to be characterised by stylistic consolidation. The centre of this gravity, around which most Estonian music is focused, can tentatively be called sound modernism. In sound modernism, the central basis for considering the work aesthetically is the extended and unconventional treatment of musical sound. Unconventionality can be expressed in how a sound is produced, in an unusual unfolding of sound, or in an unexpected perspective on some conventional sound event, which cancels the semantics that usually

accompany it. Therefore, in new Estonian music, sound as a carrier of musical information is constantly questioned: intriguing situations arise when music abandons a specific pitch as the only possible means of conveying aesthetic information.

The sound modernism with a spiritual colouring

In this respect, Estonian new music is not significantly different from the analogous traditions of Central and Western Europe. However, Estonian music is characterised by spirituality,

¹ This article focuses primarily on the current trends in Estonian new music. This is why several important composers, many of whom are still creatively active and whose music is regularly performed, are left out of the spotlight. Introducing such historical composers into the present approach would have been artificial for the above reasons.

which can also be defined as an attitude borrowed from the neo-animist perception of nature. This attitude distinguishes the Estonian tradition from Western Europe's more urbanised and intellectual tradition. The spirituality of Estonian music can be related to modern spirituality, but it lacks the declarativeness and clearly defined practices characteristic of the latter. Rather, the spirituality of Estonian music is expressed in a kind of body awareness. The body refers to the work (structure) or the instrument body in the Estonian new music. Intelligence and inner wisdom are attributed to the body, which in its comprehensiveness exceeds the limitations of the worldview created by discursive thinking and is believed to contain all the wisdom of evolution. It is not easy to approach the mainstream of Estonian new music through a psychological description because the composer does not express the psychic life of the soul in work but rather describes different states of body awareness at different moments in time. The works unfold organically, like a plant or a biological cell over time.

Arvo Pärt, the persona grata of Estonian music, has played an important role in developing the aforementioned spiritual aspect. The days when Pärt's style was a direct example for Estonian composers have, of course, passed – although with some excep-

tions. The context has also changed. Nowadays, the spiritual attitude does not have to establish itself as an opposition to the state authority. Therefore, it does not have to expose itself in a dissident way, constantly on the defensive side. Nor does it need to create a formalised language elaborated down to the last detail to be distinguishable from the forms of artistic expression tolerated by the repressive power. Today, Pärt's influence is more indirect, manifesting in characteristic attitudes towards the sound as a substance with a religious dimension. As a result, the above-described spirituality is included in the aesthetic description of Estonian music, without which the work cannot be fully understood. In such an attitude, romanticism, which has already been recognised as extinct many times, seems to be showing itself again: the composer is not only the creator of sound structures but an expresser of a higher dimension through the latter, a magician.

The described sound modernism with a spiritual colouring also differs from the classical avant-garde in terms of its calm attitude towards the use of traditional musical elements. Due to the modernist attitude, the (developed, free) tonality is not included in the means of expression of most of the works. However, this attitude is not oppositional, as it was in the case of



Helena Tulve's latest work, the sacred performance *Visiones*, had its premiere on September 21, 2022 at the Venice Biennale in St. Mark's Basilica.

PHOTO: ANDREA AVEZZU

Pärt's tintinnabuli creation. Tonality is no longer forbidden territory. Entering it is neither desirable nor avoidable. Therefore, the tonality-atonality axis is no longer important as an aesthetic category in today's Estonian music. In Western Europe, this axis lost its importance after the establishment of the avant-garde. However, in Eastern Europe, the so-called counter-revolution of the 1970s kept the axis relevant, in which the transition from tonality to atonality (post-tonality) that took place at the beginning of the 20th century was played backwards, as it were.

One-pitch music

Despite a certain homogeneity, the spiritual sound modernist galaxy described above is wide. At its centre is a group of composers whose music can be conventionally described as "one-pitch music" or "Scelsi-type sound modernism", which is not the most precise definition – instead of a single pitch, a more complex sound structure can be the basis – but which conveys the idea of music as primarily from the phenomenon manifested "inside" sound than between the sounds. In this kind of music, the movement manifests itself vertically, between the partials that make up a certain sound. This kind of movement is fundamen-

tally different from the conventional or horizontal movement of music, which takes place between sounds, i.e., from one sound to another. In traditional music, the sounds already have different meanings due to the structure of the scale (different steps of the scale have different functions), so the movement away from the sound and back to it is figuratively understood as a departure and a return.

However, in the case of vertical movement, one is always “at home” or “present”, so the pitch structure of such a piece does not require a teleological articulation of form. Furthermore, that is often the case with French spectral music. However, the Estonian analogue is characterised by the preservation of a traditional, climax-oriented form, which creates a second plan, independent of the pitch structure, in works of this kind. At the same time, the overall impression of the works is very natural and organic. This impression is due to the lack of clear articulating caesuras in the formal foreground. Here, it is as if the Wagnerian idea of infinite melody reasserts itself, albeit in the sound modernist context. Revoking the Wagnerian idea is why the style of such works can also be defined as a sound modernist branch of neo-romanticism. Sound modernist neo-romanticism, unlike conventional neo-romanticism, does not flirt with



Helena Tulve

PHOTO: RENE SUURKAEV

historical romanticism and maintains stylistic purism.

Helena Tulve and Tatjana Kozlova-Johannes represent the flagships of this style in Estonian music, followed by Liisa Hirsch, Age Veeroos, Maria Kõrvits, and Mariliis Valkonen somewhat later. The even younger Marianna Liik, Madli Marje Gildemann (Sink) and Liisa Hõbepappel seem to belong to the same group. **Helena Tulve** is undoubtedly the originator of this style in Estonian music and a classic whose oeuvre is a benchmark for many successors. **Tatjana Kozlova** is more psychological and warmer, as a person significantly “closer” to her works compared to Tulve. The most puritanical cultivator of this style is Hirsch, who minimised the use of different pitch materials in her music.

Märt-Matis Lill can also be placed at the centre of the musical galaxy described here, whose music is similarly carried by Tulve and Kozlova's strong ethical and – in Lill's case – ecological awareness. In a way, **Ülo Krigul's** oeuvre opposes Lill with its urban and macho style. However, **Toivo Tulev's** religiously glowing sound modernism, which emerged simultaneously as Helena Tulve, has been left alone lately, as it were. Unlike Helena Tulve, Toivo Tulev's music has not found many followers, and with its specific ideas, Toivo Tulev seems to be moving away from the mainstream of Estonian music every year. Perhaps his music should be discussed in the context of the Pärt's followers, which will be briefly discussed later. Nevertheless, due to the complexity and pessimism, as well as the late Soviet generation's characteristically developed relationship to religiosity as dissidence, placing Toivo Tulev among the new generation of "new sincere" is equally problematic.

Connections with Central European post-avant-garde

Moving slightly away from the described centre, one can find a group of composers whose music shows connections with Central

European post-avant-garde. Such a connection is characteristic of the work of composers of the younger generation. By post-avant-garde, I mean following avant-garde aesthetics while abandoning the latter's structure-centric approach and arrogant disregard for the audience. In other words, in their fragmentary rhetoric, post-avant-garde works preserve the appearance characteristic of avant-garde, but this is rather a style or a characteristic configuration of musical images and not output generated by a multidimensional structure. This style is not sophisticated. It pretends to be sophisticated. The post-avant-garde style of expression can be found in the works of Liina Sumera, Krõõt-Kärt Kaev, Anna-Margret Noorhani and Karl Tipp. To a lesser extent, the work of Gildemann (Sink) mentioned above and eclectically modernist Astra Irene Susi can also be associated with this approach.

This group of composers also has its antipode. **Andrus Kallastu's** music may be deceptively similar to the music of the group mentioned above. However, the compositional journey that the composer goes through while composing his works is diametrically opposite. As the last stand of parametric composition, Kallastu always starts with a structural idea, the sonic result of which can take shape only at a fairly late stage of composing.

To some extent, Kallastu is seconded by Hans-Gunter Lock, whose recent works are based on microtonal styles, especially the Bohlen-Pierce sound scale.

Sound modernism is sometimes combined with postminimalism and processuality in Estonian music. This combination means that the musical structure's sound pattern is inherently non-traditional. However, its further development is subordinated to the logic of variant repetitions that form clear linear processes. The combination can sometimes give quite unexpected results. One of the representatives of this style is **Arash Yazdani**, of Iranian origin and the firebrand of Estonian new music. However, to a lesser extent, **Elo Masing's** style generated from bodily gestures, in which repetitions are inevitably encoded, can also be associated with this direction. Some works of **Mirjam Tally**, **Evelin Seppar**, and maybe even **Liis Jürgens** can be seen as mild forms of expression of sound modernist postminimalism. In them, the repetitions do not lock the listener to the musical surface but are related to the formation of phrases and the natural breathing of the music. As an interesting phenomenon, some of **Riho Maimets's** works that periodically oscillate between movement and stillness can be added here as musical prayers.



On October 8, at the final concert of this year's Usedom Music Festival, which focused on Estonian music, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, conducted by Juraj Valčuha, performed Jüri Reinvere's orchestral piece *Schoß des ungeheuren Lichts* (The lap of endless light).

PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

Symphonic sound modernism

Nevertheless, connections with more distant traditions are also possible. One of the trends creating such connections is symphonic sound modernism. The central idea of this direction is transformation. It is a Beethovenian understanding of form and how an idea develops as the music unfolds over time and acquires appearances antagonistic to its original form. In the sound modernist context, the structural basis of the piece is not a traditional motif but a characteristic sound-structural idea. The central



ENSO opened its 96th season on September 16, 2022, with the Estonian premiere of Erkki-Sven Tüür's 10th Symphony conducted by Olari Elts.

PHOTO: KIUR KAASIK/ENSO

representative of this direction in Estonian music is **Erkki-Sven Tüür**, whose works, as a rule, show almost all phases characteristic of Beethovenian formal development – dialectical, meditative, playful, and transcendental. However, **Jüri Reinvere** also creates his musical structures in a similar style as Tüür – much more theatrically compared to Tüür – as does the already mentioned Ülo Krigul.

Kristjan Kõrver is one of the more stylistically challenging composers of modern Estonian music on the

frames of sound modernism. The central operator of Kõrver's music is inertia, which subordinates all other structural elements. Music's kinetic energy is made visible in Kõrver's works through the constant juxtaposition of musical plans with different inertia. The juxtaposition gives the impression of constantly accelerating and decelerating. By emphasizing the rhythmic and metrical plan, Kõrver's music relates to the sound modernist post-minimalists mentioned above. However, unlike the latter, Kõrver does not build his works on clearly oriented linear processes. Through

fragmentation, Kõrver's music could also be aesthetically associated with post-avant-garde. However, perhaps it would be more appropriate to talk about the influences of classical modernism, such as Stravinsky's rhythmic thinking.

In the work of **Tõnis Kaumann**, who in some ways is opposite to Kõrver, musical inertia rarely encounters significant obstacles on its way. Kaumann has recently developed a neo-modal voice leading technique, which allows the composer to accommodate much in his works in a rhetorical sense while avoiding raw eclecticism. In their mechanical nature, Kaumann's works sometimes seem like an exercise while avoiding crossing the airy border, in which simplicity is replaced by cliché.

Connections between mainstream and pop

Kõrver's music can be seen as traditional in its imagery, but the avant-garde context of presenting ideas contradicts it. At the same time, there is also a circle of composers in new Estonian music for whom connection with tradition is important. In light of the connections between mainstream and pop, **Tõnu Kõrvits** should be mentioned. Certainly, his work should not be seen as a conventional

cross-over, another manifestation of the postmodern stylistic mix. In his works, Kõrvits does not combine different compositional aesthetics (pop and academic modernism) or parody different pop music styles. In the case of Kõrvits, the influence of pop manifests rather on an archetypal level, related to the development of the material and in the formal plan of the work. The Kõrvits phenomenon consists in giving up the so-called developed forms, the mastery and use of which have been mandatory for so-called serious composers in Western art music. Kõrvits shows that even a pop song – not an example of the style but a structural and formal archetype – can encompass a surprisingly rich musical universe. Through this kind of integration of pop, Kõrvits has found a language of expression that does not get stuck in a flat eclecticism of styles but equally successfully avoids sterile post-avant-garde statics. Kõrvits's style avoids the abovementioned exaggerations and looks very natural. Kõrvits's musical style also has at least one follower – **Alisson Kruusmaa**. In the context of pop, one cannot miss **Tauno Aints**. Unlike Kõrvits, his music borrows the rhetorical surface of pop, sometimes building a surprisingly demanding structure under it.

Diatonicism plays a certain role in the music of Kõrvits and Aints, but the work of the composers cannot be

considered predominantly diatonic. Diatonicism, which dominated the mainstream of Estonian music in the 1980s, has become rather marginal today due to the growing importance of elitist styles. However, this trend continues to be influential socially and outside the specific art music scene, and the composers who practice it are widely known. **Rasmus Puur**, for example, came to Estonian music as a composer of predominantly diatonic works. However, in his last works, he has become significantly more sophisticated and moved closer to the mainstream of Estonian new music.

Since Pärt, diatonicism in Estonian music is also associated with a certain sacredness. As such, it can be distinguished from the general spirituality of new Estonian music described above due to its special emphasis on sanctity. In addition to **Galina Grigorjeva**, **Pärt Uusberg** has become the embodiment of Pärt's followers today. It must be emphasised immediately that Uusberg's approach avoids being associated with any institutionalism and is Estonian-centric and significantly more poetic than Pärt. Uusberg's works' aesthetics also originates in the tradition of Estonian choral singing, in which songs that often find an important social resonance continue to be created.

Stylistic eclecticism

The connection with the convention is also manifested in stylistic eclecticism, a compositional method or style that has not gained much currency in Estonian music after Pärt's experiments in the 1960s. One exception is **Timo Steiner**. Unlike Pärt, for whom stylistic eclecticism was a form of expressing existential questions and in whose works a strict hierarchy of styles (high styles vs low styles) established itself, Steiner's eclecticism is amusingly value-free and naughty. Steiner can be the only real postmodernist in Estonian music in the original sense of the word (non-hierarchy, structural flatness). Stylistic eclecticism also articulates some works associated with symphonic sound modernism (for example, by Elis Hallik and to some extent also by Jüri Reinvere), but such attempts have remained rather exceptional. And then, there is a group of composers whose stylistic aesthetics do not allow them to fit quite into the picture described above. Connections with sound modernism are also present here, but the latter seems to function more as a rhetorical effect to gain the listener's attention. Perhaps the closest to the previously described universe is **Malle Maltis**, a composer following a clear classical imagery logic. Her music also shows a timbral richness. Maltis's work is also brought closer to sound modernism by its poetic texts

and titles, which are also common to sound modernist style. **Lauri Jõe**leh uses a significantly more meditative but paradoxically more eclectic style than Maltis. His work combines traditional development, the static characterising sound modernist works, and the religious spirituality associated with diatonicism.

The stylistic roots of **Aaro Pertmann's** works seem to be in historical neoclassicism, which will soon have a hundred-year history in Estonia. At the same time, **Aleksandr Žedeljov** borrows his aesthetics from theatre and film music. The latter is expressed in the composer's understanding of music as primarily a means of emphasizing certain emotions, significantly narrower than the more academic view of music as a self-sufficient phenomenon in every respect. I would have placed **Ardo Ran Varres** here recently, but with his latest works, he has started to move away from this group. **Mihkel Kerem** is a kind of hard-to-capture phenomenon in Estonian new music. His numerous creations are rarely performed in Estonia because of the lack of a distinctive face. Kerem's works are often clear representations of various historical styles and are undoubtedly professional but somewhat impersonal. Similar questions arise when listening to the music of **Vsevolod Pozdejev**, in which, despite occasional modernism, the aristocratic spirit of the 19th

century seems to have rooted itself.

* * *

It seems that something has been completed in Estonian new music. The final establishment of sound modernism evidences the sense of completion. While the current mainstream established itself in the 1990s in the wind of the re-liberation of Estonia, it was followed by the explosive emergence of different styles at the turn of the millennium, which is why the turn of the millennium and the following years could be viewed as stylistically pluralistic. Oddly enough, however, the sound modernist mainstream now seems to have absorbed most of the above-mentioned approaches, resulting in a reduction in stylistic variability. At the same time, professionalism has increased. These two trends testify to a certain stagnation, which neither the attempts of new sincerity nor the avant-garde guerrilla warfare have been able to break. Some silent shift in musical consciousness may have already occurred, but due to the too small distance, it is not yet possible to recognise it. There is an expectation of something in the air, but so far, no one seems to have been able to give it a clear and inspiring shape.

The unavoidably changing world also demands more articulated changes from music.

The Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre –

an internationally active carrier of national culture

The history of Estonian music in the 20th century is largely the story of professors and alumni of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT). The number of alumni has reached well over five thousand during the academy's more than 100 years of history. Even though new paths are now open to many music universities around the world for talented young Estonians, EAMT continues to shape the face of our music culture today and for tomorrow. Several young musicians who studied abroad have returned to Estonia and now work as professors and lecturers at EAMT. In addition to this, in the last decade, the number of foreign students aspiring to study in EAMT has significantly increased, and they take what they have learned and experienced in Estonia with them to their home countries. This is how EAMT participates in international creative circulation and cultural exchange. Estonian music culture is

spreading through close international relationships and cooperation. This idea is also expressed in the vision formulated in EAMT's strategic documents: to be a prestigious and attractive educational, scientific, and cultural institution with a high level of professionalism, dedicated to preserving national cultural traditions and actively developing international cooperation, while being open to creative ideas, diverse research topics, and innovative interdisciplinary projects.

With approximately 600 students, EAMT belongs to the category of medium-sized music universities in Europe. In terms of its legal status, EAMT is a public university that operates under its own law, under the leadership of the council, senate, and rector. Its spectrum of study programmes and majors is vast: in addition to classical music

performance, you can study jazz and traditional music, contemporary improvisation, composition, including electro-acoustic and audio-visual composition, as well as music pedagogy, musicology, and cultural management. EAMT provides studies at three levels of higher education. In addition to bachelor's and master's degrees, EAMT is also eligible to award doctoral degrees (as of June 2022, 63 have been awarded). In 2017-2018, EAMT curricula successfully passed external evaluation. Bachelor's and master's degree programmes in the field of music were evaluated for the first time by the international quality agency MusiQuE, located in Brussels.

Internationalisation

At the beginning of the 21st century, only a few foreign students studied at EAMT, and mainly from neighbouring Finland, as young Finns acquired the Estonian language with ease (Estonian and Finnish are closely related languages). In 2004, the academy took a clear direction towards the internationalisation of the student body. Courses, typically in Estonian, were also offered in English. In addition to nearby countries, students also began to arrive from distant parts of Europe, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere. This year, 154 foreign students (27% of the

total number of students) from 32 countries are studying at EAMT: students from: Finland, China, Latvia, Russia, Spain, Italy, South Korea, Ukraine, Lithuania, Portugal, France, Colombia, Poland, United States, Iran, Hungary, Morocco, Singapore, Pakistan, Croatia, Austria, Denmark, Netherlands, Costa Rica, Ireland, Georgia, Iceland, Turkey, Germany, Japan, Mexico and Azerbaijan. Every year, around 30 exchange students from many European music universities join them.

What attracts foreign students to Estonia? Some have come with the desire to study with a certain professor, some have heard of the high reputation of Estonian composers and conductors, and some have had EAMT recommended by their friends as a reliable institution with a creative learning environment. From EAMT's perspective, foreign students help to secure the continuity of many fields of study and improve the quality of teaching. It must be admitted that there are not enough domestic students in all fields of specialisation and without foreign students sustainability would be in jeopardy. The broader international competition, which begins with the entrance exam and continues during studies, is certainly motivating for Estonian students as well. An extra bonus is the experience gained from international

communication and developing one's network.

The teaching staff of the Academy are leading Estonian performers and composers, with several outstanding foreign lecturers working alongside them. The master classes of guest professors have become a natural part of teaching. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, their number exceeded 100 a year. The pandemic brought this number down significantly, but courses were not interrupted even during the strictest restrictions. Simply, the communication between the guest teachers and the students was transferred to the online environment. The high-quality reference-free audio and video transmission technology LoLa (low latency, high-quality audio/video transmission system for network musical performances and interaction), in the testing of which EAMT has actively participated since 2017, has been of great help. Just one example is the "LoLa days" organised in cooperation between EAMT and the Norwegian Academy of Music from April 5 to 7, 2022.

Cooperation

In addition to master classes, the studies are enriched by various projects with an educational and creative output. Many of them take place in cooperation with interna-

tional partners or leading Estonian music institutions. From January 22 to 26, 2020 EAMT hosted METRIC (Modernizing European Higher Music Education through Improvisation) intensive week that included discussions, workshops, and concerts focused on improvisation. EAMT was the leader of this three-year-long project, which involved 13 European universities of music. The network continues to operate under the European Association of Conservatoires curation. A similar project, CoPeCo (Contemporary Performance and Composition), which took place in 2010–2013, has developed into a joint master's curriculum of EAMT and the Stockholm, Lyon, and Hamburg music universities. A group of students, focused on experimental music, studies for one semester at each of the above-mentioned universities. This year, the fifth group of students was accepted into this joint curriculum.

EAMT strongly supports those creative activities that involve other disciplines or cooperation between Estonian universities and music institutions. An excellent example of such cooperation was the performance of the musical play "King Stefan" (*König Stephan*) by Ludwig van Beethoven and August von Kotzebue in the Estonia Concert Hall on February 12, 2021. The EAMT



An excellent example of cooperation was shown in the performance of the musical play *König Stephan* by Beethoven and August von Kotzebue in the Estonia Concert Hall on February 12, 2021.

PHOTO: KÄRT RUUBEL / ENSO

symphony orchestra and young actors from the drama department were on stage together with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, as well as conductor Olari Elts. The costumes and stage decorations for the last productions of the EAMT Opera Studio, Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*, ("The Pretend Garden-Girl" on October 3, 2021) and Orff's *Der Mond* ("The Moon" on April 3, 2022) were designed by the students of scenography in Estonian Academy of Arts. The Mozart opera was directed by Marco Gandini from Italy, and the Orff opera by Thomas Wiedenhofer from Germany. EAMT's symphony



On April 3, 2022, EAMT's vocal students, choir, and symphony orchestra performed Carl Orff's opera *Der Mond* (The Moon) in EAMT's great hall.

PHOTO: RASMUS KOOSKORA / EAMT



Ivari Ilja at the festival Beethoven 250 on the EAMT's great concert hall stage.

PHOTO: VELJO POOM / AEPM

orchestra took part in both productions (in the Orff opera also the EAMT Choir was engaged) and was conducted by Paul Mägi and Toomas Kapten respectively. On April 18 and 30, EAMT's young soloists participated in the performances of Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro" in the Estonian National Opera, conducted by Arvo Volmer. Cooperation between the classical music performance and composition departments has also strengthened. Every spring, the EAMT symphony orchestra performs the graduation works of composition students. The last such concert was

conducted by Toomas Vavilov on May 15, 2022. On the album "Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre 101", students of EAMT perform new works by their fellow students in addition to international and Estonian classics.

New Concert Hall

Many of the events presented could not have taken place if the EAMT's new concert hall had not been completed. The festive opening concert took place on September 28, 2019, which was also the 100th anniversary of EAMT. The aforementioned album

was also recorded by EAMT's music technology students in a brand-new concert hall with state-of-the-art acoustics and sound technology. It is a 6,000-square-metre side building to the EAMT's main building opened in 1999, which the academic family and the Estonian public had been awaiting for many years. The centre of the side building is a 500-seat concert hall with adjustable acoustics designed by Linda Madalik. The stage can accommodate a symphony orchestra, or an orchestra pit for opera performances. There is also a black box with up to 130 seats in the new building, a multimedia centre for performing electroacoustic and audiovisual works, 21 classrooms, and EAMT administration facilities.

Besides traditional concerts by EAMT's students and teachers, the EAMT's annual Autumn Festival (MüriaadFEST as of 2020) takes place in the new concert building. There are also excellent conditions for organising national and international competitions here. In September 2021, an international piano chamber music competition took place in EAMT's concert hall, and from November 25 to December 3 of the same year, the Fourth Tallinn International Piano Competition took place. The beautiful interior and excellent acoustics of the EAMT great hall have made it a sought-after concert venue for all Estonian musicians as well as foreign

performers. Among the major events held here, the Beethoven Festival, organised by EAMT, the Association of Estonian Professional Musicians, and the Estonian Pianists' Union could also be highlighted, which took place on Dec 7–13, 2020, close to the 250th birthday of the great composer. During the festival week, all of Beethoven's piano, violin, and cello sonatas were performed.

The expanded infrastructure allows EAMT to host various conferences and academic forums more extensively and in a representative way. From September 1 to 3, 2021, the Academy hosted the fourth festival-conference of artistic research "Doctors in Performance" (DIP) – an international event of music doctoral students and doctors, founded by the Sibelius Academy in 2014. The conference of the Nordic Music Academies Association (ANMA) and NordplusMusic networks "Sustainable Development in Music Education" took place from May 2 to 3, 2022, at EAMT. This year, from June 8 to 10, EAMT and the Estonian Academy of Arts jointly organised the ELIA (European League of Institutes of the Art) leadership symposium "Surfing Uncertainties". On August 24–27, 2022, the 14th international conference on voice PEVoCI4 (Pan-European Voice Conference) took place at EAMT. The organisers of the event were EAMT,

East Tallinn Central Hospital, and the Estonian Society of Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery. Over four days, nearly 160 presentations and 40 workshops took place. The conference covered everything related to singing in various genres, the use of voice in speaking, as well as voice therapy and medicine. Such an extensive and interdisciplinary scientific forum was held in our academy for the first time.

Although EAMT is very happy about its new halls, and Tallinn's concert public has quickly adopted them, our mission is to reach other parts of Estonia as well and to widen our audience. The EAMT symphony orchestra and several professors participated in the Suure-Jaani music festival this year, as in previous years. The opening day of the festival, June 17, was dedicated to the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. Summer courses for young musicians in Haapsalu and Kullamaa have become a tradition as well. The EAMT symphony orchestra has received a great deal of acknowledgment for being the accompanying orchestra on Estonian Song Festivals, most recently at the 27th Song Festival on June 6-7, 2019. The orchestra will perform in the same role at the 2023 Youth Song and Dance Festival.

EAMT's international reputation and competitiveness are confirmed by its inclusion in the prestigious

international ranking of higher education institutions, the QS World University Rankings. In 2019, EAMT was included there for the first time, among the 51st–100th in the sector of performing art and has remained in the same position in the following years as well. EAMT is ranked alongside music universities in Munich, Hamburg, and Cologne, the Liszt Academy in Budapest, the Chopin University of Music in Warsaw, and other top music universities.

EAMT's development plan for the years 2021–2025 contains, among other things, the basic values of the academy: creativity, playfulness, proficiency, commitment, preserving our national culture, openness, and equal and respectful treatment. These, together with the five strategic goals, are the guidelines for EAMT's community. There is no doubt that the coming years will bring new challenges to EAMT – to stand out in the intense international competition of similar schools, be attractive to talented young people both from Estonia and abroad, to provide worthy working conditions to its teaching staff, to ensure the modernity and relevance of the curricula, to stand for the excellence and sustainability of pre-college music education, and to value the role of music in society. As a strong institution with a dignified history, EAMT copes with these challenges and looks to the future with hope.



On July 12, a gold coin dedicated to Neeme was presented in the Pärnu Concert Hall – Maestro Neeme Järvi with his wife Lilia and sons Paavo and Kristjan.

PHOTO: SCANPIX/ÕL/TIINA KÕRTSINI

The classical music world is full of great dynasties

TOOMAS VELMET

Neeme Järvi 85, Paavo Järvi 60,
Kristjan Järvi 50

How and where do musical dynasties begin? Matriarch Elss Järvi (1901–1984) was born in a small Estonian town – then called Pernau, now Pärnu. At the beginning of the 20th century, Pernau, on the edge of the

Russian empire, but with European culture, had about 13,000 inhabitants. The main employer of the area was Waldhof, the largest pulp factory in the Baltics. The city, however, had also developed into a resort and cultural

centre. The year 1721 can be considered the beginning of professional music in Pärnu, when the municipal authorities hired two musicians for a festive event, paying one musician 2 and the other 6 Swedish thalers “for playing their instruments” in the town hall. By the beginning of the 20th century, the *Dilettanten Orchester-Pernau - Gustav David* – had already been working for twenty years. Their repertoire included works from Beethoven to Wagner. The work of the *Dilettanten* continued uninterrupted and, today, Pärnu with its population of 40,000 has a professional orchestra. The city and its concert hall can easily be found on the world’s classical festivals’ map.

Elss Järvi’s eldest son Vallo (1923–1994) moved to Tallinn at the age of 15, finished his studies, eventually started a family, and became a professional conductor. It is certainly not a coincidence that his brother Neeme, 14 years younger, (1937) became a conductor as well – following his brother’s example with his mother’s guidance and support. There was no escape for Neeme’s sons either, neither Paavo (1962) nor Kristjan (1972) – both of whom became conductors. Neeme Järvi 85, Paavo Järvi 60, and Kristjan Järvi 50 are not the only stars of Pärnu or Estonia but they are, without a doubt, remarkable on the world’s symphonic landscape. These Estonian conductors (not just by their

origin) have left an important mark in this field, and, most importantly, an Estonian mark. There are very few conductors of such a high calibre, who never forget their passion and creed, and who present Estonia and Estonian music in the world’s most famous halls with the top orchestras. But I would like to introduce another important player in this dynasty, besides Elss Järvi. In 1961, Neeme Järvi married Liilia, a fellow student from St. Petersburg, who quickly became an Estonian and, following the example of Elss Järvi, a matriarch. Without her, not a single activity in the Järvi dynasty would have taken place.

Conductor Kurt Sanderling was once asked: who was the better conductor? Karajan or Furtwängler. To this provocative question, Sanderling replied that he was not “an expert in such subtleties”. I would say the same of whom is the best conductor among the Järvis. History will decide, if it is even possible.

But let’s start with **Neeme Järvi**. He followed the example of his brother Vallo and played the xylophone with a symphony orchestra at a fairly young age. As early as 1956, he stood in front of the Estonian Radio Symphony Orchestra for the first time. Having graduated from Leningrad

(St. Petersburg) Conservatory in 1961 under a phenomenal teacher of conductors, Professor Nikolai Rabinovich (1908–1972), Neeme became a conductor of the Estonian Radio Symphonic Orchestra and, just a few years later, its chief conductor. I can describe this period with full credibility, as I was then playing in the cello section of the orchestra. Without underestimating the previous chief conductor, Roman Matsov, I would say that the arrival of Neeme Järvi was like a fresh breeze in every aspect. Repertoire, working style, communication with musicians, his passion and way of life – everything served his slogan “Let’s make music!” Soon, the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra was created and afterward, Neeme became the chief conductor of the Estonian National Opera. The biggest stars of the classical world, like Oistrakh, Gilels, Shafran, Rostropovich, and others, noticed him. In 1971, he won the Santa Cecilia Academy conducting competition in Italy, and the doors opened to the outside world, even from the closed USSR. The era also featured the first foreign tours with ERSO, although even more important were the concerts in the major halls of Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and Moscow, and the struggle to obtain the status of a national orchestra. Estonian music was always in focus. Including classical, from Tobias and everything newer – Eller, Tubin, Villem and

Eugen Kapp, Tamberg, Tormis, Rääts, as well as their contemporaries. And, of course, the then avant-garde Arvo Pärt. It was the golden age of Estonian symphonic music – everything written was also performed – which will never happen again. In 1980, the time came to fight the ruling regime. For Neeme Järvi it culminated in leaving Estonia. According to “unofficial data”, Liilia was the generator of events, the coordinator and consolidator of the family – a real lioness. Now, Neeme’s real global career began: AA in America, the Big Five and MET, and a huge number of orchestras in other parts of the world. The children received their musical education from top schools in the US. A tough moment came when, in 1984, his mother Elss died and Neeme was not allowed to attend her funeral.

In 1982, Neeme became the chief conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, where he remained until 2004. His work was fruitful: tours, recordings, a great increase in audience, and an awakening in the interest in the works by Swedish composers (without forgetting Estonian music). The fact the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra became the Swedish National Orchestra in 1997, cannot be attributed to anyone other than Neeme Järvi. As of 1990, he divided himself between two continents while also being the principal conductor of the Detroit

Symphony Orchestra, until 2005. It must be recognised that you can't conduct an orchestra remotely, via the internet, or from your computer desk at home. You must be present both mentally and physically. And you need to be successful both in your work and in attracting sponsors. At the same time, it was a period of intensive touring with the world's most famous orchestras. Not to mention recording, recording, and recording. Composer Peeter Vähi is convinced Neeme Järvi holds the world record for releasing recordings. There are over 500 units of audio recordings, which is about one audio record every month for the past 42 years! I know his ability to concentrate, his promptness in decision-making, and his ability to inspire musicians, which are of decisive importance in the recording process. But it is extremely rare that these features all appear in one person at the same time.

His career also includes periods with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra. With these orchestras, Neeme is associated with lifelong honorary positions and creative relationships full of mutual respect. An example of his focus on Estonian music: in 2005, a CD with the Scottish National Orchestra was released by Chandos Records including Artur Lemba's Symphony No. 1 (1909). The work was performed for the first time in 1913 at the opening of the Estonian

Concert Hall in Tallinn, and it is not known to have been performed later. With various world orchestras, Neeme Järvi has recorded all the symphonies by Eduard Tubin (1905–1982), not to mention the epic performance and recording cycle of Rudolf Tobias's oratorio *Jonah's Mission*.

Eventually, Neeme was able to visit his homeland on September 3, 1989, just a few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Neeme Järvi appeared in front of Estonian National Symphony Orchestra (ENSO) again in 1993, followed by a tour with *Jonah's Mission* and a performance and recording of Artur Kapp's oratorio *Hiiob*. In 2003, Neeme took *Jonah's Mission* to the Grand Hall of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic. Even now, I still hear the words of a recognised critic in my ears: "... if this piece had been performed at the time it was written, the musical history of the 20th century would have developed by a different path". In 2010, Neeme became the chief conductor of ENSO again and took our national orchestra to world stages: Berlin Konzerthaus, Avery Fisher Hall, Mariinsky Theatre, the Golden Hall of Vienna Musikverein, Brucknerhaus Linz, Prague Rudolfinum, the opening of the French Radio Montpellier Festival, two US tours, as well as tours in China and Hong Kong. Participating in Lahti Sibelius Festival was no less important, knowing the ruthless density of the screening for that event.

In 2017, Neeme Järvi became the honorary lifetime chief conductor of ENSO. The work continues! And it can continue thanks to a family that sticks together, wherever in the world they are, and unique support at home from his lifelong wife, Liilia. What Elss Järvi dreamed about has been implemented at the highest level.

Paavo Järvi was seven years old when he was asked if he also wanted to conduct an orchestra, and he answered hesitantly "... I tried once, when I was small..." Now he is a world-famous conductor.

Although Paavo started his musical path (following his father's example) in Tallinn's Georg Ots Music School by studying percussions, he received full professional training in the US. He started private studies with Ukrainian conductor Leonid Grin (1947), and later continued at the Curtis Institute of Music under Max Rudolf and Otto-Werner Mueller. The latter has had Rudolf Baršai and Maxim Shostakovich among his students and, of course, Paavo Järvi. But now for a really noteworthy twist. Leonid Grin's tutor was one of the world's greatest musicians, Leonard Bernstein. At the peak of his formative years, Paavo Järvi also studied under Bernstein at the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute. He

has said that he values the time with Bernstein during his development the most. Paavo has mentioned that he didn't actually enjoy studying in general, and his first understanding that he could actually do something came at the Curtis Institute.

This is where his career as a conductor began: the first orchestra of his own, Malmö Symphony Orchestra in Sweden (1994–1997), and the position of principal guest conductor of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra together with Sir Andrew Davis (1995–1998). Returning to the US, he became the principal conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for ten years. The possibilities widened and a discography of 16 albums was released under the Telarc label. In 2011, Paavo Järvi left the Cincinnati SO with the title of conductor laureate and returned to Europe, where he was the chief conductor of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen and the artistic advisor of the ENSO since 2004. I have to say that all Järvis have had a significant influence on Estonian culture, no matter where they currently reside. From the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Paavo's journey led to Paris, where he became the chief conductor of the Orchestre de Paris until 2016. He had the opportunity to visit Tallinn with the Paris orchestra – continuing the family trend of a "mission" for Järvis to come to Estonia with their orchestras. In



Jubilarians from the Järvi family on the Pärnu Concert Hall stage at the final concert of the Pärnu Music Festival 2022.

PHOTO: TAAVI KULL

2015, the prestigious music magazines Gramophone (UK) and Diapason (FR) named Paavo Järvi the Artist of the Year. In 2021, the extremely successful contract with the Tokyo NHK Orchestra ended. It is important to mention that this list is far from complete as he holds a number of other achievements, let's just mention one – a Grammy award for the recording of the “Sibelius Cantatas” with ENSO and Estonian choirs. Very often he includes works by Tubin, Pärt, Sumera, and Tüür in his concerts and recording programs. In 1997, the album “Searching for Roots” was recorded, and this summer the Estonian Festival

Orchestra’s (EFO) CD “Estonian Premieres” was presented in Pärnu. The CD includes the first recordings of works by composers Tõnu Kõrvits (1969), Ülo Krigul (1975), Helena Tulve (1972), Tauno Aints (1975), and Lepo Sumera (1950–2000).

When the Pärnu Music Festival started in 2011, along with the ongoing Järvi Academy conducting courses, something really big was born – although no one really realised just how big at that time. A completely new phenomenon appeared, the Estonian Festival Orchestra, an unexpected and risky step that was



taken by Paavo, the most academic member of the Järvi family so far. The orchestra consists of both top players from the best European orchestras and the top Estonian players from home and abroad. Such a combination requires like-minded participants, both in music and in life, and a phenomenal willingness to make music together at a very high level. In the first years, the percentage of Estonian musicians was not very high, but it has risen to nearly 70 percent. The orchestra records and tours. Despite enormous logistical issues (a credit to the organisers!), they have made it to the BBC Proms in Royal Albert

Hall, and to South Korea this fall. The result is a natural development of many things, if we remember that it was the young Neeme Järvi, who awakened the creative nature of orchestra players and ended the era of dictator-conductors.

The development process never stops but continually seeks new perspectives. These are found by **Kristjan Järvi**, the multi-talented musician whose formative years occurred in the US. Having studied piano at the Manhattan School of Music (Nina Svetlanova), conducting at the University of Michigan, and training as a pianist

in Mozarteum in Salzburg, he made his first major contribution in 1993 by founding the Absolute Ensemble in New York. An award by Deutsche Bank was given to the ensemble in 2007. This was followed by the positions of artistic director and chief conductor of the NorrlandsOperan, chief conductor of the Vienna Tonkünstler Orchestra, advisor to the Basel Chamber Orchestra, and the chief conductor of the MDR SO. He has received the German Record Critics' Award and a Swedish Grammy. In 2016, he founded his own production company, Sunbeam Productions for creative musical activities, stage directing, and concert performances. The man who does as much as ten.

If the aforementioned activities may conditionally be called a period of search, then his permanent home is now in Estonia. The magic behind this is another matriarch, Kristjan's life partner, violinist Hanna-Liis Nahkur. Kristjan has found a peaceful family life, but that does not mean sleeping creatively. On the contrary, composing music, the Baltic Sea Orchestra (BSO), and Sunbeam Production are flourishing and developing. The BSO is an orchestra of a very unique composition. It's like a road sign that tells where the orchestral culture of the future can go. It's a perfect group of like-minded people, which is only beginning to show what such a group is capable of. There is nothing similar elsewhere in

the world – who else is able to play Stravinsky's *Firebird* by heart! There have been orchestras that play without a conductor, but without sheet music? At the Pärnu festival, a two-hour program was performed, *attacca*, the players moving freely around on the stage (no music stands that would prevent moving), and a conductor acting just like a member of the orchestra – sitting, walking, moving. And an audience that reacts actively, including fans of academic performances. If something is full of talent and well mastered, success is guaranteed.

The common denominator of each of the Järvis could be that real talent cannot be hidden. It breaks itself out into the spotlight, one way or another. The Järvi dynasty continues to bring international recognition to Estonian music culture, making us great in spirit and adding extra value to the music scene in Europe, the US, and worldwide. It all started in the small provincial town of Pernau and returned to Estonia as a big and powerful dynasty – making both Pärnu and its music festival, world-famous. A quick and unanimous answer came from all Järvis, regarding the question: where do they feel the best and truly at home?: In Estonia! (Riina Luik, Muusika July, 2022). The most adventurous of the Järvis, Neeme, added Florida to the list, and the most settled one, Kristjan, specified Vääna in Estonia.

The Estonian Music Council –

30 years of protecting sound art, development, and professionalism

Prequel

The journey of liberation from totalitarianism in Estonia and in Eastern Europe 30 years ago, not only aroused the desire to have a say in the politics of one's own country but in many other aspects as well. It provided the opportunity to have a real say in making decisions, to influence democratic processes, and to build the social arrangement that its members themselves needed or considered right. In the field of fine arts, which was still somewhat liberal under the Russian occupation, the eloquent partners of the state in terms of social processes and arts (including music) were unions of creative artists, which even the Soviet government tolerated to a certain extent. By 1988, the joint plenum of the Estonian unions of creative artists was organised and prepared by the cultural council of these unions. The event was officially called a Joint Plenum of the Boards of the Unions of Creative Artists of the Estonian SSR. The official purpose

was to discuss the materials of another congress of the communist party, the sole party of the regime at that time. In reality, in the hall of the Estonian parliament, the Riigikogu, the growing policy of Russification, the exhausting use of Estonian natural resources, the lack of democracy, and the restriction of creative freedom were discussed with unexpected criticality. Among others, composers Lepo Sumera (the first Minister of Culture of the newly independent Republic of Estonia), Jaan Rääts, and Eino Tamberg spoke up. The final document of the plenum called for the transition of the republic to self-sufficiency and the establishment of Estonia's own citizenship.

In parallel with the plenum of creative unions, an awakening movement could be noticed in society in general. In the summer of 1988, it became common to perform homeland songs at mass events, including the anthem of the Republic of Estonia, which would have brought singers severe punishment from the authorities of the Soviet



Culture Minister Märt Kubo, IMC/UNESCO representative Hans Åstrand, Estonian Musicological Society Representative Reet Rimmel, and EMC's new President Leo Normet in Tallinn City Hall after the founding meeting of EMC on June 13, 1992.

PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

regime just six months earlier. New musical works were created that emphasised the need to hold together, and many of them quickly became extremely popular. The year 1988 turned out to be the peak of the singing revolution: masses of people gathered for “night song festivals” at the Song Festival Grounds. In the spring of the same year, the composer Alo Mattiisen wrote “Five homeland songs”, which spread across the country at lightning speed after their first performance at Tartu’s music festival days and became the signature piece of the “Singing Revolution”.

After the pivotal events of August 1991 and the gradual restoration of the constitutional order of the Republic of Estonia in 1991-1992, there was a crying need for civic organizations in every field. The thirst for democratic processes encouraged people to join

political parties, but at the same time created a favourable ground for the emergence of social umbrella organizations in many areas. This also happened in the music scene. Several associations were just founded – the Estonian String Teachers Association, the Estonian Piano Teachers Association, the Estonian Jazz Association, the Wagner Society, the Estonian Arnold Schönberg Society and many others. But, individually, the voices of each standing up for their own specific interest was too weak, a “joint choir of musicians” was needed.

In the creation of the Estonian Music Council, the desire to join larger European or international networks as quickly as possible was also significant. Especially, if these networks were in one way or another under the auspices of the United Nations, UNESCO, or other global organizations. Also, and perhaps even more importantly, was the close interaction with our immediate western and northern neighbours – similar unions and societies in Sweden and Finland. One of the initiators of the creation of the

Estonian Music Council (EMC) was the Swedish Music Council, which had connections with Prof. Leo Normet, the main initiator and first president of the EMC. Thus, on April 24, 1992, a preparatory meeting for the founding meeting of the Music Council took place in the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum, where the President of the International Music Council (UNESCO) Eskil Hemberg, the representative of the European Regional Group of the IMC (UNESCO), and the executive secretary of the Swedish Royal Academy of Music, Hans Åstrand, participated. The last of whom also took part in the founding meeting of the Estonian Music Council, introducing the international music councils operating under the auspices of UNESCO.

The very beginning and early years

Founders from eighteen organizations gathered at the first meeting of the Estonian Music Council on June 13, 1992, in Tallinn. As mentioned previously, it was largely the initiative of Leo Normet, a professor at the Tallinn Conservatory, the first president of the Estonian Music Council. His reputation as a musicologist played an important role in music at home and in neighbouring countries. At the opening meeting, the Minister

of Culture Märt Kubo, Doris Kareva a writer from the Estonian National Commission for UNESCO, Dr. Arnolds Klotiņš from the Latvian Composers' Union, and Eero Pekka Tarasti, a musicologist and semiotician, professor at the University of Helsinki, made their speeches.

In addition to the aforementioned umbrella organizations that emerged the same year, the Tallinn Conservatory (the former name for the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre), the state-funded concert agency Eesti Kontsert, the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Heino Eller's Tartu Music School, the Estonian section of Jeunesses Musicales, and the Estonian Composers Union were the founding members of the EMC.

The Estonian Music Council set its first goal – to strengthen ties between all music institutions and educational institutions and professional musicians active in Estonia. On the international level, the priority was to become a member of the International Music Council (UNESCO), in order to start the international cooperation of the newly liberated country. In the speeches of the opening meeting, it was stressed that the EMC was not just a citizen's movement to give advice, or, if necessary, criticize, but a partner for the state – the Ministry of Culture

and other organizations responsible for the development of professional music culture. It was clear that in such a time of extremely fast social changes, a joint body was needed to focus on the introduction of Estonian music culture, handling important issues in the music industry, in the media, and at the state and local levels, and in searching for solutions.

On March 26, 1993, the Directorate of the International Music Council (UNESCO) decided to accept the Estonian Music Council as a member. Through this, it was immediately possible to join, for example, the project “Music at school - a source of balance and tolerance” operated under the patronage of Yehudi Menuhin, where music schools from European countries were selected to participate. The EMC strongly supported the newly established music school of the Vanalinna Hariduskolleegium.

At the first annual meeting of the EMC in May 1993, President **Leo Normet** highlighted the sharp increase in the importance of church music in Estonia, and the resulting need to create a department of church music in the newly renamed Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. There were talks about the danger of damage to the historical manuscripts in the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum and the need to publish the first English-language magazine introducing Estonian

music and musicians. This is how the first edition of *Music in Estonia* was prepared. Besides articles introducing the history of Estonian music, the symphonies of Eduard Tubin, and the works of Arvo Pärt, there were also articles about the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, the history of the development of our musical university, and the coming contemporary music festival “NYJD ‘93”.

As in the early years of its activity, the EMC has played an active role in organizing concerts in all decades. Greatly thanks to the efforts of the long-time executive secretary of the EMC, Kadri Lassmann, and several member organizations. In 1993, the Norwegian music festival “Eduard Grieg 150” was organised in Tallinn and Tartu, as well as Canadian music days in Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, and Viljandi. Since 2013, EMC has been celebrating International Music Day, initiated by the International Music Council in 1975. For this purpose, each year on October 1st, a program of free concerts takes place with the help of the EMC. On this day, live music can be heard in places all over Estonia, in concert halls, clubs, churches, and schools. The concerts offer musical experiences and introduce both musicians and students to this beautiful but difficult profession. The concert program invites us to notice the importance of music and musicians in our daily lives.

Music education, premises and musicians: 30 years of fight

At the General Assembly of the EMC of November 1994, chaired by Prof. Leo Normet, who unfortunately left us a year later, issues were raised that remained in the focus of the EMC and its board for the following decades. Some of these concerns do not yet seem to be solved.

The first concern, which was finally solved 25 years later, was the construction of a new building for the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre – an educational building and complex of halls. Prof. **Peep Lassmann**, rector of EAMT and the president of the EMC from 1995 to 2017, set this as a priority. Since 1982, the search for a plot and later the financing of the building became the main concern of the board and, quite a few times, of the general assembly. Over the years, public letters, and direct mails were sent to the Riigikogu and its culture committee, successively changing the ministers of culture and ministers of education and science. The EAMT buildings were completed in two stages: In 2000, with a new educational building in the heart of Tallinn, and in 2019, with a modern hall complex next to the educational building.

Over the years, the poor conditions of the Tallinn Music High School



The ex-president of the EMC Peep Lassmann at the International Music Day Gala 2020.

PHOTO: VELJO POOM / AEPM

and G. Ots Tallinn Music School received a lot of attention as well. These buildings, which are crucial in Estonian music education, were hopelessly outdated. In fact, these were already too small and unsuitable for music studies when music schools were “temporarily” housed there after World War II; remaining in these premises for decades. Just this year, on September 1st, the new Tallinn Music High School and G. Ots Music School building was opened, where these two operate as a combined school. The topic of a merger of two secondary music schools (as well as the Tallinn Ballet School, which also found a home in the new building) was repeatedly discussed at several EMC general assemblies and board meetings a decade earlier.

However, the focus of the EMC has not been limited to school buildings but Estonian music education in general. When Estonia restored its independence, we had the Soviet music education system in place. During the reform, the children's music schools at that time remained under the management of local municipalities. Some of the graduates of these schools continued their studies in the two aforementioned secondary music schools. Therefore, primary music schools were, and are, of decisive importance, both in terms of number and quality. The EMC has consistently discussed the integrity of music education at its general assemblies and at numerous focus days, trying to ensure that the teachers of local municipalities or private music schools have

roughly similar working and salary conditions to teachers in general education schools. Likewise, the volume and quality of music education in our general education schools have been considered important. In this aspect, Estonia is a positive example for the rest of Europe, but it is necessary to maintain the achieved quality and quantity of music lessons. Here, long-term members of the EMC, the Estonian Music Schools Union, and the Estonian Music Teachers Association have been important partners in standing up for positive changes. Ensuring the high-quality functioning of local music schools was discussed at the EMC general assembly as early as 1999, but an important political breakthrough, i.e., the decision to support music schools nationally, was reached in 2017.



Just this year, on September 1st, the new Tallinn Music High School and G. Ots Music School building was opened, where these two operate as a combined school (as well as the Tallinn Ballet School).

Policy maker and a partner of the Ministry of Culture

EMC was a good and constructive partner of the Ministry of Culture for all those decades, which was also recognised by the cooperation agreements with the ministry. A huge amount of work was done in music policy matters, both in terms of content and strategic documents (for example, the Cultural Policy 2020 document), passing on the ideas and directions of activities of the organizations in their field to the Ministry. However, at several critical moments, when the political or some will is clearly in conflict with the well-being of the music field as whole or some member organizations, EMC has had to fulfill the role of a spokesperson or even defender for its field. Meetings with various Ministers of Culture or top officials of the ministry have been part of EMC's work forms.

The wellbeing of our musicians, their living and working conditions, salaries and fees, performance opportunities, etc., is indirectly related to music education but is directly related to the quality and brilliance of Estonian music life. Thirty years ago, Estonia quickly entered a phase where our best instrumentalists went to work in the Nordic countries, primarily in Finland, but also in the Netherlands and Iceland. On the one hand, it was a mark of the quality



Collegium Musicale performing in Solaris Centre on International Music Day 2022..

PHOTO: RENE JAKOBSON / AEPM

of our music education. Being good in music is an international language, it was not difficult for orchestra players from Estonia to get contracts with Nordic symphony orchestras, or singers contracts in European opera houses. Pianists, choir directors, and music teachers found better-paid jobs in the music schools of our Nordic neighbours or Iceland. Estonia had to pass through this period inevitably. One of the activities of the EMC in all three decades has been to strengthen the reputation of our national or municipal

music groups, to get their salaries and working conditions improved, trying to maintain or, if possible, increase the number of jobs or decisively oppose the intentions of closing some institutions. Under the leadership of Prof. **Ivari Ilja**, the current president of the Estonian Music Council, there have been many discussions in the last five years on the topic of expanding performance venues, i.e., concert halls and the Estonian National Opera. There has been an interesting trend in Estonia in the last two decades: at the initiative of a member of the music council, the state-funded concert agency Eesti Kontsert, some high-quality concert halls have been modernised or built in Tartu, Pärnu, and Jõhvi, but not in the capital city. Before the hall complex of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and after 1913, when Estonian society's theatre building was

completed, there was no public concert hall built in Tallinn, not to mention a new opera house. The hall of the Estonian National Opera, which was originally built as a drama hall, but later became our national music theatre, is clearly small for both opera and ballet productions, both in terms of dimensions and acoustics. The board of the EMC has held numerous discussions on the topics of a new opera house or the addition to the current building and has stood for creating new homes for the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir. All these issues are directly related to the wellbeing of our musicians and policy making in culture. Those who make their listeners happier with their music should also work in happy conditions themselves.

International Music Day 2022 Gala in Viimsi Artium.

PHOTO: RASMUS KOOSKORA / EMC



Music awards as an expression of gratitude

Thoughts about the awards given to musicians in parallel with the rewards of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia have also been on the agenda of the EMC meetings for nearly three decades. This was realised on International Music Day, October 1, 2002, when the EMC awarded a music prize for the first time – to Estonian Radio Klassikaraadio for actively covering musical life, introducing and promoting the work of Estonian composers and performers both at home and abroad.

According to the statute of the music awards, up to three awards are given each year to recognise Estonian musicians or music institutions whose activities have contributed to the development of the music life. The categories of these three awards are composition, interpretation, and the award for important and outstanding activities in the music sphere. When nominating these awards, the board takes into account the long-term activities of the nominees in their field. Together with the awards of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, which are handed out at the same ceremony but focus on the outstanding achievements of the previous season, the awards ceremony is a kind of “Oscar-gala” of Estonian music and therefore the most important meeting place of the year for musicians. Over the years, music



This year's EMC Award winners Villu Veski, Tõnis Kaumann and the piano duo Kai Ratassepp-Mati Mikalai with the President of the EMC Ivari Ilja

PHOTO: ERLEND STAUB / AEPM

awards have been given to our internationally known composers like Arvo Pärt and Veljo Tormis, or creators who combine tastes and styles, such as Olav Ehala or Rein Rannap. Among others, the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra and NYJD Ensemble, conductors Neeme Järvi and Paavo Järvi, Tõnu Kaljuste, Eri Klas, Jüri Alpernten, and others, and soloists Tõnu Naissoo, Ivari Ilja, Aile Asszonyi, Peep Lassmann, and others, have received interpretation awards. The awards for their outstanding activities in music have been given to Estonia's leading acoustician Linda Madalik, and legendary music teachers with a large field of influence such as Laine Leichter, Toomas Siitan, Jaan Ross, Endel Lippus, Tiia Järg, and others. The awards ceremony is also broadcasted on national television. It ends the day full of free concerts across Estonia, dedicated to International Music Day.

The classical performers of Estonia –

from today to the future on high speed!

Today's Estonian music scene is diverse, lively, and rich. It is characterised by an abundance of inspiring talents and a growing number of composers, performers, and groups who are appreciated both at home and on international stages. The marquee names of Estonian music culture are primarily our composers – Arvo Pärt, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Jüri Reinvere, Tõnu Kõrvits, and Helena Tulve to only name just a few. Estonian conductors are also highly recognised: next to Neeme Järvi and Paavo Järvi, the names Olari Elts, Mihhail Gerts and Kristiina Poska, stand out as those who conduct orchestras worldwide, despite their rather busy schedules. Estonian choir culture also receives a great deal of attention, with our song festivals growing as a landmark tradition. Our opera artists are also receiving growing recognition outside of Estonia as well. The outstanding

basso Ain Anger made his Metropolitan Opera debut in October 2021, and the soprano Mirjam Mesak has achieved a position among the distinguished soloists of the Bavarian State Opera (Bayerische Staatsoper). In the background of such international success, the performances at home deserve to be listened to with rapt attention.

This year has brought Estonia marvellous achievements in the field of string music, with two winners in major international competitions. The violinist Hans Christian Aavik won first prize at the Carl Nielsen competition in Odense and the cellist Marcel Johannes Kits won third place at the Queen Elisabeth competition in Brussels.

Hans Christian Aavik has become one of Estonia's brightest violinists, whose accelerating rise to the top is paved by numerous successful concerts as a soloist and chamber musician, as well as several prizes at competitions. Aavik, who studied in Estonia and Germany (Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt), combines spirituality, intellectual curiosity, and openness, which has made him a favourite of a continuously growing audience. Aavik is in his early twenties and just in the early stage of his international career, but he has already won numerous awards across Europe. The most recent of which is first place in the prestigious Carl Nielsen International Competition 2022. Aavik's achievements in recent years also include first prize in the soloist category at the Cadenza Contest, first place at the László Spezzaferrri International Music Competition, first prize and four special prizes at the Estonian String Players Competition (2020), and the laureate title and special prize at the chamber music competition of the Polytechnische Gesellschaft Frankfurt am Main.

Mental and physical integrity has been highlighted as the strongest features of Aavik's playing. Behind his bright and meaningful interpretations, one can sense his gratitude and sympathetic respect towards the



Hans Christian Aavik

PHOTO: AIVO KALLAS / AEPM

composer and the listener. In addition to numerous awards, Aavik's debut album with pianist Karolina Žukova was released under the Orchid Classics record label (2021), and he is to be a frequent guest soloist in front of the best Scandinavian orchestras. It is also important to note that Aavik plays a historical instrument – Giovanni Paolo Maggini's violin, made around 1610 in Brescia (Italy), with the bow of the French master Victor Fétique from around 1930. The precious instrument and bow have been given into his use with the kind permission of the Estonian Instrument Foundation and the Sapožnin family.



Marcel Johannes Kits

PHOTO: KAUPU KIKKAS / AEPM

The young cellist **Marcel Johannes Kits** has made an outstanding start, his successful participation in the Queen Elisabeth Cello Competition in Brussels brought him third place and elevated him into the ranks of the most remarkable soloists of his generation. To promote his participation in the competition, Kits gave several successful concerts at home with the Helikunst orchestra (conductor Valles-Rasmus Roots), which received a lot of positive attention in national media. A few years ago (2018), Kits won first place at the highly competitive George Enescu competition in Romania. International awards translated to

an extensive tour in Belgium, as well as performances with the Estonian Festival Orchestra with maestro Paavo Järvi. Not just in Estonia, but in South Korea as well. Such a remarkable soloist also deserves a special instrument – Marcel Johannes Kits plays an instrument by Francesco Ruggeri, made in Cremona in 1674, which was given into his use by the Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben.

Kits made his debut as a soloist with an orchestra in his early teens and won prizes at almost every classical music competition he participated in, even before graduating from high school. In addition to patiently building his solo career, Kits is also an enthusiastic chamber musician. His passion for chamber music led to the formation of Trio '95 in 2003 with his classmates from Tallinn Music High School. The trio has won several awards and given numerous concerts at several festivals, including at the XVIII Tallinn Chamber Music Festival, where an unforgettable program with the music of Olivier Messiaen and Valentin Silvestrov was performed.

Bright moments have also been offered by the younger generation of chamber musicians, whose development includes participation in international competitions as well as local performances. In September 2021, the first international piano chamber music

competition “Tallinn 2021” took place, which brought together top young ensembles from duos to quintets. The contestants were evaluated by a jury consisting of internationally recognised musicians and lecturers. It is especially pleasing to note that the **Trio ‘95** (Rasmus Andreas Raide, piano, Robert Traksmann, violin, and Marcel Johannes Kits, cello) took home the first-place award in the category of trios. Their brilliant level of performance is backed by a long experience of playing together, which, despite the youth of the performers, stretches back over 15 years.

Numerous concerts and festivals are held in the field of chamber music, offering ample opportunities for both beginners and advanced chamber ensembles. In a broader sense, it is also important that the brightest moments of performances are actively recorded and distributed outside the narrow circle of domestic enthusiasts. In November 2021, one of the biggest record companies in Poland, DUX, released an album of the **Trio Poll-Varema-Poll**. This marked an important milestone in music written for a piano trio by Estonian composers. Acclaimed performers Mihkel Poll (piano), Mari Poll-Novakovich (violin), and Henry-David Varema (cello) have played together for nearly ten years. The trio has also performed successfully in the small hall of the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and in the Berlin Konzerthaus.

One of the new initiatives is the two-year residency program for chamber ensembles launched by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia at the end of 2020, the aim of which is to expand the scope of ensembles and create an inspiring environment for active ensembles. The residency comes with financial support for creating new ensembles, cooperating with managers, and enriching the repertoire through commissions. The first group chosen for the residency was the **String Quartet M4GNET**, which consists of four top string players: Robert Traksmann (violin), Katariina Maria Kits (violin), Mart Kuusma (viola), and Siluan Hirvoja (cello). The quartet’s performances have received both critical acclaim and a warm reception from the audience. The ensemble offers bright and meaningful interpretations of the quartet classics.



Mihkel Poll, Mari Poll, Henry-David Varema
PHOTO: KAUPU KIKKAS / AEPM



Quartet M4GNET

PHOTO: VELJO POOM / AEPM

But it also considers it important to introduce lesser-known pieces and new compositions. Brand new works for the string quartet by four composers will be premiered at the Estonian Music Days festival in spring 2023.

It is no secret to the observers of Estonian music life that in recent years the activities of string quartets have been enthusiastically widened. It is obvious composers have also been drawn into this momentum – quite a number of them have written quartet music in recent years: Mihkel Kerem - *Tenth String Quartet* (2020), Rasmus Puur - *String Quartet No. 2* (2020), Age Veeroos - *Lausuja* (2021), Riho Esko Maimets - *String Quartet* (2021), Viktoria Grabv - *When Winter Kisses the Last Thaw* (2021), Alisson Kruusmaa -

Day by Day, Towards Lightness (2021), Tõnu Kõrvits - *Point Nemo* (2022) and Kristjan Randalu - *QR-tet* (2022). The enthusiastic quartet **FourEst** (Linda-Anette Verte, Egert Leinsaar, Sandra Klimaitė, and Theodor Sink) has also contributed to the emergence of new string quartet music. Their recent success includes concerts with Tõnu Kõrvits's chamber works and the album *Constellations*, released at the end of 2021, featuring works by Rasmus Puur.

The Association of Estonian Professional Musicians (AEPM) plays an important role in the career of professional musicians. The main goal of the AEPM is to support creative artists, protect their interests and value their art. The AEPM is an

association of artists and operates as a non-profit organisation. All professional performers in Estonia and outside – soloists, chamber musicians, orchestra players, and conductors – can be members of the AEPM. The main activities of the association, since its beginning in 1998, have been organising festivals and events, mostly related to chamber music, where strong ideas and creative impulses often come from musicians themselves.

In December 2021, the AEPM organised Estonian Music Week for the first time (not to be confused with the Estonian Music Days Festival, which focuses primarily on contemporary music). The week-long event took place in the great hall of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, which is fairly new and has excellent acoustics. AEPM's new festival emerged from the idea to perform works by one particular Estonian composer at each concert, while also bringing attention to lesser-known or unperformed works. Last year, compositions by Eino Tamberg, Ester Mägi, Artur Lemba, and Erkki-Sven Tüür were played on four respective nights. The festival received warm support and attention from both audience and critics, which will hopefully continue into the future.

One of the major and most exciting events in the last season was the impressive Free Stage of Performers



FourEst

PHOTO: SILVER ÕUN / AEPM

night, where the musicians had the opportunity to play pieces of their own choice on the stage of the EAMT's great hall. The extensive concert, which lasted nearly three hours, featured music from five centuries and gave a diverse overview of the rich interests and broad musical reach of numerous Estonian professional performers.

An important element in the music life is also the concert series *i nagu interpret*, which brings top Estonian performers to the best halls (including the great hall of EAMT) once a month. Last year, for example, pianist Mihkel Poll gave a successful solo recital with works by Chopin in the Estonia Concert Hall, the duo Linda-Anette Verte and Maksim Štšura introduced



Sten Heinoja

PHOTO: AEPM

the audience to works by British composers, and the string quartet Prezioso celebrated its 15th year together with soprano Arete Kerge.

AEPM also highlights Estonian composers. Author's nights dedicated to Estonian composers are mostly initiated by the musicians themselves. Concerts often take place in collaboration with composers. Along with the concerts included in the Estonian Music Week, several such author's nights took place last season. René Eespere's music was heard in the hall of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. Concerts were also given to celebrate Hillar Kareva's 90th birthday in collaboration with the poetess Doris Kareva, who shared his memories of her father with the audience. This spring, the string quartet FourEst performed the music of Tõnu Kõrvits at three concerts.

The fact that AEPM values rich and meaningful musical life outside the capital area, also deserves a special underlining. Throughout the season concerts are organised in small

Estonian cities and locations. Of course, the regional characteristics do not allow record ticket sales there, but dedicated music lovers, who thirst to hear the best talents, can be found in every location and village.

Besides the cross-regional cooperation that unites brilliant soloists and ensembles, an important aspect is also the historical scope – the overall picture of the brightest creative talents in Estonian music culture throughout history – including a deep and thorough understanding of certain composers. In this area, the pianist **Sten Lassmann's** grand project, which lasted several years, to record the piano music by Heino Eller, a national classic of Estonian music, has made a great contribution. The project will come to an end next spring – the last, ninth, album will be released by the London-based label Toccata Classics. The album series will be supplemented by a profound monography, which is currently under completion. If all plans are realised according to the schedule, those interested will be able to enjoy this material in 2023. It is also a happy fact that Sten Heinoja, one of the brightest pianists of the younger generation, has started a creative research project on a complete performative treatment of Mart Saar's piano preludes, the results of which would be both a recording and a study in written form. There really is a lot to look forward to.

Arvo Volmer: We cannot make it without Wagner

An interview with Artistic
Director and Chief Conductor of
the Estonian National Opera

Arvo Volmer is one of the most high-flying Estonians, both in a literal and figurative sense. He made his debut as a conductor at the Estonian National Opera in 1985 and with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra in 1987. He has been the principal conductor of the Oulu Symphony Orchestra in Finland, the principal conductor and artistic director of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in Australia, and the principal conductor of the Haydn Orchestra of Bolzano and Trento in Italy. He has conducted, among others, the BBC Philharmonics, the Orchestre National de France, the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Berlin, Finnish, and Dutch Radio Symphony Orchestras. He has worked in Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, the Finnish National Opera, the

Sydney Opera, and more. Volmer has returned as the chief conductor of the Estonian National Opera since 2019, but this has not reduced the number of invitations to various top orchestras in various cultural metropolises of the world.

You have been called a dynamic conductor who always has a clear idea of what he wants to achieve. What are your plans for the next few years at the Estonian National Opera?

Yes, there is a certain cognition – what I would like to pass on and what to achieve. I have a list of works that I would like to do and some of them are already on the agenda. We try to find a balance and harmony between different genres, to provide a good feeling for both the creators and the



Arvo Volmer

PHOTO: ENO

audience – one that there is balance in the world. There are happy surprises and small scares, but this balance works, it has good energy.

In your view, what is the main purpose of the national opera? What should be the priority or stand out?

Our duty as a national opera is, among other things, to develop the audience's experience and bring new works to the stage. Undoubtedly, the creative productions born here are what matter in the long run. But if we take a closer

look, what really becomes important is the aura, the quality of the productions, a good position in society, and a good connection with the audience. Everything that is innovative and unique often looks more interesting from a distance than up close or does not have a large enough local interest to keep the activities going on economically. Finding a balance is difficult but, without a doubt, yes, Estonian music is undoubtedly an important component, whether it is a previously written Estonian opera or a new work.

How many contemporary works do you perform yourself? What is their share in the repertoire in other parts of the world?

This varies greatly from country to country and is highly dependent on funding. In countries with strong state support, institutions are not so afraid, they experiment more boldly and try to broaden the audience's taste as well. But in countries where financing depends greatly on their own income, they are somewhat more conservative. In Australia, for example, we were forced to be quite conservative.

Quite often, new works are added to the agenda reluctantly, because of the belief that it is too risky with the audience – it is much safer to do something well proven. Do you find educating the audience through presenting them with new pieces to be important?

This is extremely important, especially nowadays, when people's musical education and knowledge are decreasing. I simply mean that people have less and less time to sit down and listen to music. Today, the audience can be *carte blanche*. The thing that attracts them, doesn't necessarily fit into any previous framework. Composers are completely free to write and use different styles, they don't have to meet the expectations of the listeners

but can also surprise them. Technically, after all, our whole-tone-half-tone system, which has become dominant, is easier to understand, than all kinds of quarter-tone techniques that have been tried. Let's say that micro-intervals do not go well with polyphony, they fit well into mainly monophonic music. They are not effective in multi-layer polyphony. But as for composers, anything is possible, I don't think the audience has any certain expectations. On the contrary, the mixing of styles, quoting, etc., seems familiar – it's all free! I would really look forward to such free-thinking composers who can create a new context. In Estonia, for example, Tõnis Kaumann writes in such a style, and Timo Steiner too writes a bit in the same way.

What genre does your own heart belong to?

Oh, I would still gladly conduct symphonies from time to time (laughs). No, that was a joke – I do like musical theatre. And I really like the theatre in general. I have to say that in the first half of our production of "Tchaikovsky's Masterpieces" with Balanchine's choreography for Tchaikovsky's Serenade for strings, I feel superb because it's excellent music. And this choreography, the visual image, is somehow, especially intertwined with the music. There are moments where the visual gives some

additional emotions to the musician. The visuals are important, the lyrics are important, and it all expands the power of music. I think I am very happy to conduct such good operas.

You have also been called a Madetoja specialist, and as the chief conductor of the Oulu Symphonic Orchestra, you have recorded all Leevi Madetoja's orchestral works. You have also recorded all of the symphonies by Sibelius and Tubin. And you currently have a series of Sibelius symphonies with the National Opera orchestra. What attracts you to Nordic music?

In fact, Carl Nielsen's name should also be added there, because I have conducted all of Nielsen's symphonies, and some several times. I would have liked to record them too – if that could ever be done.

There are some perceptual lines in this music created near the North Pole, which are similar and uniting. By the way, we can also include here some British composers: I sense some similar features in the British, there is something cognitively specific about it. That's why the connection with this music has emerged and the desire to perform it.

Concerning Sibelius, I am interested in the form of his symphonies and the development of that form through his seven symphonies. I focus on the

details; I have developed my own theories about them during working with his manuscripts in different museums. If in the case of Sibelius, I'm interested in the form, in Nielsen's music I'm interested in the phrasing and rhetoric, as I often feel it does not sound right. In certain cases, I feel that by doing it myself maybe I can achieve something that feels right. Maybe I can offer listeners a new experience next to their existing ones.

When we recorded Tubin, the previous recordings helped me, of course, although they also set some limits on my thinking. Then I decided that, as Neeme Järvi made pretty emotional interpretations, I would try to do what Tubin wrote as accurately as possible, leaving my subjective feeling in the background. Of course, when a musician phrases and plays music, there develops a rather strong emotional bond, but it can be controlled. For example, if it seems to me that I should speed up in a certain place, because my heart wants to do that, but Tubin has not written any acceleration, then I try to feel it in the way that it actually fits into the given frames. And that was the main thing: to offer another version in addition to the already existing versions. So, that other conductors or music lovers can also listen to that work from another musical perspective. There is no point to produce anything that could be considered "copy-paste".

You once said that you like to listen to old recordings because they are closer in time to the original, the composer's own concept. Is loyalty to the author still important to you?

Loyalty to the author is extremely important to me. There are many ways to deal with old recordings because performance styles have changed a lot. If you listen to Edward Elgar conducting his own works, it is extremely free and quite blurred – at the same time his own comments and the way he writes are extremely detailed, which speaks strongly against his own conducting style. What's the point of writing a sixty-fourths and articulation in a very detailed way, if it can't be performed? Probably the reason was that the interpretation style of the 20th century was a little different – the same goes for Sibelius' symphonies. I have heard nothing of Sibelius himself conducting, except his *Andante Festivo* for strings, still often played. He conducts it in a way you would never think of. But there is also a certain spirituality of the era in that. At the same time, Sibelius was not a tyrant about the interpretation of his works: he did have certain preferences, but he accepted different approaches, saying the main thing is that the musician lives in the music and creates a certain sound system.

I took Madetoja's works because I worked in the Oulu Orchestra as the chief conductor for many years, and Madetoja was from Oulu. He is also known to be the only person who was privately taught a little by Sibelius and, since Sibelius is important to me, I started looking into what kind of composer Madetoja was. It turned out to be amazingly original and peculiar, but at the same time with great symphonic thinking. His three symphonies are very different: the first one is a bit Sibelian, and in the second symphony he finds his own sound language, which he also uses a lot in his opera "Juha". In terms of style, it is particularly scenic and epic – you can call it national romanticism in some sense – but in reality, it is still much harsher. Well, in the same sense as the question, of whether Tubin's second, third and fourth symphonies are national romanticism or not. Probably not, but at the same time, if you look at it from a distance, they should be classified that way.

But, yes, recording as such is an interesting process. I started to look at what Madetoja had written, and it turned out that there was a huge amount of orchestral music. And since it had never been done, we recorded all Madetoja's orchestral works. Later I found two more tiny pieces that he had written for the orchestra, but they just didn't come across at the time.

How many albums came out of that process?

Five in total. And I was able to add a small addition myself. Madetoja has one big ballet pantomime called “Okon Fuoko” – 90 minutes of music. We recorded it in whole and then also recorded the suite, made by Madetoja himself, which is about 40 minutes of extremely exciting music. And I had the idea to make a suite out of the rest of the music that Madetoja didn’t use in his suite. So, I recorded a new suite I put together, about 25 minutes, and I was able to conduct it later as well. I had a feeling it was necessary. Tubin’s Kratt suite is also the one that does not include the most exciting music from this ballet. There is so much exciting music in “Kratt” that I would like to combine in a suite that could be played in concert and would show the brilliance of this ballet in its full glory. It’s one of the most amazing ballet scores ever, right up there with Stravinsky’s best ballet scores, in my opinion.

When it comes to future plans, to what extent do the conditions of the current hall of the National Opera put the brakes on your plans or force you to make compromises?

We have taken out practically the maximum that can be taken from the current hall. We constantly think

about what our repertoire options are, which works we can consider and which ones we can’t. Of course, this especially concerns newer music – we’re not even talking about the most modern, but everything that starts from the 20th century.

When the new hall of the National Opera is finally ready, what piece could it be opened with – what piece do you dream of performing in this new hall?

We would definitely open the new hall with one of the new great Estonian operas. Definitely. But in the next phase – if we want to be a nation with serious musical theatre, then we must go through all the important milestones, feel them, and be there, with the audience and the performers. I am afraid we cannot make it without Wagner.

Estonian choirs on the international arena

After the release of the last *Music in Estonia* (13/2018), hardly anyone could predict what a rollercoaster the coming COVID-19 waves would cause to global cultural life, with concert and theatre halls closed. It also impacted choral life in Estonia: a number of planned concerts were cancelled (even the Song Celebrations were postponed!), as well as long-prepared concert tours by both professional and amateur choirs. Participation in international festivals, collaborations with guest conductors, soloists and groups, and unfortunately, many amateur choirs had to end their activities as well.

The most difficult periods were 2020 and 2021. Being resourceful in these times meant that the work of professional choirs was not interrupted: rehearsals with a reduced number of singers, voice groups, wearing masks, working over zoom, and periodically giving tasks to singers for individual work at home. It was through this, for example, that the main personnel of our choral flagship, the Estonian

National Male Choir, survived entirely. If circumstances allowed the choirs also performed outdoors, which can be seen on their respective websites (Estonian National Male Choir, the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, the Collegium Musicale, and the Estonian Choir Association, and in the monthly newsletters of the Estonian Music Information Centre. All these sources were used for writing this text). Awards from international choir festivals came to Estonia and new recordings were released. In order to maintain the activities of the choirs representing the Song Celebrations movement, with its 150 years of tradition, the Ministry of Culture took a decisive step in 2021 to support local governments in paying salaries to the choir directors of local amateur choirs. Simply put, this meant the opportunity for the choir director's employer to apply for government funding that covered nearly half of the salary costs. Such a decision was eagerly awaited because it is not sustainable to work for years for a symbolic fee, a box of candies, a bouquet of flowers, or



The National Male Choir performing *Kalevala's 17th Runo* by Veljo Tormis on October, 15, 2020 in Põlmu Concert Hall.

PHOTO: ANU HUNTSAAAR / ENMC

just compliments. The work of choir directors of amateur choirs has been almost entirely voluntary for years. Hopefully, the new system will give young conductors some certainty about the future and we will be able to maintain the spirit of a singing nation in the years to come.

The Estonian National Male Choir, founded by Gustav Ernesaks in 1944, has been one of the most prestigious male choirs in the world. During its long history, the choir has given more than 7,000 concerts and performed in several countries, from Estonia to North America, and Asia. The chief

conductors of the choir have been Olev Oja, Kuno Areng, Ants Üleoja, Ants Soots, and Kaspars Putniņš. Since the 2011/2012 season the Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the National Male Choir has been **Mikk Üleoja**. Over the years, the choir has recorded with record labels, including Deutsche Grammophon, Sony, Finlandia, Alba Records, GB Records, Virgin Classics, Aurora, and Ondine. In 2004, the Estonian National Male Choir, the Ellerhein Girls' Choir, and ENSO recorded for Virgin Classics the cantatas of Jean Sibelius with conductor Paavo Järvi, which received a Grammy award – the first for

Estonian musicians. In the last seven years, the Estonian National Male Choir has released five albums. In the 2018/2019 season the choir performed in Belgium, Lithuania, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan, and in Strasbourg, Moscow, Linz, and Zurich. But 2020 brought a long list of cancelled and postponed concerts, including Shenzhen, Shanghai, Paris, the cancelled concerts in Bayreuth, and more. The concert at Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, postponed until February 2022, had to be cancelled again...

According to Anu Huntsaar, the program editor of the choir, the only performance outside of Estonia since 2020 was on October 20, 2021, at the Vilnius contemporary music festival Gaida. The versatile program included the world premiere of *The Holiest Tree* by Lithuanian composer Tomas Kutavičius for the trumpet and male choir; the choir was joined by trumpet soloist Markus Stockhausen from Germany. Over the last three years, the choir has recorded material for several albums that are now awaiting release, as well as various male choir music for the Estonian National Broadcasting Company. This spring season, work has been going on for the recording of Galina Grigorjeva's album, the premiere concert of which is planned for November 26, 2022, in the Estonian Concert Hall.

Estonian new music and premieres are an important part of the choir's activities, as well as works written for the male choir that are rarely performed in the world. For example, *The Triptych of the Moon* by Tõnu Kõrvits, written for the 75th anniversary of the National Male Choir, as well as works by Riho Esko Maimets, Mart Jaanson, Tõnis Kaumann, and Pärt Uusberg, and choral arrangements by Aare Kruusimäe. At MustonenFest 2022 gala, Arnold Schönberg's *Six pieces for male chorus Op 35* had their Estonian premiere, as well as his cantata *A Survivor from Warsaw*. One of the most touching collaborations of recent times includes the concerts in Tallinn and Tartu at the end of April 2022 with the outstanding Ukrainian chamber orchestra Kyiv Soloists, performing Arvo Pärt's *Dapacem Domine*. Looking back, we can see that despite the lockdown and special conditions it was possible to maintain the activities of the choir. The National Male Choir participated in several local festivals such as the TubIN Festival and Klaaspärlimäng in Tartu, MustonenFest, Mooste Elohelü, and Viljandi Folk Festival.

On the international scene, the **Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir** has reached the largest audience. The choir was created in 1981 at the initiative of Tõnu Kaljuste. From 2001 to 2007 the chief conductor

was Paul Hillier, 2008–2013 Daniel Reuss, 2014–2021 Kaspars Putniņš, and from August 2021, Tõnu Kaljuste again. The choir can often be seen on the Mezzo TV channel. It has performed in the most prestigious festivals and venues, such as the BBC Proms, Salzburg Mozartwoche, the Abu Gosh Festival, the Hong Kong Arts Festival, the Bergen Festival, the Edinburgh Festival, the Aix-en-Provence and Schleswig-Holstein festivals, the Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Sydney Opera House, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Royal Opera of Versailles, the Palau de la Música Catalana, the London St Luke's and Barbican Centre, the Flagey Concert Hall in Brussels, the Esplanade Concert Hall in Singapore, the Kennedy Centre, the Lincoln Centre and Carnegie Hall, the Walt

Disney Concert Hall in LA, and more. The choir has collaborated with many conductors (including Claudio Abbado, Helmut Rilling, Eric Ericson, Sir Colin Davis, and Sir Simon Rattle), orchestras (including London SO, BBC Wales Orchestra, Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Philip Glass Ensemble) and with record labels (including ECM, Virgin Classics, Carus, Harmonia Mundi, Ondine, BIS). The choir has received impressive international recognition: Two albums have received Grammy awards: with conductor Paul Hillier *Arvo Pärt. Da Pacem* (Harmonia Mundi, 2007); with conductor Tõnu Kaljuste *Arvo Pärt. Adam's Lament* (ECM, 2014). There have been 16 nominations for Grammy awards. The choir's albums have received the Gramophone Award -

On June 30, the EPCC celebrated its 40th birthday with a special concert at the Noblessner Foundry in Tallinn. The Finnish accordion virtuoso and composer Kimmo Pohjonen dedicated his work *Freedom* to the choir's anniversary.

PHOTO: EPCC



Schnittke. *Psalms of Repentance. Pärt. Magnificat & Nunc dimittis* (BIS, 2018) and several other recording awards (Diapason d'Or, Preis der Deutschen Schallplattencritik, Danish Music Award, de Choc de l'Année Classica). In the last four years, several albums have been released: *Estonian Incantations 1* (Toccatà Next, 2019), *Ferenc Liszt. Via Crucis & Arvo Pärt. Sacred Choral Works* (Ondine, 2019), *New Choral Music by Richard Harvey. Evensong* (Altus Records, 2019), *Tõnu Kõrvits. You are light and morning* (Ondine, 2020), *Schnittke & Pärt - Choral Works 2* (BIS Records, 2021), *Veljo Tormis. Songs of the Seasons* (Vinyl, EPCC, 2021), *Rachmaninov. Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* (BIS Records, 2022) and Ülo Krigul's album *Liquid Turns* (BIS Records, 2022). In 2020, BBC Music Magazine named the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir among the ten best choirs in the world.

Even the “almighty” COVID did not interrupt the international performances of the EPCC entirely. In July 2021, they participated in the productions of Kaija Saariaho's new opera *Innocence* and Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* at the Aix-en-Provence Opera Festival in France. Saariaho's opera, created as an international collaboration (Aix-en-Provence Opera Festival, Covent Garden Royal Opera, Finnish National Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the Dutch National Opera) is based on the libretto by Sofi

Oksanen, the world premiere on July 3 at the Grand Théâtre de Provence was conducted by Susanna Mälkki. Wagner's opera was performed with conductor Sir Simon Rattle, both operas were staged by Simon Stone. In August and September, the EPCC performed in Italy (Pisa, Turin, Milan) and in Switzerland (Tonhalle in Zurich).

This year has also been a busy one, from February 10 to 18 seven concerts were given in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands with the Flanders Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Kristiina Poska. The program included Arvo Pärt's *Adam's Lament* and Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*. In March, the choir performed at the Arvo Pärt Festival in Amsterdam Muziekgebouw, together with the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra under Tõnu Kaljuste. The program included *Te Deum* (the piece that marks the beginning of the composer's and conductor's creative path together), *Adam's Lament* (which brought the conductor the 2014 Grammy Award as being the album's title piece), *Fratres, Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*, and *Salve Regina*. Conducted by Kaspars Putniņš, Arvo Pärt's a cappella works and Liszt's *Via crucis* were performed, together with the pianist Kalle Randalu. In the same month, the choir also participated in the Estonian music festival *Sounds of Estonia* in London's Kings Place with

a concert under the title *The Deer's Cry*. The program included works by Cyrillus Kreek, Arvo Pärt, Veljo Tormis, and Toivo Tulev. In April, the EPCC performed together with Tapiola Sinfonetta, at the Espoo Culture Centre in Finland, the program included James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words on the Cross* and Arvo Pärt's works.

On June 30, 2022, EPCC celebrated its 40th birthday with a special concert in Tallinn at the Noblessner Foundry. The Finnish accordion virtuoso and composer Kimmo Pohjonen dedicated his three-part work *Freedom* to the choir on this occasion. The program also included Zoltán Kodály's *Laudes Organi* (with Kadri Toomoja on the organ). The conductor was Tõnu Kaljuste.

The Chamber Choir Collegium Musicale, founded in 2010 by singer and conductor **Endrik Üksvärav**, stands out with numerous foreign performances and international projects, as well as with regular commissions from Estonian composers. On August 24, 2019, they performed in Ukraine on the country's Independence Day. Who would have guessed at that time how many concerts they would give a few years later to support Ukraine – in Estonia, the USA, Canada, and elsewhere. And

how many times they have performed Erkki-Sven Tüür's piece *For Ukraine*, composed in 2022 because of the brutal war Russia started on Feb 24, 2022.

The choir's repertoire is rich in terms of eras and styles. On May 4, 2019, a concert was given in Tallinn's Dome Church as part of the ISCM World Music Days, the program included compositions from several parts of the world. Canadian composer Gabriel Dharmoo's work *Useless spells*, South African composer Franco Prinsloo's *Pula, pula* (Rain, rain) and Peeter Vähi's *Siberian Trinity Mantra* received the biggest applause there. On November 16, 2019, at the Second International Central and Eastern European Festival EUFONIE in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Warsaw, alongside the works by Arvo Pärt and Erkki-Sven Tüür, Polish composer Paweł Łukasze-wski's *Popule meus* were premiered, commissioned by Collegium Musicale. *Corpus Christi responsorial* by the same composer, written a year earlier, was also performed. Together with the Israel Camerata, the choir performed in February 2020 at the MustonenFest Tallinn – Tel Aviv, the program included Bach's *St. John's Passion* and Vivaldi's *Gloria*. One of the most unique concerts entitled *Summa* took place on September 5, 2020, at the Nargenfestival in Tallinn as a part of the Arvo Pärt Festival. Together with Raschèr Saxophone Quartet

(Germany) works by Pärt and Bach were performed and arranged by tenor saxophonist, composer, and arranger Andreas van Zoelen, a member of Raschèr Quartet since 2014. Collegium Musicale has been collaborating with this world-famous saxophone quartet, which promotes classical music and its arrangements, since 2017.

For its tenth birthday, Collegium Musicale commissioned a new piece from Erki Pärnoja – a bold idea as the composer had never written anything for the choir before. But the result was completely unique in Estonian music, both in terms of musical language and content. The central text of the work *Anima Mea* (My Soul) is a poem by Estonian poet Anna Haava *On see koit või ehakuma* (Is it a dawn or a sunset glow), and includes phrases from Psalms, Latin, and Celtic prayers. The text is compiled by Erki Pärnoja, Anu Lamp, Jaan Tammsalu, and Eero Epner. The composer was inspired by the desire of people to maintain their faith in the possibility of starting over. The first performance of this Mass-like work was planned in 2020 for Easter Night, which also marks the beginning of a new circle of nature that awakens every spring, and the belief in the impossible becoming possible through resurrection. However, the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow the realisation of these plans, and the premiere was postponed until autumn. The concert

under the title *Südaõine. Pärt & Pärnoja* took place on Nov 7, 2020. The musical language of *Anima Mea* is very special, instruments added to the choir are not typically associated with this genre. Erki Pärnoja on guitars, Filip Leyman (Sweden) on keyboards, Ulrik Ording (Denmark) on percussion, and Peedu Kass on bass guitar joined the Collegium Musicale for that piece. With the concert recording released as an album *Anima Mea* presented on April 3, 2021, the music reached a wide international audience.

Another commission by Collegium Musicale, *Maarja missa* (Mass for Maria) by Maria Faust for the choir and four instruments also gained international attention. It was well received in both Estonia and in Denmark, at the opening concert of the Copenhagen Jazz Festival on July 3, 2021, in Brorson's Church. The Mass is dedicated to all victims of abuse, from the point of view of the mother or father and the child, as well as the community, that way the message of the work is not limited by any national borders or parts of the world. The text was compiled by art historian and dramatist Eero Epner. The performance line-up of the concert in Copenhagen included Maria Faust (alto saxophone), Anders Banke (bass clarinet, Denmark), Tomasz Dąbrowski (trumpet, Poland), Peter Dahlgren (trombone, Sweden), and Collegium Musicale under the direction of Endrik



At the concert for the 12th birthday of the chamber choir Collegium Musicale on October 3 in Viimsi Artium chamber hall, the favourite songs of the singers were performed – the most popular was Erkki-Sven Tüür's *The Wanderer's Evening Song*, followed by Tõnu Kõrvits' *Stabat Mater* and Veljo Tormis' *Two Songs on poems by Ernst Enno*.

PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

Üksvärav. The Estonian performances included Maria Faust, Indrek Vau (trumpet), Kristjan Kungla (bassoon), and Andres Kontus (trombone).

On September 10, 2021, on the occasion of Arvo Pärt's birthday, the choir gave concerts in Ostrava (Czech Republic) and Katowice (Poland). The program also included works by Veljo Tormis, Erkki-Sven Tüür, and Tõnu Kõrvits.

After two years of delay, the 50th Estonian Culture Days took place in New York from March 31, 2022 to April 3, 2022. Collegium Musicale under the direction of Endrik Üksvärav performed alongside other renowned Estonian musicians (including Ain

Anger, Martin Kuuskmann, Kristjan Randalu) at Eesti Maja. Works by Veljo Tormis, Miina Härma, and Peep Sarapik were performed, as well as (surprisingly) a hit by Estonian rap artist Nublu, *Õõlaps*, together with the author, who had rocketed the heights of the Estonian music scene since 2018 with hundreds of thousands devoted fans. The choir also participated in a pop-up concert in support of Ukraine, organised on the entrance steps of the Ukrainian Institute in New York. After the Estonian Culture Days, the choir had a US tour with performances in Annapolis and Washington, all concerts featuring the works by Arvo Pärt and Veljo Tormis, as well as Erkki-Sven Tüür's *For Ukraine* (the choir

dedicated all the concerts of the tour to Ukraine) and his *Omnia mutantur*. The last one was written as a mandatory piece for the 17th International Choir Competition Tallinn 2021 and remained in the choir's concert programs later as well. The choir has been cooperating with Tüür since 2011; the composer is well familiar with the choir's sound and has dedicated several of his works to the choir and their conductor. The message of *Omnia mutantur* is very appropriate for today – be patient, everything changes, and love wins, because all things change and we change together with them. During the concert tour to Canada (Toronto, Ottawa, and Hamilton) from May to June 2022, Estonian music was performed again – works by Arvo Pärt, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Tõnu Kõrvits, Pärt Uusberg, as well as songs from Veljo Tormis' cycle *Forgotten People* and special songs in the support of Ukraine.

The choir has been awarded the title Choir of the Year by the Estonian Choir Association three times (2011, 2014, and 2017). The choir has also won the Grand Prix at the EBU/Euroradio international competition Let the People Sing in Barcelona in 2017, and received the Annual Award of the Estonian Cultural Endowment in 2018. In 2019, Collegium Musicale was chosen from 179 choirs of 44 countries to perform at the 12th World Choral Music Symposium in Auckland (New Zealand). The choir, which is still new

in terms of its active years, has already performed in Italy, France, Russia, Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Finland, Malta, Israel, Lebanon, Greece, Holland, Japan, USA, and Canada, and several times in many of these countries. And they mainly perform Estonian music – everywhere.

Achievements of Estonian choirs in international choir competitions

2019 – the mixed choir K.O.O.R. (director Raul Talmar) got the main award from the Chernomorski Zvutsi competition and the diploma of the Union of Bulgarian Musicians and Dancers to the choir director; the Estonian Youth Mixed Choir (director Silja Uhs) achieved the 1st place in the folk music category at the international choir competition Tallinn 2019; the Ellerhein girls' choir (director Ingrid Kõrvits) achieved the 1st place (shared with the Finnish choir Spira Ensemble) in the contemporary music category and 2nd place among youth choirs; also the 1st place in the youth choir category as well as the Grand Prix on choir competition in Gdansk; the female chamber choir Sireen (director Nele Erastus) achieved 2nd place in the category of female choirs at Tallinn 2019 competition; Tartu Girls' Choir Kurekell (director Vilve Maide) received 3rd place in the category of youth choirs,

the chamber choir Encore (director Karin Kuulpak) received 3rd place; the pan-Estonian boys' choir Kalev of the Society of Estonian Male Choirs (directors Indrek Vijard and Kuldar Schüts) achieved 3rd place in the boys' choir category; the joint choir of Tallinn University Male Choir and the pan-Estonian boys' choir Kalev (director Indrek Vijard) received 3rd place in the male choir category at Tallinn 2019 competition.

2021 – the joint Tallinn University Male Choir and Kalev, the pan-Estonian boys' choir, (director Indrek Vijard) achieved 3rd place in the Leevi Madetoja Male Choir Competition in Finland; the mixed choir K.O.O.R. (director Raul Talmar) won a silver medal during an online competition in Tokyo; the chamber choir Encore (director Karin Kuulpak) got the 2nd place from Finland JS Fest in online form in the category of sacred music. The international choir festival Tallinn 2021 was postponed until 2023, the "Tallinn choir concerts 2021" were held in Mustpeade Maja and the concert hall of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre with the Junges Consortium Berlin (director Vinzenz Weissenburger) participating.

2022 – The Eller Girls' Choir (director Külli Lokko) received 2nd place in Cork (Ireland) and a special award for the performance of a piece by a living European composer (*High Flight* by Eriks Ešenvalds); the mixed choir

HUIK! (director Ode Pürg) received 2nd place and the Gold Superior award, as well as a special award for directors in the Ave Verum competition in Austria; the mixed choir of Estonian National Broadcasting (director Hirvo Surva) received 3rd place in Stasys Šimkus Competition in Klaipėda; Tartu Youth Choir was awarded the main prize and the 1st place in the sacred music and mixed choir categories on the choir competition in Karpenisi (Greece), director Markus Leppoja was named the best choir director.

In support of Ukraine

In 2022, Estonia supported Ukraine in the country's war against Russia in many ways, including – so typical to Estonians – with singing. Music video for the Ukrainian song *Oi u luzi chervona kalyna* has reached the world and this war-torn country through Ukrainian and European TV channels, and millions of viewers have thus been able to give their support. It was recorded on May 22, 2022 in the Song Festival Grounds in Tallinn with thousands of Estonian singers. The song was arranged for the choir by Jonas Tarm, it included the 11-year-old Varvara Bražnik of Ukrainian origin as a soloist and the performance was conducted by Hirvo Surva, the chairman of the Estonian Choir Association. This video is spreading rapidly around the world, empowering Ukrainians to defend their homeland, to have peace at home and peace in the world.



The Arvo Pärt Centre in the evening lights.

PHOTO: PACO ULMAN / APC

KARIN RÕNGLEP

The house of vibrant peace

Daily moments from the Arvo Pärt Centre

Most of the trails in the pine forests of Laulasmaa lead to the beach with the “singing sand” (Laulasmaa means singing land in Estonian). People come here to look for something that has been lost in their hectic daily lives. In addition to that forest trail, you’ll find

a house where searching and finding, music and silence, and sound and word meet. It is not a coincidence that the Arvo Pärt Centre (APC) is located right in this very spot, away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The centre has been operating in Laulasmaa for 12 years with the aim to organise and preserve the legacy of composer Arvo Pärt. The centre was originally in a small residential building, but four years ago a new building was built here – a complete architectural artwork designed by Enrique Sobejano and Fuensanta Nieto, which presented new opportunities for the APC.

The House for the Archive

In the 1980s, when the Pärt family set up their new life in Berlin after emigrating from Estonia, the composer's wife Nora began to systematically save all materials related to Arvo Pärt's activities. After their return to Estonia in 2010, it was decided to establish the Arvo Pärt Centre, and others were hired to take over Nora Pärt's work. The number of documents accumulated over the years is extensive and diverse: the composer's musical diaries, sketches, manuscripts, scores, recordings, correspondence, and contracts. In addition, thousands of photos, programme booklets, media pieces, research papers, and documents related to recognition and awards - to name only a small portion of the entire material surrounding Pärt's more than 60 years of creative activities. Digitizing documents and inserting

them into the special archive program, the APIS (Arvo Pärt Info System), is one of the centre's missions, the completion of which may take decades.

“You have a job here to do, your children will too, and so too do your grandchildren,” says Arvo Pärt with a glimpse of sympathy, looking at the stacks of notebooks, magazines, and papers piled up on the table. Under the archivist's desk a seemingly inexpressive box, which was recently found in some hidden corner, waits to reveal its content. The composer delves into music sheets, which the archivist shows him one by one. What period do these belong to or what work might they be related to? Sheets get yellow tags according to the composer's statements, but not all. “No, I don't know, I don't remember...” Some of the sketches remain on hold and wait for a future researcher to date them definitively.

The House for the Research

In the first eight years, the centre's team was mainly dedicated to archiving materials and organising smaller events, like film nights, and the new building allowed the staff to go out of the archive premises and welcome a number of guests. The concerts, exhibitions and lectures, daily guided tours and educational programmes began.

A guest exploring the centre on their own will be greatly helped by an audio guide (in Estonian, English, and Russian), which provides a comprehensive overview of the unique architecture of the building and the composer's creative journey. On the other hand, a guided tour allows a more personal approach to guests. It is probably more exciting for music teachers to follow the birth story of the *tintinnabuli* style, from Arvo Pärt's music sheets. Architecture students too can explore each and every detail of this remarkable building. The highlight of the guided tour is undoubtedly presentation of the archive materials, as it is rare to get a chance to look at the miracle of creation and the seeking that preceded it, on hundreds of sheets, written with pencil.

The theme of "seeking" is also reflected in the first permanent exhibition "When you seek from almost nothing", which leads the visitor closer to the composer's world of thought. Carefully selected thoughts from Arvo Pärt's musical diaries alternate with the sounds of his works, providing the key to understanding Pärt's style, but at the same time requiring great concentration from the viewer-listener. Soon, the exposition will be expanded to gradually open the mysterious world of *tintinnabuli* to the visitor.

From September to June, a few days a week, groups of children of different



"It is always a beautiful time when you are at an utter loss; when you seek from almost nothing..."
The exhibition team with Nora and Arvo Pärt.

PHOTO: BIRGIT PÜVE / APC

ages, from kindergarten to high school, fill the house with a joyful bustle. Three educational programmes of different levels have been developed for these guests. Sometimes university students and other adult groups also express their desire to better familiarise themselves with Pärt's work with the help of an educational programme. The "dessert" of the learning day for both 5- and 75-year-olds is a creative activity in the centre's art room, with Arvo Pärt's most beloved chamber music piece playing in the background – even the rowdiest teenager calms down there.

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted visits to the building and it may happen in the future, which is why online education programmes are also under preparation.

The children group from Käopesa kindergarten passed their lesson in an exemplary manner, they watched “The Little Motor-Scooter” in the film room, sang the “Käin juba lastaeaias...” (“I’m off to kindergarten”) song on the stage of the chamber hall, ran back and forth on the stage a few times, reverently studied the score, and visited the chapel (perhaps for the first time ever). Together with the teacher, the supervisor put aprons on the children in the art room, helps the smaller ones to sit at the table, and presses the button on the CD player. “It’s ‘Spiegel im Spiegel,’” a bright-eyed six-year-old proudly announces in a very good German pronunciation.

The House for Live Music and Word

Whether it’s the view of the pine forest, the rows of chairs in autumn colours, the warm oakwood interior or the brilliant acoustics (created by Arau Acustica and supervised by the irreplaceable Estonian architectural acoustician Linda Madalik), the special atmosphere of the centre’s chamber hall has been praised by both musicians and the audience. Concert life, which was stagnant during the pandemic, has gained even stronger

momentum this season, and not a week goes by without live music. The concert series in Laulasmaa opened in October 2018 by well-known performers of Pärt’s music: violinist Anne Akiko Meyers, Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, conductor Tõnu Kaljuste, and the ensemble Vox Clamantis. By now, many musicians performed on the centre’s stage, including famous names such as countertenor David James, pianist Alexei Lubimov, violinist Gidon Kremer, conductor Peter Phillips, the ensemble Theatre of Voices and Paul Hillier, as well as young Estonian musicians, choirs, and ensembles. Although the concert programmes represent different eras, genres, and styles, all the musicians who performed at the centre are connected by an invisible thread in the form of a similar sense of music.

Over the course of four years, the centre’s programmes have expanded in terms of genres. Besides music, the current calendar of events is characterised by a thirst for words and knowledge. For example, there will be special guided music listening sessions, master classes, conversations and poetry evenings as well as lectures with a wide range of topics and speakers: architect Enrique Sobejano, Bishop Makarios, poetess Doris Kareva, icon historian Orest Kormashov, semioticians Peeter Torop and Valdur Mikita, and more.

The centre's film days can be considered a well-trodden path. Since 2011, cinema fans have seen dozens of films featuring Arvo Pärt's music here. While films were initially screened in the Sõprus cinema theatre, in recent years the centre's chamber hall has been transformed into a cinema hall for film days.

The House for Books

The library is like the architectural centre of the house, surrounded by courtyards. The rhythm of pine trunks can be seen from the windows and the chapel with the sense of eternity. 5,100 data-carrying items have found their place on the large shelf, mainly books, broadly divided between two topics – music and art, and religion and theology. There are also books written about Arvo Pärt. In addition, you can find the latest versions of the scores of all Pärt's works, as well as nearly 400 CDs and DVDs. The core of the collection is the personal collection of Arvo and Nora Pärt. The library is constantly expanded over time and can be found in full in the nationwide online catalogue ESTER. The library's three cosy reading rooms await readers who don't want themselves to be distracted by anything other than the view of the pine forest.

In 2014, the centre's own series of publications began with the book *In*

Principio. The Word in Arvo Pärt's Music, which contains the texts of 81 works by Arvo Pärt. On average, 1 to 2 publications are published each year, among them are also the audio discs *Songs from Childhood* and *Ukuaru Waltz*. In more recent years we could highlight Joonas Sildre's graphic novel *Two Sounds*, which has become very popular and has already been translated into several languages, and the Estonian translation of Peter Bouteneff's book *Arvo Pärt: Out of Silence*.

The House for Science and Creation

One of the goals of the centre is to contribute to the publication of new scientific literature by providing music researchers with access to archive documents. Musicologists from Estonia and abroad found their way to the centre even before the opening of the new building. It is a pleasure to note that the archive program APIS currently contains more than 100 theses and scientific articles on the topic of Arvo Pärt's music, not to mention the studies that have been published.

The first scientific conference of the Arvo Pärt Centre "Arvo Pärt – texts and contexts" was organised in 2021 in cooperation with the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and brought together the core of Pärt

researchers: scholars from Europe, America, and Australia, among them Peter Schmelz, Peter Bouteneff, Jeffers Engelhardt, Leopold Brauneiss, Kevin Karnes, Toomas Siitan, etc. Res Musica, a collection of articles from the presentations given at the conference, will be published in cooperation with the Estonian Musicological Society. Many guests have looked at the centre's peaceful and balancing working environment with a little envy. One of the latest developments is the residency program, which aims to support artists and musicians in their creative work, offering them an ideal place for creative activity for a couple of weeks, financed by the centre. Four artists from Estonia, Austria, Belarus, and Iran have participated in the centre's residency program during a couple of seasons. Several other artists, both from Estonia and abroad, have enjoyed

the creative atmosphere of the centre with their own financial resources.

Two bodies are bent over a round meeting table covered with manuscripts and musical diaries. "What is written here?"; the German musicologist points to a green pencil scribble in Estonian on a page of a diary from 1976. Together, they try to decipher the composer's notes, which may turn out to be a key to more deeply understanding the piece. Only a few dedicated researchers have so far got a chance to enter the mysterious world of the creation process reflected in composer's musical diaries.

The House for Silence?

There are crowded days with complicated logistics in the centre, when conductor Tõnu Kaljuste's apt metaphor of the Arvo Pärt Centre as a "ministry of silence" does not

"Today is Hele-Mai's day." Talks with the composer about his archives in the centre's classroom.

PHOTO: BIRGIT PÜVE / APC



seem to apply. But usually, the flow of visitors to the centre is regulated by an invisible hand, as just enough people arrive here at the same time. In any case, you have to take time to visit the centre, whether your starting point is Tallinn, Ahja, London, or Australia. On Mondays and Tuesdays, when the centre is closed to visitors, and in some reasons on Thursday afternoons, the centre achieves a kind of dignified silence, with all employees working quietly at their computers.

The lights are lit at 8:30 in the morning. Around ten, a restless group of school children arrives to gain new knowledge and experiences from the educational programme. The hustle and bustle has hardly died down when a new group, this time elderly enthusiasts, arrives at the building, and they will move around the house together with guides for the next hour. At the same time, one company is holding its seminar in the classroom. After a while, the musicians unpack their instruments in the hall to rehearse for the evening concert. At peak hour, there are 150 visitors in the building listening to the concert. After the applause and the last person leaves, the cleaner prepares the house as a clean sheet for tomorrow. Lights go down at 11:00 p.m.

In addition to organising events, receiving guests, and work in the archive, the day of a team member of the APC may also include several other tasks, such as washing paint brushes

after the children's art class, getting musicians to Laulasmaa and back to the city, disinfecting the headphones of the audio guides, shaking hands with Sting, who came to visit Arvo Pärt, checking tickets at the door of the chamber hall, listening to music, arranging the chairs, moving the piano, and long hours at the meeting table – and a lunchtime walk to the sea.

“Today is Hele-Mai’s day”, says Arvo Pärt. The morning light flows from the green courtyards into the small classroom, where the centre’s team has gathered to discuss one particular work in details. That’s how the “Story of creation” begins, as the archivist’s in-depth interview with Arvo and Nora Pärt is called. A number of musical diaries, sketches, diagrams, sheet music, recordings, and photos have been prepared so that in order to look at them together, listen to them, and learn as much as possible about this work. The event is recorded with a camera and audio recorder so that the topics discussed today do not get lost for future generations. What motivated the composer to write this work? Why did he choose this particular text for the basis of the work? What is the structure of the work? How has the composer used the tintinnabuli technique? Which performance is the closest to the composer’s vision? Pretty soon, the topic goes beyond music and into the life events that took place at the time of the creation of the work and, if you are lucky, into the philosophy of the composer. Arvo Pärt’s archive is expanding again.



Festivals attract audiences from across the sea

There is a total of 2,222 islands in Estonia. However, most of Estonia's island inhabitants live on the three largest islands, Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, and Muhu island. These are followed by Vormsi and Naissaar in terms of area. Being on an island has always added some special colour and flare to any events taking place there. It has been a long tradition to organise summer camps for choirs, orchestras, and theatres on the Estonian islands. It started during the Soviet regime when the islands were close to

visitors as a border area, and an artistic summer camp was something uniquely special and inaccessible to ordinary people. The final concerts of such summer camps, initially intended just for the musicians and actors themselves and the few local residents, grew into a much larger phenomenon, in which the islands competed with each other. These events now include not only choral singing and folk music but, the very best that Estonian music life can offer. Here is an overview of major festivals on islands.

Nargenfestival

One of Estonia's most unique and diverse summer festivals is the Nargen-festival, launched in 2006 by conductor Tõnu Kaljuste. Starting with the grand stage production of Veljo Tormis' major work *Estonian Women's Songs*, the festival has expanded in terms of genres and expanded its reach far beyond the island Naissaar. On Naissaar, an hour's journey from Tallinn by sea, the main concert venue is Omar's barn in Lõunaküla. It is a hundred-year-old log building that can accommodate a few hundred seats. In recent years, in addition to the extensive program on Naissaar, concerts have also been held on Hiiumaa, Saaremaa, and the mainland, such as the Cyrillus Kreek Days in Haapsalu in the spring, and Arvo Pärt Days in September with concerts all over Estonia.

Sõru Jazz

The Estonian jazz music festival in Sõru, one of the most important harbours of Hiiumaa, invites jazz musicians and fans to Hiiumaa every year at the beginning of summer. The festival was started in 2008 by the jazz-lovers and cultural promoters Guido Kangur and Pille Lukin-Kangur for themselves and their friends. For four days, top Estonian jazz performers, as well as guests from abroad, perform in seaside concert venues with a cosy and novel atmosphere. You can listen to a diverse

selection of Estonian jazz mixed with blues, folk, rock, and nostalgic pop. People come there to enjoy concerts, but also to spend time, socialize and experience the special atmosphere of Hiiumaa. Take part in a nature hike, breathe in the sea air, and feel like a western hero on the horses of the Kassari horse farm.

Juu Jäab

The Juu Jäab festival, usually taking place on Muhu island at the end of June or beginning of July, celebrated its 26th year this summer. The festival lasts four days, concerts are given in the garden of Muhu Muusikatalu, the ancient St. Catherine church, Mihkli farm in Nautse, Pädaste Manor, and Koguva village. The annual gathering of music lovers, which arose from a successful concert in the garden of Pädaste manor in 1997, has defied all difficulties through the decades and has become an integral part of a Muhu summer. There are no style limits for



The Juu Jäab festival is on Muhu island.

PHOTO: JAANAR NIKKER

the festival, the program includes a selection of music from hip-hop to rock, from jazz standards to electronic beats, avant-garde and choral music, and blues to soul. The founder and the soul of the festival is Villu Veski, a well-known Estonian saxophonist, who comes from Muhu himself.

Hiiu Folk

Hiiu Folk is a folk music festival in Hiiumaa, traditionally held in mid-July, since 2005. Besides concerts, nature tours and workshops await the guests, and special activities are provided for the youngest members of visiting families. Hiiu Folk was awarded the title “Most Family-Friendly Festival in Estonia” in 2015.

Since the beginning, the organiser of the festival has been the folk musician Astrid Böning-Nõlvak. The festival does not have one specific venue, with concerts taking place all around Hiiumaa and on small neighbouring islands – on Kassari, Saarnak, and elsewhere. Besides folk music and culture, the festival promotes a lifestyle that is close to nature, organises hiking trips, and involves local museums. An alcohol-free party culture and a focus on keeping nature clean at the event locations have been very important for this festival. In 2016, Hiiu Folk was awarded Hiiumaa’s Green Badge for its environmental friendliness.

Saaremaa Opera Festival

The Saaremaa Opera Festival in the medieval bishop’s castle in Kuressaare has grown over 15 years into one of the most prestigious and internationally known music events of Estonian cultural summer. An opera tent with a capacity of 2,000 seats is set up for the festival in the castle’s courtyard, which is perfect for opera performances due to its acoustic properties. The organiser of the festival is Eesti Kontsert along with Arne Mikk, the best-known Estonian opera director, as an Artistic Leader.

Every festival brings one guest theatre company to Saaremaa with its productions: Black American Opera (USA, 2008), Latvian National Opera (2009), Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko Academic Music Theatre (2010), Helikon Opera Theatre (2012 and 2019) from Moscow, Ankara State Opera and Ballet (2011), Tbilisi, Khuthaisi and Bathumi Operas from Georgia (2013), Ukrainian National Opera (2014), Teatro di Milano (2015), Wrocław Opera (2016) and Silesian Opera (2022) from Poland, Krefeld-Mönchengladbach Opera from Germany (2017), Shanghai Opera and Hungarian State Opera (2018) and St. Petersburg Chamber Opera (2021). Over the years, several prominent stars have appeared during the Saaremaa Opera Festival, among them Neeme Järvi, Eri Klas, José Cura, Karita Mattila, Paata Burtçu-

ladze, Soile Isokoski, Lilli Paasikivi, Ain Anger, Matti Salminen, Jaakko Ryhänen, Jorma Hynninen, Annelly Peebo, and others. Opera festival also includes chamber concerts, children's performances, and master classes. The festival has a central place in the cultural life and tourism of Saaremaa.

Mustjala Music Festival in Tagaranna

The Mustjala Music Festival with its long history also invites music lovers to Saaremaa – to the beautiful location with untouched nature, perfect for relaxing and enjoying cultural experiences. The sea, junipers, windmills, stone fences, and thatch roofing in Mustjala village, as well as the peace and quiet here, help one to get away from the bustle of the city, to relax, and to take time for yourself.

Since 1995, the festival has been organised by the group called Loovüksus, it includes both classical and contemporary music, folk and jazz. The concerts take place in churches, the picturesque fishing village of Tagaranna, Loona, and Pidula manors, the recreation centre in Ninase village, and Saaremaa Harbour. However, undisputedly, the favourite venue of the festival audience has been the coastal defense battery in Ninase, built by the Soviet military in 1939. Several popular classical masterpieces



The favourite venue of the Mustjala Music festival audience has been the coastal defense battery in Ninase (2019).

have been performed in that extraordinary venue over the years. As part of the Mustjala festival, Ain Anger, one of the most recognised bass singers in today's opera world, and coming from Saaremaa, often performs for his home audience in Kihelkonna church.

Kuressaare Chamber Music Days

Since 1995, Kuressaare Chamber Music Days have been held under the leadership of the pianist Andres Paas. The festival, loved by its audience, has brought several famous soloists and chamber ensembles from more than twenty countries to the stages of Kuressaare each August, as well as the best Estonian instrumentalists as well.

We can only hope that the unexpected break (the festival did not take place this year) will give new momentum to the upcoming festivals.

Pühalepa Music Festival

The Pühalepa Music Festival in Hiiumaa on the first weekend of August is very likely to be the only festival in the world where the composer Erkki-Sven Tüür (born and living in Hiiumaa) is featured consistently every year. The festival is not large in terms of the number of concerts or the venues, but the ultimate goal has always been the highest musical quality. The programs also include new music and performances by young talents. The festival also made its mark on Estonia's music history by bringing the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra to Hiiumaa for the first time in 2021.



In 2022, the Pühalepa Music Festival took place for the 11th time.

PHOTO: SABINE BURGER

The Hiiumaa Chamber Orchestra was also born thanks to the festival. In 2022, the Pühalepa music festival took place for the 11th time under the artistic direction of conductor and singer Endrik Üksvärav. One of the initial aims of this festival was to acquire an organ for Pühalepa church. When this task was accomplished, the tradition had already been established and the festival found a solid place in the cultural calendar of Hiiumaa.

Due to climate conditions and seasonality, the majority of festivals on the Estonian islands take place in midsummer, which is also their high season. This means that the most popular groups visit several islands during the summer. In addition to offering musical experiences to the guests of the island, all festival organisers consider the local audience to be very important as well and ensure that the residents of the islands also take part in the festival life. Organising a festival on an island is more complicated than on the mainland due to logistics issues alone, and the festival organisers, therefore, deserve special attention and recognition. But for the audience, their concert or festival experience begins when boarding the ferry. And the unique nature of the Estonian islands adds an additional beautiful stamp to the concert experience.

CLASSICAL ALBUMS

Since 1998, the Estonian Association of the Phonogram Producers (EAPP) has been organizing the annual Estonian Music Awards gala to recognise Estonian musicians and their creations. The Estonian Music Council's goal to recognise the best classical albums was realised in 2014 in cooperation with the EAPP. Since then, the Classical Album of the Year award has also been given at the awards ceremony. For this reason, an expert jury selects the best classical albums in four categories: chamber music, symphonic or stage music, choral music, and works by Estonian composers. The best in each category will receive a nomination, and one of these four will be named the Classical Album of the Year.

The Classical Album of the Year 2022 is Anna-Liisa Eller's first solo album *"Strings Attached. The Voice of Kannel"*, released by Harmonia Mundi. This year's winner was the best album in the chamber music category. *Kannel* player Anna-Liisa Eller recorded her own arrangement of works by William Byrd, John Dowland, Louis Couperin, Guillaume de Machaut, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Sylvius Leopold Weiss, and Girolamo Frescobaldi and her improvisations. The album also features the work *Silmaja* by Estonian composer Helena Tulve (1972).



The Estonian Album of the Year 2022 is "Heino Eller. Complete Piano Music. Volume Seven" (Toccata Classics) by Sten Lassmann. Nearly 200 piano pieces form the most extensive part of the work of the Estonian composer Heino Eller (1887–1970). Sten Lassmann is the first pianist to undertake a complete recording of Eller's piano works, and the label Toccata Classics has been releasing the series since 2011. "Heino Eller: Complete Piano Music", volume eight, was released at the beginning of this year.





The Choral Album of the Year 2022 is “Alfred Schnittke. *Choir Concerto*, *Three Sacred Hymns*. Arvo Pärt. *Seven Magnificat-Antiphons*” by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (EPCC; conductor Kaspars Putniņš), released by BIS Records. The EPCC’s great popularity is revealed in its nearly 80 recordings, in cooperation with recognised record labels (ECM, Harmonia Mundi, Ondine, BIS). The album features Schnittke’s Choir Concerto and Pärt’s (1935) *Seven Magnificat-Antiphons*, which combines seven antiphons and a hymn to Mary, which in the Roman Catholic liturgy are sung during vespers, seven days before Christmas Eve. The album was nominated for a Grammy in the category of Best Choral Performance and won the October 2021 Diapason d’Or Award, and the annual Diapason d’Or de l’Année award, presented by the French music magazine Diapason and the France Musique radio channel.



The Symphonic / Stage Music Album of the Year 2022 is “Sergei Rachmaninoff. Eduard Tubin. *Works for Piano and Orchestra*” (Dux) with Mihkel Poll (piano) and ERSO, conducted by Mihhail Gerts. The album includes the *Piano Concerto No. 3* by Sergei Rachmaninoff and the *Piano Concerto* by Estonian composer Eduard Tubin (1905–1982).

A selection of chamber music albums released in 2021:

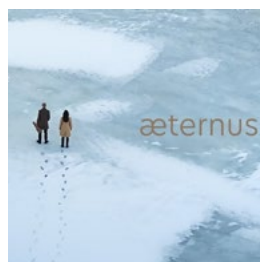


“*Estonian Piano Trios*” (Dux) by Mari Poll (violin), Henry-David Varema (cello), Mihkel Poll (piano). The album features Artur Lemba’s (1885–1963) *Piano Trio No. 1 in B flat major* – the first trio in Estonian music history, Heino Eller’s lyrical pieces, Arvo Pärt’s works *Scala cromatica* and *Mozart-Adagio* and the piano trio *Three Reflections* by Riho Esko Maimets (1988).

“Rasmus Puur. *Constellations*” (MTÜ Kõrvale Pai) by the string quartet FourEst (Egert Leinsaar – violin, Linda-Anette Verte – violin, Sandra Klimaitė – viola, Theodor Sink – cello). The album features works for the string quartet by Rasmus Puur (1991) composed between 2014 and 2020.

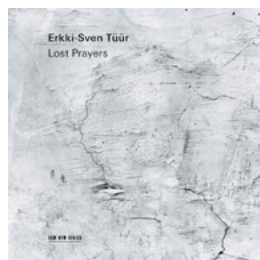


“*Aeternus*” (Pilw Records) by Hans Christian Aavik (violin) and Karolina Žukova (piano). The debut album of these young musicians includes *Prelude*, *Postlude*, and *Chaconne* from Partita No. 2 BWV 1004 by Johann Sebastian Bach, *Sonata in A minor*, D. 385 by Franz Schubert and *Fratres* by Arvo Pärt.



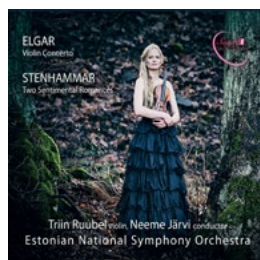
The Classical Album of the Year 2021

“Erkki-Sven Tüür. *Lost Prayers*” by Harry Traksmann – violin, Leho Karin – cello, Marrit Gerretz-Traksmann – piano, Florian Donderer – violin, Tanja Tetzlaff – cello, **Signum Quartet**. Released by ECM Records, 2020. The album also won in the **Chamber Music Album of the Year** category. The album provides a fine overview of the developments in Erkki-Sven Tüür’s (1959) musical style during the last two decades through the prism of chamber music. The CD features Tüür’s works *Fata Morgana*, *Synergie*, *Lichttürme* and *Lost Prayers*. The album’s title piece, *String Quartet No. 2 “Lost Prayers”*, was commissioned for the famous ARD competition.



The Symphonic / Stage Music Album of the Year 2021

“Elgar. *Violin Concerto. Stone hammer. Two Sentimental Romances*”. Performed by Triin Ruubel (violin), Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, conductor Neeme Järvi. Released by Sorel Classics, 2020. The CD features Edward Elgar’s Violin Concerto in B minor and Wilhelm Stenhammar’s Two Sentimental Romances.



The Estonian Album of the Year 2021



“Tõnu Kõrvits. *You are Light and Morning*”. Performed by Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, conductor Risto Joost. Released by Ondine, 2020. Composer Tõnu Kõrvits (1969) has created a 60-minute long work entitled *Sei la luce e il mattino / You are Light and Morning* for choirs and orchestras, based on the poetry of the 20th-century Italian poet Cesare Pavese. In September 2021, the album received the highest recognition possible from the French music magazine *Classica* – the “Choc de *Classica*” award.

The Choral Music Album of the Year 2001



“Cyrillus Kreek. *The Suspended Harp of Babel*”. Performed by Vox Clamantis, Jaan-Eik Tulve, Anna-Liisa Eller, Angela Ambrosini, Marco Ambrosini. Released by ECM Records, 2020. The album features folk chorale arrangements and Psalms of David by Estonian composer Cyrillus Kreek (1889–1962). The instrumental trio performs interludes composed by Marco Ambrosini, adding a special colour to the whole program.

Record news



“Estonian Premieres”. Performed by the Estonian Festival Orchestra, conductor Paavo Järvi. Released by Alpha Classics, 2022. On the album “Estonian Premieres”, released this summer, the Estonian Festival Orchestra performs six works by five Estonian composers: Tõnu Kõrvits, Ülo Krigul (1978), Helena Tulve, Tauno Aints (1975), and Lepo Sumera (1950–2000).

Additional information:

<http://www.emc.ee/aasta-klassikaalbum/>

<https://www.muusikaauhinnad.eu/>

