

# MARKUS STENZ



“Stenz exuded endless energy from the podium. Even in moments of lyrical reflection, he kept a sense of tension going, so that the music seemed capable of sprinting off again at any moment.”

– *The Baltimore Sun*

**Markus Stenz, conductor**  
**2023-2024 Biography**

Markus Stenz has held several high-profile positions including Principal Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Guest of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and most recently Conductor-In-Residence of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. He was General Music Director of the City of Cologne and Gürzenich-Kapellmeister for 11 years, conducting Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Wagner's *Ring* cycle, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, as well as Janáček's *Jenůfa* and *Katya Kabanová* and Eötvös's *Love and Other Demons*. His widely recognized ability to communicate a score with both enthusiasm and profound musicality produces memorable performances for musicians and audiences alike.

Stenz made his opera debut in 1988 at Teatro La Fenice in Venice, where he has returned for numerous successful concert weeks with the Orchestra. Last season he conducted a new production of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* and will return in subsequent seasons for *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Lohengrin*.

In 2018, Stenz conducted Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten* at the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich and led the world premiere of Kurtág's *Fin de partie* at Teatro alla Scala Milan, where he also conducted Strauss's *Elektra* that same season. This was followed by performances of the Kurtág work for Dutch National Opera, and its French premiere at Opéra National de Paris.

This season he returns to Dutch National Opera to conduct Weill's *Mahagonny*, travels to Hangzhou, China, for *Die Walküre* and conducts a special performance of *Fin de partie* in Kurtág's hometown of Budapest before touring to Hamburg and Cologne. Elsewhere in Germany he conducts the MDR Leipzig, Stuttgarter Philharmoniker and Staatskapelle Halle.

The 2023-2024 season also sees Stenz's return to Orchestre National de Lyon and, following a very successful debut with the CBSO in Mahler Symphony No. 2 in 2022, he returns this season for Bruckner Symphony No 7. He conducts both Orchestra della Toscana and Fondazione Haydn di Bolzano in Italy, returns to the New Jersey Symphony on a program featuring Anna Clyne's *Atlas*, and makes his debut with Naples Philharmonic Orchestra in Florida.

Recent symphonic engagements in North America include appearances with the Detroit, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Colorado, and Oregon Symphonies. A regular guest at the Aspen Music Festival, Markus returned in July 2023 to conduct Donnacha Dennehy's Violin Concerto with

Augustin Hadelich. Overseas highlights have included his debut with the Orchestra dell'Academia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, multiple appearances with the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra and regular visits to three orchestras where he previously held positions: Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra; Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln.

While with the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, Stenz received the prize for 'The Best Concert Programme of the 2003-2004 Season' as well as initiating a number of youth and educational projects such as 'Experiment Klassik', '3. Akt' and the concert live-recording project 'GO live.'

His extensive discography includes many prize-winning recordings including the Gürzenich Orchestra's complete cycle of Mahler symphonies, for which Symphony No. 5 received the German Record Critics' Award; Strauss's *Don Quixote* and *Till Eulenspiegel* also both received unanimous critical acclaim, followed by an equally celebrated release of Schönberg's *Gurrelieder* which received the Choral Award at the 2016 Gramophone Awards.

Markus Stenz studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne under Volker Wangenheim and at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. He has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, and the 'Silberne Stimmgabel' (Silver Tuning Fork) of the state of North Rhein/Westphalia.

**AUGUST 2023. AT THE REQUEST OF THE ARTIST – PLEASE DO NOT ALTER THIS**

**BIOGRAPHY**

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## Markus Stenz Critical Acclaim



**\*Kurtág: *Fin de Partie* | La Scala | November 2018\***

“Markus Stenz’s conducting realises every detail of the score with the absolute precision Kurtág’s music always demands.”

*The Guardian*

“Glistening and nimble, the Scala orchestra is conducted by Markus Stenz, who leads an exceptionally delicate score — its balances and pauses fragile and exposed — with naturalness and a sense of spontaneity.”

*New York Times*

“Conductor Markus Stenz draws razor-sharp playing from small clusters of instruments; the moment collective forces let rip, as Clov hovers at the door, is like dazzling light breaking through a dark veil.”

*Financial Times*

“The music, expertly and diligently conducted by Markus Stenz, traces the text in conversational sympathy, with stop-start blurts and urgent, delicate fluencies.”

*The Guardian*

“Markus Stenz’s artful realisation is engaging. The closing orchestral passage, which resembles bright light bursting out of darkness, is dazzlingly hard won.”

*Opera Now*

“The cast—Frode Olsen as Hamm, Leigh Melrose as Clov, Leonardo Cortellazzi as Nagg, and Hilary Summers as Nell—sang magnificently, under the exacting guidance of the conductor Markus Stenz.”

*New Yorker*

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“Stenz exuded endless energy from the podium. Even in moments of lyrical reflection, he kept a sense of tension going, so that the music seemed capable of sprinting off again at any moment.”

*The Baltimore Sun*

“Stenz provided sensitive support and drew wistful, loving contributions from the orchestra.”

*The Washington Post*

“There was no shortage of expressive nuance from the players. They seemed firmly connected to the wavelength of principal guest conductor designate Markus Stenz, who revealed considerable sensitivity and imagination at every turn. One more sign that his association with the BSO -- the three-year principal guest tenure officially begins in the fall -- is going to be rewarding.”

*The Baltimore Sun*

“Stenz makes the orchestra play beyond itself, and future appearances should not be missed.”

*The Washington Post*

“Markus Stenz is a master of the German repertoire, as demonstrated from the first notes of Wagner’s “Parsifal,” played with beauty and clarity, through the triumphant final notes of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9. He led without a baton, using his expressive hands to communicate to the furthest corners of the stage. The large and diverse audience responded enthusiastically throughout.”

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

“Sparks flew on the stage as he led the players through a performance that combined historically informed practices — minimal vibrato from the strings, snappy tempos — and striking ideas about dynamics and pacing to deliver an ear-opening experience.”

*The Baltimore Sun*

"Stenz led a powerful, surging performance with brilliant playing from the musicians across all sections that put across the sonic fury of Glanert's writing. Stenz also drew a wide dynamic range, the pianissimos barely audible yet registering clearly on an unusually quiet downtown evening."

*Chicago Classical Review*

At the Concertgebouw Markus Stenz and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic - "their Elektra was volcanic, seething and spitting from one terrifying eruption to the other."

*Opera Today*

"Stenz was again in his element in the work's ebullient finale, at one point dropping his arms below waist level....the orchestra's playing surged with energy... The fade to near-inaudibility at the Idyll's rapt conclusion was beautifully managed - a moment of uncomplicated placidity, like a long day ending happily, or a child slipping peacefully into deep slumber."

*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“Markus Stenz made this account of a familiar staple of the concert hall choral repertoire memorable. His vigorous yet completely detailed direction was clearly driven by Mozart's vibrant setting of the Requiem text, sharply illuminating its kaleidoscopic changes and chiaroscuro voicing."

*San Diego Story*

"One of the best things that has happened at the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in recent years was Markus Stenz coming aboard as principal guest conductor. Stenz has conducted many of the Wagner operas, and his expertise shone through in his reading of the excerpts from *Parsifal*."

*Washington Classical Review*

"Under Stenz's leadership, this performance was a rediscovery of the well-known masterpiece. From the star, one felt an inner drive, an undercurrent of electricity. Even the atmospheric opening, which rises out of nothingness, shimmered in an unusual way."

*Cincinnati Enquirer*

"Beethoven masterpieces bookended the concert, one flawed but brilliant, the "Leonore Overture no. 2", the other the Fifth Symphony, which concluded with an anthem-like jubilation that made this performance the most goose-bump thrilling I've ever heard."

*San Diego Union-Tribune*

“Opting for a large ensemble by today's standards, Stenz achieved a sound that was weighty but never clogged, the BBC Symphony Orchestra playing as if confronting a thrillingly new piece."

*London Evening Standard*

## **Recording Quotes:**

### **Schoenberg Gurre-Lieder (Hyperion):**

*100 Best Records of the Year*

- *London Times*

*Recordings of the Year (Choral)*

- *Gramophone*

"*This Recording, along with Chailly's, is among the best*"

- *The Arts Desk*

"These studio recordings underline Stenz's credential as a conductor of the Second Viennese School" ". Perfect control from master conductor Stenz"

- *The Guardian*

### **Hartmann *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (BBC Music Direct) Netherlands Radio Philharmonic:**

"Markus Stenz proves himself an ideal exponent of this music, drawing a performance of conviction and intensity". - *BBC Music*

### **Glanert *Requiem for Hieronymus Bosch* (RCO live) Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra:**

" The performance under Stenz has tremendous dramatic intensity."

- *The Guardian*

MARKUS STENZ

# The New York Times

December 5, 2018

## The Best Classical Music of 2018



### *'Fin de Partie'*

An era ended with the November premiere, after many false hopes over the past decade, of this opera by the 92-year-old Hungarian master Gyorgy Kurtag at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. A series of scenes and monologues extracted from the Beckett play “Endgame,” it is a work of utterly assured starkness — confident and patient. The music seems to wrap around and subtly trail off the words; the lucid orchestra is neither bullying nor reticent, producing an atmosphere of gnomic, melancholy beauty. It is, like its Beckett source, tender, transparent, unsentimental and unsparing.



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# MARKUS STENZ



April 17, 2018

## **BSO and principal guest conductor Markus Stenz still hitting it off**

By Tim Smith

When German conductor Markus Stenz made his debut with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in 2012, there was no mistaking the chemistry. BSO management soon signed him up as principal guest conductor for a three-year stint starting in 2015.

“The contract has just been extended by a year, which I think is absolutely great,” says Stenz, who wraps up his third year with the BSO this weekend. “The extension felt natural.”

Music-making with the orchestra feels natural, too.

“The overriding impression I have is that we hit it off right away and have been developing from there,” says the 53-year-old conductor. “Sometimes you end up with a honeymoon situation with an orchestra and then the work gets more tedious.”

Audiences over the past three seasons haven’t heard any tedium from Stenz and the BSO. A couple of weekends ago, for example, he drew taut, fresh playing in Beethoven’s Symphony No. 1, as well as a lush, vibrant response in music of Korngold and Rachmaninoff.

“I feel I can find ever more fascinating corners of refinement, fine-tuning and spontaneity with the musicians,” Stenz says. “And spontaneity is only possible when there’s an amount of trust that exceeds the ordinary. I can even change things a little on the spot in a concert. It

is a rarity for orchestras to be flexible enough to allow that.”

That flexibility should be on display again April 19 at the Music Center at Strathmore, April 20 and 21 at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall.

On the first half of the program, Stenz conducts Beethoven’s Triple Concerto featuring as soloists two BSO members — concertmaster Jonathan Carney and principal cellist Dariusz Skoraczewski — and guest pianist Ryo Yanagitani. Then the conductor turns to Mahler’s colorful, dramatic Symphony No. 1.

In choosing his BSO programs this season, “I think I’ve been rather cunning in showcasing all the creativity in the orchestra,” Stenz says.

That goes for next season, too, when his three programs will cover a broad range of repertoire, including works by Mozart, Haydn, Wagner, Brahms, Sibelius, Chabrier, Khachaturian and Schoenberg.

The 2018-2019 season will also find Stenz continuing his tenure as chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor-in-residence of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra.

He is particularly enthused about conducting the November premiere of “Fin de Partie,” a long-anticipated opera based on Samuel Beckett’s “End Game” by Gyorgy Kurtag — “The greatest living



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composer,” Stenz says — at Milan’s famed La Scala.

In addition to the BSO, Stenz is a guest on the podium of several American ensembles each year, among them the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, which he revisited last fall. It was with the Missourians that Stenz experienced something in 2014.

Just as he was about to commence a performance of Brahms’ “German Requiem,” protesters began to unfurl banners and sing “Which Side Are You On?” — a demonstration against the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson. A YouTube clip of the event has had almost 850,000 views.

“The [protesters] didn’t come across as aggressive,” Stenz says. “They made their point at probably the pinnacle of emotions without provoking

antagonism. I was impressed with the peacefulness of it all. I just wish they had stayed for the Brahms Requiem, which is such a universal statement about loss and healing.”

Stenz started as BSO principal guest conductor the same year another controversial death, that of Freddie Gray, occurred in Baltimore. Although only an annual visitor, Stenz has followed this city’s struggles with interest.

“Baltimore might have some dodgy corners or some things you don’t want to explore, but there is a buzz here,” the conductor says. “At its core, the city’s values are intact. Count me in as an idealist and an optimist. Wherever I go, I tend to see the best in places. I’m born that way. It’s something that drives my family crazy sometimes.”



December 21, 2017

## Top Ten Performances of 2017

By Charles T. Downey

### 9. Markus Stenz, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in Gaelic-themed program

One of the best things that has happened at the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in recent years was Markus Stenz coming aboard as principal guest conductor. In the best of his concerts this past year, Stenz conducted two popular pieces with surprises around every corner, and the musicians, including concertmaster Jonathan Carney in the solo part of Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*, responded with aplomb. Baritone Stephen Powell sang as Amfortas in extended excerpts from Wagner's *Parsifal*, and even with the chorus and the title character himself excised, the conclusion of this opera was exalted in Stenz's hands.



MARKUS STENZ

bachtrack

September 21, 2017

## Creating the moment: Interview with Markus Stenz

By Danny Riley



*Conductor Markus Stenz has an affinity for openness, attracted equally to the uncertainties of live performance and the innumerable potentials of interpreting a score. Talking to him before his live-streamed performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on 24th September, with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, of whom he is currently Principal Conductor, one got the strong sense that he has always thrived on change.*

*In the late 90s he explored contemporary music as conductor of the London Sinfonietta, and as Kapellmeister of the Gürzenich*

*Orchestra he spearheaded the novel "GO Live!" project, which offered audiences recordings of concerts – immediately after the performance finished. Now travelling as far afield as Japan and Korea, where he is Conductor in Residence with the Seoul Philharmonic, he shows no sign of resting on his laurels. We caught up with him to talk live streams, contemporary music and the philosophy of Beethoven.*

**DR: Recently you conducted new works by Jörg Widmann and Detlev Glanert, and this upcoming season, you're programming Ligeti, Messiaen and Pascal Dusapin. Is your relationship with modern music an influence from your days in the London Sinfonietta?**

MS: It's something that has never changed. It all stems from my genuine curiosity for music. I think the biggest asset these composers have is that they can speak to us with total immediacy. There is nothing that is between us and their time, and that makes the living composers different from any music from the past that we conduct.

**You obviously revere the great classics as well. Is it important for you to have that contrast between the challenging contemporary works and the established classics?**



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I think you've summed me up in a nutshell. I really try to make a point that, whether we listen to the milestones of music from centuries ago, or whether we listen to today's composers, we are in a time when that is possible to be a pluralist. To visit music from the past and maybe come up with interesting combinations, or build bridges for people to visit the past through the ears of a contemporary composers, or vice versa.

**Beethoven's 9th is a hugely famous piece...**

For all the right reasons. Because there is of course the catchy tune in the last movement, but also there is an extra dimension. Anybody who listens to the other Beethoven symphonies gets a wonderful treat of orchestral music. But here we have Beethoven entering the realm of philosophy, and also the total idealist Beethoven who just wants to storm the world with this idea of the "Ode to Joy".

**Would you care to talk a bit more about Beethoven as a philosopher?**

The way I see it, Beethoven, just like his inventing of music, goes beyond what he can notate. Just like with his chamber music, piano music or other constellations, he went to the extreme – stretching the musical imagination. Here, in the ninth, he stretched the imagination of what you can do in a symphony. There's a choir in the last movement, and they chime in with one of those incredibly powerful thoughts: if you praise joy, you might be able to change the world.

Whatever he put down, I think he did to perfection, despite the fact that at this point he was probably going way beyond the limits of what people thought was possible on an orchestral stage.

**When you perform famous pieces like this one, how do you hope to present something to the audience that is fresh?**

Let's stay with the Beethoven symphonies. What makes them so eternally fresh is the fact that the music is just full of ideas. In Beethoven's time, because he was in a sense writing contemporary music, there are so many

things that he didn't need to notate – things that people would do automatically. Many phrasing things, microdynamics or rubati, beat hierarchy – things that make the music pulsate. For a while these things were lost, but now we live in a time when it is very easy to be informed, or to at least approach the music with a certain knowledge of the fashions, standards and instruments of the time. All these kinds of things add up to a picture of an extremely vivid work, with many more possibilities of what technically you see on paper with 21st-century eyes.

**I've seen you talk in the past about being true to the original idea, rather than just what's on the score. How does one go about doing that with a long-dead composer?**

It all comes down to imagination: the imagination that any performer or interpreter puts into reading music of the living or the older composers. Pick any given "specialists" for historically-informed performance practice, and then compare their recordings, and what you'll get is distinctly different outcomes, all based on the same kind of research. You won't end up with a blueprint for an autopilot performance. You end up with the possibility of the performer's imagination kicking in. All these choices that make music spring to life are things that you can live in the moment. You can also revisit the score in five or ten years time and come to a completely different playing field. That's more or less what I mean when I say "Play the idea. Play the idea before it had to be notated." Even if you end up in a corner which might have upset Beethoven, or a corner that would be completely wild, it is nonetheless a possibility that a performer's skill can produce. It's all incredibly stimulating and very much a creative process.

**The way you're describing it, it sounds like you're channelling, becoming a prism through which the ideas of the composer are refracted.**

I don't know who I can attribute this quote to, but: "The notation is already

the first translation of the idea.” The original idea is just a musical thought, and the notation kind of defines it. But does it grasp fully, or is it already kind of a limitation, the moment you write something down?

**When you go to the US in October, you’ll be programming works by Mendelssohn, Bruch and Wagner all together. Do you find that you have a special connection with composers from your native country?**

For sure. Like with everybody, the things that you encounter in your adolescent years somehow build a kind of core repertoire that you cherish. For me, certainly the music of Wagner has entered that core and I love Mendelssohn for his sheer disarming charm and effortless music. You always have the sensation that you are flying when you dig into Mendelssohn. I think that programme is very much, “Let’s praise the Romantic era!” And with three different aspects: the flying Mendelssohn, the profound Wagner and Bruch as a vehicle for Romantic fantasy. I’m really looking forward to that programme.

**You have a great love of Mahler and will be conducting the Third Symphony in December. Tell me about your relationship with Mahler.**

How many musicians have you met who will tell you they’ve had a life-changing experience with Mahler? I’m not on my own there. Mahler has this way about him. I once stumbled upon the last 20 minutes of a live broadcast of the Second “Resurrection” Symphony, not knowing what music it was. But I was completely bowled over by the end. I had this distinct notion that this was the way music should be. It was completely overwhelming in all its emotions, and completely beyond anything that I’d heard before. It was powerful and poetic, and that’s more or less what many people experience with Mahler, including himself. He was saying, “My music should be the world.” And that’s

what those 20 minutes of the live broadcast did to me, I thought, “This is the world.” Mahler is that one composer who always provides profound experiences. I can’t praise him enough.

**What are your feelings about the Third?**

The Third is this powerful statement. Mahler takes you through the advent of summer, through the beasts in the forest, through the Nietzschean philosophy in movement four through the childlike, bell-like movement five, through the last movement which he subtitled “What love tells me”. By this he meant love as agape, love as an idea to unite all mankind. He found the perfect music for the sequence of all of these items.

**What do you make of the current trend towards live concert streaming?**

I think it’s a beautiful thing because it does what we musicians aim for: we want to create the live moment. Ask any performer what they cherish most and it really is this moment of recreating a piece for an audience, to talk to people through music. If you were to compare the perfectly polished results of a beautifully edited recording where everything falls into the right place, there’s an incredible value to that. But I think in general creating something for the moment... is very much an unfiltered approach. I love unfiltered music-making, that’s what’s in it for us.

**So you prefer the openness of a live event rather than a rehearsed, polished recording?**

I don’t know. Make no mistake, there is the perfectionist in me who absolutely loves this idea of, “OK, we need to get those five minutes perfect, with all the inner voicings, all the layers, with all the sonorities and all the micro-dynamics.” There is something incredibly rewarding about reaching that goal for a perfectly edited recording, particularly when you listen back to it on your home stereo. But being on stage, being a performer, creating the moment: that is something that is very strong in me as well.

May 3, 2017

## SCORE VALUES

Conductor Markus Stenz and BSO Perform Stravinsky's "The Firebird"

By Ellen Wexler

Markus Stenz has come a long way since his days under his father's piano. The internationally-acclaimed German-born maestro is now the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra's Chief Conductor, the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra's Conductor in Residence and happily for Metro D.C. area classical music lovers, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor.

As a child, Stenz remembers being "mesmerized by my father's piano playing. I spent a lot of my young childhood lying under the piano while he played." Despite living in a small town that offered no professional concerts for its 20,000 inhabitants, "there was a great love for music" in his family. He describes his father as "the quintessential amateur chorus master, organist and pianist," and his mother as "the most enthusiastic chorister you ever heard."

His supportive parents noted their youngster's predilection, and "were wise enough to enlist a 70-year-old dragon as my teacher" at age 5, he said. With and without her guidance, he studiously went through the repertoire. The best things his parents did for his burgeoning talents, Stenz said, "was to keep out of my way and let me explore," noting that they had to endure hearing his "butchering" of the piano.

Stenz and his family, he said, "never ventured beyond our town to hear concerts. In fact, I attended only one concert before I studied conducting." With live performance unavailable, "the radio was my good friend. As an adolescent, I listened to a lot of jazz—Big Band in particular. My ears were quick enough and close attention to the music was the best oral training."

But the veritable "trigger" for Stenz's musical future came at age 13 when he heard "The Unanswered Question," Leonard Bernstein's Harvard University lecture series. The six lectures focused on the history of classical music, its then-current state as well as its potential future, along with analogies to linguistics and extensive musical recordings. "I was hooked," Stenz said. "Bernstein explained the inner mechanics and fascination of classical music—in ways far superior to any of my former heroes on German TV." He was thrilled to meet his 70-year-old hero later at the Tanglewood Music Festival in Massachusetts' Berkshire Hills.

Stenz continued studying piano until he was 18 when he completed the standard secondary education and had to "figure out what to do with my life. I decided to give conducting a shot and somehow made it into the conducting class (at the School of Music in Cologne)." While he acknowledges that his piano playing and

sight reading were “extremely mediocre, I was still head and shoulders above everyone in my town. There was no competition.” He was also aware of his strengths. “My ear was good, and I was able to train my ears, in part by deciphering jazz’s quick harmonies, and curiosity transported me the rest of the way,” he said.

Once at university, Stenz focused exclusively on conducting, initially training as a “traditional master of chorale,” and subsequently making his debut as an opera conductor at La Fenice in Venice. Since then, he has appeared at many of the world’s major opera houses and international festivals. Until 2014, Stenz was General Music Director of the City of Cologne and Gürzenich-Kapellmeister, but Cologne continues to be his home base. He lives there with his wife, an able fiddler who never had professional ambitions and has an “important” position in a not-for-profit cultural institution, their 17-year-old son who played double bass but is “a man of words” rather than music and 14-year-old daughter who “plays cello beautifully.” Fortunately, with his considerable travel across four continents, he observed, Cologne has three airports and he can be in Amsterdam in 2-1/2 hours.

Stenz has a pair of dates at the Music Center coming up. He will lead an Off the Cuff session including a talk and performance of Igor Stravinsky’s “Firebird” on Friday, May 5, and along with Finnish pianist Juho Pohjonen and the BSO, will perform pieces by Mendelssohn and Ravel as well as the complete Stravinsky opus on Sunday, May 7. For the first, he said, as an “ear person,” he intends to focus on “what people will hear. They will not get a lecture on background; they can look that up for themselves on the Internet. Rather, I will use that 25 minutes to give the audience a feel for the music itself and how visual it is.” Although “Firebird” was intended to be performed

with ballet dancers, Stenz said the music “doesn’t require them—although I love ballet dancers. The music says it all. The audience will hear that instantly and be able to create their own movie.”

Stenz noted that typically, orchestras perform only the suites from “Firebird.” Strathmore’s performance of the complete score is, he said, “a rarity in concerts.”

On Sunday, there will be no explanations, said Stenz, but Maurice Ravel’s “Piano Concerto in G Major” and Felix Mendelssohn’s “Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage” will be on the program along with Stravinsky. “Ravel breathed the same air as Stravinsky; the pieces have the same high octane energy,” he observed. “Mendelssohn is of a different age, but its 19th century poetry will provide a good prelude for the others.

Stenz is pleased with how he earns his living. “I’m so lucky I get to live what I love most,” he said. “I have conducted all the pieces anyone would want to conduct, and I get to see the world.” As for the future, his intentions are clear. “I want to strengthen classical music’s place in this ever-accelerating 21st-century world. I want it to be a haven for the part of humanity that does not get swamped by technology. Classical music has such a vital role to play in balancing us.”

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra will present Principal Guest Conductor Markus Stenz will lead an Off the Cuff session including a talk about and a performance of Igor Stravinsky’s “The Firebird” at 8:15 p.m. Friday, May 5, at the Music Center at Strathmore, 5301 Tuckerman Lane, North Bethesda. Stenz, Finnish pianist Juho Pohjonen and the BSO will perform pieces by Mendelssohn and Ravel as well as the complete Stravinsky opus, at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 7, also at Strathmore. For tickets, ranging from \$35 to \$99, visit [www.bsomusic.org](http://www.bsomusic.org).

MARKUS STENZ

 The Korea Herald

January 19, 2017

## Long-lost Stravinsky ‘Funeral Song’ gets Asian premiere in Seoul

Markus Stenz debuts as SPO conductor-in-residence with milestone performance

By Kim Hoo-ran



Markus Stenz, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra conductor-in-residence, leads a rehearsal.

The Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra is working to get back on firm ground a year after the departure of Chung Myung-whun at the end of 2015, following a maelstrom of controversies, and the task of stabilizing the orchestra has fallen on the newly appointed conductor-in-residence Markus Stenz and principal guest conductor Thierry Fischer.

“The team that approached me was very wise in wanting a stabilizing time,” said Stenz during a press conference held at the Sejong Center in Seoul on Tuesday. “The idea was that I would spend

regular time with SPO,” he said. As the conductor-in-residence, Stenz will perform four times a year while Fischer is slated to give eight performances.

The two conductors were appointed in an effort to stabilize the orchestra in the interregnum as SPO continues its search for a music director. The goal is to decide on a music director at least by the end of the year, according to SPO CEO Choe Heung-sik. However, it will take two to three years to make the official appointment, as classical music engagements are committed some three years in advance, he explained.



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In the meantime, the newly created posts of conductor-in-residence and principal guest conductor are three-year assignments, designed to provide a smooth period of transition. Stenz, chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra since 2012, and Fischer, music director of the Utah Symphony Orchestra, have led the SPO in previous performances.

“I see SPO as a major international player. It has built an international reputation,” Stenz said, elaborating to say the orchestra’s international renown would not have been possible without the “intense work” of Chung.

Markus makes his debut as SPO’s conductor-in-residence Friday night with a program titled “Romantic Revolutionaries,” featuring Schuman Symphony No. 2, Op. 61, Liszt Piano Concert No. 1 in E-flat major, S.124 with Hungarian pianist Dezso Ranki and Stravinsky’s “Funeral Song” Op. 5.

The performance of “Funeral Song” is an Asian premiere of the piece that has been performed only twice since it was written in 1908. Stravinsky wrote the 12-minute orchestral work as a tribute to his teacher Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and the piece was performed just once, in 1909, before it disappeared during the Russian Revolution. It was rediscovered in 2015 and performed for the first time

by the Mariinsky Orchestra just weeks ago, led by Valery Gergiev on Dec. 2.

“If I needed proof this is a very much caring orchestra, I have it now,” said Stenz about the SPO’s quick response to the discovery of the Stravinsky piece. “It is amazing how quickly the orchestra moved,” he said.

Indeed, it is a coup of a sort that SPO is performing the Asian premiere of the piece that sheds new light on the work of the young Stravinsky before the ballet “The Thunderbird,” which launched his international career.

SPO’s composer-in-residence and artistic adviser Chin Un-suk likened the effort to stage “Funeral Song” to a “spy operation,” noting its drama.

The Asian premiere had initially been scheduled to be performed in February by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, guest conducted by Swiss maestro Charles Dutoit, but SPO beat them to it and had the score completed for SPO, according to Chin.

“It is a young Stravinsky full of harmonic imagination, incredible amount of substance, harmony, theater and color,” said Stenz of “Funeral Song.”

“Markus Stenz Cycle I: Romantic Revolutionaries” will be staged Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. at the Lotte Concert Hall. For more information, visit [www.seoulphil.or.kr](http://www.seoulphil.or.kr) or call 1588-1210.

MARKUS STENZ



January 18, 2017

## Stenz to perform Stravinsky's Funeral Song for Asia premiere

By Yun Suh-young

The Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra's (SPO) newly appointed conductor-in-residence Markus Stenz will be showcasing Stravinsky's "Funeral Song" in Seoul, for the first time in Asia, this weekend.

The score's Asian premiere on Jan. 20 and 21 will be held at the Lotte Concert Hall as part of the "Markus Stenz Cycle 1: Romantic Revolutionaries," his debut performance as conductor-in-residence for the SPO. Hungarian pianist Dezso Ranki will play the piano 30 years since his last performance on the Korean stage in 1986.

The "Funeral Song Op. 5" had been lost for over a century, since 1917, after it was performed just once in 1909. It was miraculously found last year at the Rimsky-Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory's library in Russia and was finally put together as a score and will be performed across the globe. Following Seoul, 14 performances are scheduled this year including Singapore, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Spain.

"I'm really thrilled to open our concert as the Asian premiere of the Funeral Song," said Stenz, during a press conference Tuesday, an event inviting him to speak as the conductor-in-residence, a newly created position.

"It's a small piece but has an incredible amount of substance -- harmony and theater is there, all the colors are there. For an orchestra to notice an international development and be able

to react quickly, that is extraordinary. It was amazing how quickly we were able to say 'let's put it into this program' for the Asian premiere."

Stenz will be serving as the SPO's conductor-in-residence along with principal guest conductor Thierry Fischer from January this year through December 2019. The two conductors will help the orchestra stabilize from the internal struggle it went through and advise it on its direction forward.

"Everyone in the music world is aware of the tours the Seoul Philharmonic has made. The rise of the SPO is not thinkable without the intense work maestro Chung (Myung-whun) put into the orchestra. Everyone knows this orchestra has incredible energy and commitment to the performance," said Stenz, when asked of his role as conductor-in-residence.

"I think it has done something extremely valuable in building an international reputation.

I feel honored to take my share of the next three years ahead and I very much look forward to it and am grateful to be here.

"I was aware that the idea of stabilizing the orchestra was on everyone's mind. In order for the international future of the orchestra, Thierry Fischer and I were approached to embark on regular collaborations with the orchestra which is an excellent way forward."

Stenz identified his style as being "concrete."



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"I'm a concrete worker. I need a specific repertoire to start my work with an orchestra and Schumann with all his freedom of thought and ideas, shapes and shades, is a wonderful starting point," he said. Schumann's Symphony No. 2 in C major, Op. 61 is part of the program this

weekend along with the Stravinsky piece, as well as Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major, S. 124.

"I love building bridges. I love that we have a wealth of masterpieces. My ambition is to build programs that span over periods of time. I love to hear new music but it's not possible without listening to the past."

MARKUS STENZ

THE  TIMES

December 6, 2015

100 BEST RECORDS OF THE YEAR

Schoenberg Gurre-Lieder Choirs, Gürzenich-Orchester, cond Markus Stenz (Hyperion) Schoenberg's concert drama was also premiered in 1913. Stenz's forces wallow in his lush late Romanticism.

MARKUS STENZ



THE BALTIMORE SUN

May 15, 2015

## Galvanizing German conductor Markus Stenz returns to the BSO

By Tim Smith

Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, nicknamed "Eroica," turns up with regularity on any orchestra's playlist. So its inclusion on a Baltimore Symphony Orchestra program in October 2012 suggested business as usual.

The result proved anything but usual, thanks to the presence of German conductor Markus Stenz on the podium. Sparks flew on the stage as he led the players through a performance that combined historically informed practices — minimal vibrato from the strings, snappy tempos — and striking ideas about dynamics and pacing to deliver an ear-opening experience.

Stenz returns next week for an all-German program, and with a title: principal guest conductor-designate. The "designate" part comes off in October, when he officially begins a three-year tenure that will have him leading three weeks each season.

"I have such incredibly fond memories of my debut with the orchestra," Stenz says in flawless English with a trace of British accent. "It has refinement, subtlety and energy in a perfect mix. And I felt an immediate connection with the audience."

The orchestra has not had a principal guest conductor for a long time. The closest position was that of resident conductor, held by Christopher Seaman for a little more than a decade starting in the late 1980s.

"It's nice to get a familiar face more than once every few years," says BSO

associate concertmaster Madeline Adkins. "Having [Stenz] as principal guest conductor gives us a good chance to foster a relationship with him. We were quite taken with him from the start. We felt a chemistry right away."

Adkins was concertmaster for that 2012 "Eroica" performance, which found many of the players applauding Stenz as heartily as the public afterward.

"It was fantastic," the violinist says. "Even though we were using almost no vibrato, he got from us an amazing palette of beautiful colors. It was great for us to find that much expression just with the bow."

The 50-year-old Stenz has been pursuing expressive possibilities in a career that has included a broad variety of musical jobs. He's principal conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, and former general music director of the City of Cologne, where he and his family still live.

He recently finished a tenure as principal guest conductor of the Halle Orchestra in England. Previous posts include artistic director and chief conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He has had guest conducting engagements with many major orchestras and opera houses in Europe and the United States.

Born in the town of Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler in Germany, Stenz was exposed to music early.

"My father was a music teacher, my mother an amateur chorister," he says.



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"I was lured into thinking that music was a good thing."

Although also interested in jazz — "I have a passionate love affair with big band music," he says, "and I loved the Mel Lewis Orchestra" — Stenz settled on classical and studied at the College of Music in Cologne. Orchestral conducting became his focus.

"I love the idea of many people being involved in music-making," he says.

One of his earliest influences came courtesy of German television, which broadcast Leonard Bernstein's celebrated 1973 lecture series at Harvard University, "The Unanswered Question." "It was for me a life-changing experience," Stenz says. "It was wonderful just to hear the voice of that man. Imagine my heartbeat when I finally got to meet him."

That meeting was at Tanglewood, the music center in western Massachusetts where the Boston Symphony makes it summer home and where various educational activities take place. Stenz was among a group of young conductors chosen to study with Bernstein in the summer of 1988. Marin Alsop, the BSO's music director, was another.

"How paradisiacal it was," Stenz says. "It was his Bernstein's 70th birthday, so there a big to-do for that, but he always had time for the students. His best advice was about broadening your horizons. Before waving your arms, he would make you think about the landscapes that might have inspired Brahms to write the second movement of his Third Symphony."

Stenz and Alsop "kept loosely in touch" after that Tanglewood summer as their careers developed. For the German conductor, one of the first career stops was the London Sinfonietta, which engaged him as principal conductor during the mid-1990s. The managing director of that ensemble at the time was Paul Meecham.

"Here we are 20 years later," says Meecham, now president and CEO of the BSO. "It's a very small world. When [Stenz] conducted here in 2012, he really galvanized everyone."

Alsop likewise admires the conductor.

"I think the world of him," Alsop says.

"He's super-talented. I think he brings a depth, particularly to the German repertoire."

In addition to next week, when music by Weber, Schumann and Strauss is on the bill, Stenz will keep the focus on music by his countrymen during his first full year as principal guest conductor next season — works by Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms will be featured in his concerts.

"This is just the way the programming fell into place," Meecham says. "I expect him to expand after that. But he does bring a certain German sensibility that is innate."

If it looks like a bit of typecasting, Stenz doesn't mind.

"As a chief conductor, I would invite guest conductors to bring their best, the pieces they feel a very strong bond with," he says. "I think that is what will be the case in Baltimore."

Stenz considers next week's BSO program a celebration of what he calls "ideas music."

If some of the ideas in Schumann's Symphony No. 2 are "clumsy" in terms of orchestration, "as an interpreter you have to find your way around some corners," Stenz says. "But what is revealed behind them can be profound." And in the "Four Last Songs" by Strauss, which will be sung by the exceptional soprano Heidi Melton, "you hear [Strauss] committing to the text with all his wisdom. There are no extraneous notes. All ideas are distilled. You get the essence of his music," the conductor says.

BSO audiences will get to experience the essence of Stenz in the years ahead, and he will get to experience more of the orchestra and its environs.

"Baltimore is such a vibrant city," the conductor says. "I feel the energy of a student community, of people interested in culture, and an orchestra firmly positioned in Baltimore's cultural scene. I feel very happy about having a regular association with the Baltimore Symphony."

# MARKUS STENZ



July 9, 2014

## Baltimore Symphony appoints Markus Stenz principal guest conductor

By Tim Smith



The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra has appointed Markus Stenz as principal guest conductor for a three-year term commencing with the 2015-2016 season. The German conductor, who is principal conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, made a sensational BSO debut in 2012.

In a statement released Wednesday, Stenz said that

his "first encounter [with the BSO] in October 2012 is unforgettable to me. I loved the musicians' sophisticated and joyous approach to music making and look forward to experiencing a wide variety of repertoire with the orchestra." He will on the podium next May as a guest conductor.

BSO music director Marin Alsop said she is "delighted to be joined by long-time friend and colleague, Markus Stenz. We met when we were conducting fellows at Tanglewood in 1989 under Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa and Gustav Meier. When Markus debuted with the BSO, he immediately struck a rapport with our musicians, and they were as enthusiastic as I about creating a position that would bring him to Baltimore on a regular basis."



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MARKUS STENZ

Chicago  
CLASSICAL REVIEW

July 23, 2022

## Stenz, Trpčeski light up 20th-century program with Grant Park Orchestra

By Tim Sawyer



The Grant Park Orchestra had a particularly fine outing Friday night under the baton of guest conductor Markus Stenz. Most recently conductor-in-residence of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, the Stenz led a vigorous program of works from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The evening began with the first GPO performances of William Grant

Still's *Darker America*. A 15-minute essay from 1924, the score dates from the period when Still was studying with Edgard Varèse. The influence of the French modernist is palpable throughout, along with Still's grounding in American blues and jazz. The result is an engaging mélange of styles that cohere in inventive and unexpected ways.

Stenz had a clear vision of the score, organically melding moments of chromatic angularity with its swaggering jazzy passages. Anne Bach gave a mournful, reedy first statement of the work's "sorrow theme" on English horn, and concertmaster Jeremy Black filled his jazz-inflected violin solo with convincing idiomatic slides.

Rachmaninoff's beloved Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor followed, with soloist Simon Trpčeski. The Macedonian pianist displayed a relaxed yet assertive demeanor on stage that matched his obvious fluency with Rachmaninoff's most well-known score. Trpčeski had a forward-leaning take on the opening Moderato, seldom allowing a sense of urgency to abate. The Pritzker Pavilion's amplification was actually welcome here, as one could hear details of the solo part often obscured in the thick orchestral textures.

Trpčeski likely could have sustained the extended melody of the Adagio sostenuto to greater effect, as principal clarinet Dario Brignoli did in his



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prominent solo. The pianist dispatched the scherzando section toward the movement's close with effortless technique, however, and Stenz brought cinematic sweep to the lush accompaniment.

The soloist made a dramatic impression with his entrance in the closing Allegro scherzando, which was about the fastest trip up and back down a keyboard one can imagine. He continued to bring confident showmanship to Rachmaninoff's dynamic finale, in which he was well supported by Stenz's assured orchestral leadership. The pair warmly shared a deserved standing ovation at the work's end.

As an encore, Trpčeski gave a wistful account of Chopin's Waltz in A Minor, Op. post., demonstrating his interpretive breadth and offering a more intimate sensitivity than was called for in the concerto.

The program closed with a commendable performance of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra. Stenz created a creeping atmosphere in the opening of the Introduzione, and maintained a sense of buoyancy throughout the ensuing Allegro vivace. The solo duos in the "Game of Pairs" all acquitted themselves well, though the audience's noisy scramble from a passing rain shower made it hard to appreciate the playing.

Stenz seemed a bit impatient in the Elegia, whose lugubrious Transylvanian feel comes across better at a more settled pace, though he deftly steered the many schizoid shifts of the Intermezzo Interrotto. The Finale was a showcase of the orchestra's collective virtuosity, with all sections dispatching Bartók's flurries of black notes with spirit and precision.



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MARKUS STENZ

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November 6, 2019

## NJ Symphony Orchestra

By Susan Van Dongen

Take a German musical master inspired by time spent in the Austrian Alps, a famed Norwegian schooled in Europe, and a French composer whose family musically dominated the Baroque period.

Now mix these cultural ingredients with a Finnish piano soloist and a masterful German conductor, and you have a night of music with true international flair. Such was last Friday's concert by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, led by guest conductor Markus Stenz at Richardson Auditorium in Princeton.

The program included Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor, performed by virtuoso soloist Juho Pohjonen, Johannes Brahms' Symphony Number 2 in D Major, and the NJSO's premiere of Jean-Fery Rebel's "Chaos" from his ballet "Les Elemens (1737)."

This composition was Rebel's late Baroque contribution to the concept of the birth of the universe, from chaos into order. The NJSO tackled the piece with gusto and the skills needed to balance the serene moments with musical dissonance that was some 200 years before its time.

Beautiful work by the ensemble's two flutes (one doubling on piccolo) gave brightness to the many dark passages of this unusual composition. The brief piece piqued my interest and left me wanting to learn more about the aptly named Rebel.

Then came Grieg's piano concerto, played with bravura by Pohjonen, born in Helsinki in 1981.

You probably know the opening to this work, a flourish followed by a melody

that might sound more like Rachmaninoff than Grieg to some. By the end of the piece the composer's Scandinavian roots shine through, however.

I was impressed by the calm, fluent way Pohjonen's hands traveled across the keyboard. A long cadenza, which revisited the main theme, rose with passion then fell to just a whisper, and the soloist played it all with grace and control. This wild ride of a first movement drew applause from the audience — unusual for the staid Richardson crowd — until the second movement put us in a more introspective place.

The melody was traded from the principal cellist, Jonathan Spitz, to the orchestra, then to the principal French horn. Bravo to hornist Chris Komer and his excellent playing during the Grieg: in fact, the entire French horn section was brilliant.

The third movement fires up the energy again. Driven and rhythmic, this section is actually a Norwegian folk dance called a "halling," which evoked an all-night celebration of the solstice in the land of the midnight sun. A new mood arose in the second half of the movement, much more akin to Grieg's gentler folk influences.

Then the storm returned, with powerful sound and dynamics. Pohjonen played with such intensity, the audience held its breath as he and the NJSO concluded the Grieg. The hall then erupted with applause and kept going so much so that the pianist had to make two curtain calls.



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I was also fascinated with maestro Stenz, an emotive leader who seemed to connect personally with the individual musicians throughout all this swirling sound.

The Brahms Symphony in D Major was splendid, a “pastoral” that made ample use of a fine wind section, especially flutist Bart Feller and Karl Herman on clarinet.

Hornist Komer again shone with an exquisite solo amid the dreamy first section. The second slower movement was a little darker, with Brahms employing the lower brasses and even

timpani. Featuring a lovely oboe solo, the third movement was like a palate cleanser before the spicy finale.

Here in the fourth movement, Brahms might have been playing with the listener but also showcasing his skills with counterpoint, as the vigorous melody passed around the orchestra from upper winds to lower brasses and strings.

By the end conductor Stenz was totally caught up in the music, actually jumping up and down on the podium, moving with the exuberance the composer intended and the NJSO delivered.

August 4, 2019

## Classical review: Proms, Royal Albert Hall

Markus Stenz's reading of Brahms's Symphony No 1 shows that little can match the exhilarating standard of the greats

By Paul Driver

Violin concertos are a Proms theme this year, following the cello-concerto outbreak of three years ago. The fourth of 10 of them was the Hungarian Peter Eotvos's *Alhambra* (2018), co-commissioned by the BBC and given its British premiere at the Royal Albert Hall by the superbly accomplished Isabelle Faust with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, under the composer's direction.

It is his third such work, its predecessors, *Seven* (2006) and *DoReMi* (2012), having also had British premieres at the Proms. *Alhambra*'s actual premiere last month was in Granada - aptly, as it is an attempt to convey, as he puts it, "the intersection of Spanish and Arabic culture" exemplified by the *Alhambra* palace there; he even homes in on the initial letter G as a note-centre for the music.

Several composers have had a similar inspiration, and Eotvos's two-movement essay can't really compete in evocative power with Debussy's *La puerta del vino* piano prelude or Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* piano concertante. But it did come across as a score of rare refinement, somehow pleasantly imbued with the modernist or premodernist manners of the music he is inclined to conduct, on this occasion Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Bartok's *Dance Suite* and Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*. All three had British premieres under the Proms' founder, Henry Wood, whose 150th anniversary is another motif this season.

The next evening's Prom was cheerfully unthemed and given by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales with the conductor Markus Stenz. Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* and Brahms's *Symphony No 1* stood like stalwarts of tradition on either side of another BBC co-commission, *Nigredo: Dark Night of the Soul* (2018), a double trumpet concerto

THE CRITICS

by the Swede Tobias Brostrom (b1978), receiving its British premiere with the soloists Jeroen Berwaerts and Hakan Hardenberger. This nearly half-hour-long diptych came with a complex Jungian and alchemical subtext, but its effect was of the sort of densely layered tutti continuum familiar in modern-day music, and nicely evoked in Martin Anderson's programme note when he spoke of trumpets emerging "from scintillating waves of orchestral colour, rippling like sunlight over water". There was a lovely wistful sheen on the solo playing throughout, belying the hectic virtuosity of the figuration.

Stenz's reading of the Brahms had a terrific unaffected strength. One felt there was nothing between his mind and the music - no egotism, no false display. He had easily secured the requisite clarity and incisiveness for the Strauss, and the instant rightness, the unforgettability, of the tone poem's images made me a touch impatient with the oceanic surgings of the Brostrom. It's a sad thought that probably no new work among Prom novelties of recent years is due for the classic status of these masterpieces. **How impossibly high the standard is!**

All the more exhilarating, therefore, to be presented with an undoubted classic from the 1970s: Messiaen's *Des canyons aux étoiles...* (1974), forming a BBCSO concert by itself, conducted by Sakari Oramo.

The same combination gave us a fabulous account of Messiaen's *Turangalila* Symphony at the Proms last year, though the orchestra for *From the Canyons to the Stars* is stripped down nearly to chamber forces - and they sounded like a brand-new orchestra. Oramo's technical adroitness in this rhythmically devastating idiom (fiendish in every way, this exuberantly religious music!) was again manifest, and the result easily had one on the seat edge.

The soloists in this astonishingly vivid 100-minute portrayal of the deserts and canyons of Utah, their birdlife and night skies, were the horn player Martin Owen - peripatetic in his *Interstellar Call* solo movement, as though prefiguring the astral *Licht* operas of Messiaen's pupil Stockhausen - the glockenspiel player Alex Neal, the virtuosically clattering xylorimba player David Hockings and the truly prodigious pianist Nicolas Hodges, with solo on solo, two complete movements to himself, and a flurry of closely mimicked birdsong to dispatch with impeccable flair.

Five other percussionists contributed to the graphic immediacy, not least the soil- or sand-rattling shaker of Messiaen's specially invented "geophone" and the wind-machine player required to hold unlikely pianissimos. Brostrom's work also calls on an extended percussion section, but never to such telling effect. It was a memorable Sunday night at the Royal Albert Hall: Messiaen's grandeur of vision, audacity of invention and sheer sustaining power left one marvelling anew.

The first of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra's two appearances at the Proms - with Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting in place of Mariss Jansons - paired Beethoven's *Second Symphony* and Shostakovich's *Fifth*, and set one marvelling too.

The finesse of the articulation, the automatic cohesiveness of the ensemble, the driven intensity at one with a sonorous beauty one wanted to stop in its tracks and savour - all this musical reality is difficult as ever to put into words, yet one felt it at every second. Nézet-Séguin was impressive. c

It came across as a score of rare refinement

MARKUS STENZ

# The New York Times

November 16, 2018

## A 92-Year-Old's 'Endgame' Opera Is Patiently Perfect

By Zachary Woolfe



From left, Frode Olsen as Hamm and Leigh Melrose as Clov in Gyorgy Kurtag's operatic adaptation of Beckett's "Endgame," at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan.

In the middle of Samuel Beckett's bleak but endlessly wry play "Endgame," a character tells a joke about a man who goes to the tailor to get a pair of pants. The tailor dithers and dawdles, making one tiny change at a time.

Finally, the customer explodes: God made the world in six days, he screams, "and you are not bloody well capable of making me a pair of trousers in three months!"

The tailor answers, "But, my dear sir, my dear sir, look" — with a disdainful gesture — "at the world, and look" — lovingly, proudly — "at my trousers!"

The punch line had extra relish at the Teatro alla Scala here in Milan on Thursday when "Fin de Partie," the eminent Hungarian composer Gyorgy Kurtag's operatic adaptation of "Endgame," had its long, long-awaited premiere. Mr. Kurtag, 92, has taken a



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Rather than looking out from an interior, in Pierre Audi's staging the characters are outside a small, grim, rotating house, looking in.

protracted path to this patiently, perfectly tailored work, his first opera.

Over the past decade, we were told time and again that the opening was coming. Time and again, the pants were not quite ready. "Fin de Partie," based on Beckett's original French version of the play, became the white whale of contemporary music.

As Mr. Kurtag turned 85, then 90, we could be forgiven for quietly fearing it would never be finished. And it wouldn't, perhaps, have been too much of a surprise if it hadn't been: A master of miniatures, best known for collections of pieces a few dozen seconds each, Mr. Kurtag had stubbornly resisted the idea of working on a vaster canvas.

But Beckett had already provided him with vital inspiration for other works over the years. And "Endgame" — its text, like Mr. Kurtag's classics, an assemblage of small self-sufficiencies surrounded by space — was an apt partner for what the play calls "the prolonged creative effort." If Mr. Kurtag felt uncertain about how to sustain his gnomic style over a two-hour span, it's undetectable in an opera that, even constructed as a series of discrete "scenes and monologues," unfolds with the confidence — the paradoxically unsettled serenity — of his best music.

He can revel in mood, color and agile, even raucous, rhythms because there is barely a plot to convey. A sick man in a wheelchair (Hamm), his companion (Clov), his father (Nagg) and his mother (Nell) recall the joys and sorrows of the past and curse the indignities of the

present and future. That's all; that's everything.

Shuffling around nervously, Clov (the robustly gruff baritone Leigh Melrose) is characterized in jittery blots of music, as if he consists entirely of punctuation marks. The orchestra quietly trembles under the bass Frode Olsen's more authoritative roars as Hamm. Old Nagg (the tenor Leonardo Cortellazzi) and Nell (the contralto Hilary Summers), stuffed by Beckett into side-by-side ashcans, exist in a sphere of ethereal nostalgia and thread-thin high notes that Ms. Summers, in particular, spins with the eerie softness of elderly skin.

Though spare, Mr. Kurtag's music isn't severe. The string sound has been pared back, so the ensemble feels transparent and winds-heavy, with an airy chamber-music intimacy, whipping occasionally into passionate outpourings and embroidered here and there with the coppery twang of cimbalom. The vocal line is often mirrored in the orchestra, giving a feeling of purity, coherence and deceptive simplicity. (There is nothing simple about it.)

There are echoes of Monteverdi in the piece's declamatory, text-forward quality; Debussy's "Pelléas et Mélisande," in its atmospheric ambiguity; Berg's "Wozzeck," in its episodic structure and concentrated expression. Glistening and nimble, the Scala orchestra is conducted by Markus Stenz, who leads an exceptionally delicate score — its balances and pauses fragile and exposed — with naturalness and a sense of spontaneity.

Pierre Audi's staging provides some of the physical comedy Beckett intended, while slyly inverting the play's scenic indications. Rather than looking out from an interior, the characters here are outside a small, grim house, looking in. (The designer is Christof Hetzer.) The house, partly overhung by the shells of yet larger structures, rotates with each scene change; Hamm, in turn, rotates in his wheelchair. It is a little solar system onstage, a theater of the cosmos.

I had worried that Mr. Kurtag would stint the music-hall roots of Beckett's dramaturgy, but bits of accordion and

whistles peep out from the orchestra, faraway glimpses of vaudeville. The opera extracts roughly half of the play, meaning we lose some of the slapstick circularity; what's gained is starkness, each episode standing in harsh isolation. We lose, too, the full depth of the relationship — defined by Beckettian repetition — between Hamm and Clov. So the opera's final scene of simultaneous separation and togetherness, while powerful, doesn't quite break your heart. Nagg and Nell, their music luminous, are now the emotional center — appropriate for a work that is, if not quite autobiographical, then at least resonant on the subject of growing old alongside one's mate. (Mr. Kurtag's wife of more than 70 years, Marta, has long been his close collaborator in composition and performance.)

"Fin de Partie" is a farewell not just to a life and a marriage, but also to a whole culture. Mr. Kurtag is one of the last who remain of the generation of avant-garde composers that came of age during World War II and in its wake: Boulez, Ligeti, Henze, Stockhausen, Schnittke. Even if the great final scene equivocates — modernism is always on the verge of leaving, it seems to say, yet

it is also always here to stay — the opera, drawn from a play that Mr. Kurtag saw in Paris as a young man, is truly goodbye to all that.

It's a world that ends, in his telling, with both a bang and a whimper: apocalyptic brass chords alternating with a hushed stillness, off which rises a mist of cimbalom and suspended cymbal. This kind of quick transition from seizure to stillness is a characteristically Kurtagian move, as in the final of his six "Moments Musicaux" for string quartet, from 2005, when a sudden ripping roar fades to a faint march, pricked by an even fainter violin.

It is a gesture that challenges the very notion of an ending. And Mr. Kurtag may not be done yet; he has mulled filling in some of the gaps he has left in creating the "Fin de Partie" libretto. Future presentations — the work travels next to Amsterdam, in March — may well set more of the play's text. But it by no means feels curtailed in its current form.

Look at our world, indeed, then look at this exquisite opera, a miracle of dedication, craft and care. This, as Clov says near the end of the piece, is what we call making an exit.

MARKUS STENZ

# *The* Guardian

November 19, 2018

## Fin de Partie review – Kurtág's compelling musical testament

By Andrew Clements



György Kurtág's fascination with Samuel Beckett dates back more than 60 years. After leaving his native Hungary in the wake of the failed 1956 uprising, he attended the Paris premiere of *Endgame*, or *Fin de Partie* as it was in the original French version of the play, which had been first performed a few months earlier at the Royal Court in London. But it wasn't until the 1990s that the notoriously fastidious Kurtág produced any works based on Beckett's texts. Both *What Is the Word* and *Pas à Pas – Nulle Part* are substantial, extraordinary pieces but seem only stepping stones to the opera Kurtág has now composed, which returns to that first encounter with *Fin de Partie*, and its quartet of characters, locked in a terminal spiral of mutual loathing and dependency.

It's been a long operatic journey and eight years from the original commission. Kurtág has used about 60% of the original French text, omitting some of the repetitions that reinforce

the hopelessness of the characters – blind Hamm, who cannot stand, his servant Clov who cannot sit, and Hamm's parents Nagg and Nell, who have no legs and live in adjoining dustbins. But he's left their words unchanged, and prefaced the opera with a setting of *Roundelay*, a Beckett poem from the 70s.

With short pauses between the scenes, *Fin de Partie* runs for just over two hours, more than twice as long as anything Kurtág has composed before. It's surely his musical testament – at 92, he was too frail to travel to Milan from his Budapest home. And, as one might expect from one of the greatest figures in the music of the last half century, few new operas are so uncompromisingly distinctive, paying so little heed to anything else in the operatic canon.

The text is set as extended recitative, only rarely erupting into lyricism, and supported by an orchestral score that never uses more than the absolute minimum of instruments. There's the dramatic directness of Monteverdi and the extreme instrumental compression of Webern – volleys of brass, lonely saxophone solos, tuba growls, snatches of cimbalom and accordion, ripples of harp and occasional surges of warming strings. Just occasionally the orchestra has a brief interlude to itself.

The forensic exploration of the text plays down any moments of black humour;



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there's little redemption in the endgames Kurtág depicts so unblinkingly, with three large-scale monologues for Hamm providing the dramatic backbone. But this austerity is compelling, and the rare moments of piercing emotion are transfixing, as when Nagg's shouts finally fail to summon Nell from her dustbin – his shouts turning first into a wail, then to a piercing scream – or in the only moment when Clov and Hamm sing together, admitting their reliance on each other.

There are rumours Kurtág plans to continue working on the score, but the director Pierre Audi insists what he has staged at La Scala should be considered definitive. Certainly his cool, lucid

production, with a design by Christof Hetzer showing the outside of Hamm's house and changing perspective from scene to scene, perfectly matches the opera's economy, just as Markus Stenz's conducting realises every detail of the score with the absolute precision Kurtág's music always demands.

So, too, do the four wonderfully committed singers – Frode Olsen's frighteningly austere, unbending Hamm; Leigh Melrose's gruffly submissive Clov; Leonardo Cortellazzi the touchingly fragile Nagg, and Hilary Summers as Nell, whose gentle, confiding delivery of the Roundelay gets this extraordinary, unforgettable piece under way.

MARKUS STENZ

# FINANCIAL TIMES

November 20, 2018

## Fin de partie: György Kurtág delivers Beckett opera at last

After numerous delays, the veteran avant-gardist unveiled his gruelling and brilliant adaptation at La Scala

By James Imam



Samuel Beckett's plays seem ill-suited to operatic adaptation. Their philosophical rather than dramatic character works against the form's strengths, and their intricately woven texts risk being hampered by music. But the Hungarian composer György Kurtág has been passionate about Beckett since first seeing *Fin de partie* (*Endgame*) in a 1957 production. Now, at 92, he has adapted the work into his first opera. The La Scala premiere was feverishly awaited. Kurtág, the last surviving composer of the postwar avant-garde generation, started work on the opera in 2010, and the premiere has been repeatedly scheduled and cancelled since then.

Many believed the composer would not live to complete his magnum opus. That he has done is partly down to the perseverance of Alexander Pereira, La Scala superintendent. Whether Beckett, a dogged defender of his works' integrity, would have sanctioned the opera is debatable. Nuanced character interplay becomes near-uniform despair in Kurtág's highly personal vision. The persistently grim atmosphere requires powers of endurance (as highlighted by the audience exodus between the five scenes). And yet the composer's reverence for the source material radiates from the score. Roughly half of Beckett's text features in Kurtág's one-



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act libretto, and it is treated with devoted care. Pierre Audi's sets are clever and noirish. The result is a personal tribute to a lifetime's work. Scrupulous attention to detail, typically exhibited in Kurtág's miniature compositions, is unflaggingly applied over the opera's two hours. Myriad orchestral shards colour the French text, which here takes primacy over all. The vocal parts are brilliantly sculpted — refined by Kurtág and the singers over years — and resemble recitation with instrumental support. Hamm, the

wheelchair-bound tyrant, is threateningly sung by Frode Olsen. Clov (Leigh Melrose), his grimly limping servant, is deeply anguished. Nagg and Nell, Hamm's legless, bin-dwelling parents, are given more central roles here, and their black comedy comes across very well (singers Leonardo Cortellazzi and Hilary Summers). Pierre Audi's clever noirish sets reduce La Scala's vast stage to intimate dimensions. Conductor Markus Stenz draws razor-sharp playing from small clusters of instruments; the moment collective forces let rip, as Clov hovers at the door, is like dazzling light breaking through a dark veil. Kurtág's score is still in draft form. Much like Beckett's drama, the opera may never reach finality.

MARKUS STENZ

# The Guardian

November 24, 2018

## Fin de partie review – Kurtág's thrilling endgame

By Fiona Maddocks



A whisper of vaudeville, a burst of cimbalom, shrieks, whistles, bells and the brief wheeze of accordions, each sound exquisitely sculpted, pierces the silence. György Kurtág's long-awaited first opera was never likely to sound like anything else that comes under that title. Nor does it. Aged 92, after decades of resistance to the form, despite the cajoling of professional friends, the Hungarian composer has had his *Fin de partie* premiered at La Scala, Milan.

The opera's full title is *Fin de partie: scènes et monologues, opéra en un acte*. While Samuel Beckett's play, written in French and later translated as *Endgame*, runs straight through uninterrupted, Kurtág's work consists of short scenes. The curtain comes down frequently, which doesn't break the continuity because, in a sense, there is none. Kurtág's compositions have always been jewelled miniatures. *Fin de partie* is like a glistening string of them, perfectly suited to the granular nature of Beckett's text. Only now has Kurtág

agreed to release this work in progress (he has set roughly 60% of the text), after postponements at Zurich, Salzburg and, three years ago, Milan.

At over two hours without interval, it's already a challenging evening: apart from a scurry of exits early on, it held its international audience (which included the prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán) captive. Only the composer was absent, unable to travel from Budapest where he lives in an apartment at the top of the city's Music Centre. (If London's Centre for Music is ever built, someone might bear this in mind for the UK's senior composers.)

Reviewing the world premiere of Beckett's play at London's Royal Court, Kenneth Tynan triumphantly scorned it as too bleak, "stamping on the face of mankind" (the *Observer*, 7 April 1957), likening its characters to Francis Bacon's newly displayed "screaming popes". Kurtág saw it in Paris the same year. For the young composer, instead, it was a lasting revelation. He had just arrived in France after the 1956 Hungarian uprising: "I understood hardly anything when I saw the play. But then I bought the two [Beckett] texts, *Endgame* and *Godot*, and they became my bible. Truly."

This context is vital. Kurtág, the last survivor of the group of influential European avant garde composers born in the 1920s – Boulez, Ligeti, Xenakis, Berio among them – has been steeped in



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Beckett all his artistic life. His pianist wife, Marta – they married in 1947; their lives are intertwined; she sits beside him, commenting, advising, as he works – spoke recently of the opera being the couple’s own endgame.

There’s scarcely a plot. Four people, variously immobile, are confined to a disintegrating existence. Hamm, blind and chairbound, superbly, inexhaustibly sung by the Norwegian bass-baritone Frode Olsen, is the “king”. He bullies, but relies on his “knight”, Clov, who cannot sit down – performed with ferocious cogency, each heaving step an effort, by the British baritone Leigh Melrose. Hamm’s parents, Nell (British contralto Hilary Summerstouchingly, absurdly romantic) and Nagg (Italian tenor Leonardo Cortellazzi, edgy, strident), have lost their legs. They live in rubbish bins, mostly with the lids down. Nell dies. Hamm is abandoned, withdrawing from the world under a bloodied handkerchief.

The music, expertly and diligently conducted by Markus Stenz, traces the text in conversational sympathy, with stop-start blurts and urgent, delicate fluencies. The 60-strong orchestra, in addition to the usual lineup, is dominated by low instruments and tuned percussion: alto and bass flute, cor anglais, contrabassoon, tuba; celesta, piano (with supersordino – permanently muted), piano, as well as cimbalom. Pierre Audi’s production, designed by Christof Hetzer, with chilling use of shadow play by lighting designer Urs Schönebaum, is stark, unyielding, economic. A shack of a house, which revolves for each scene, stands alone in blackness. Beckett once told an actor preparing the play that he must “fill my silences with sounds”. Kurtág has done just that. Far from stamping on the face of mankind, this masterly composer has caressed it with all his own life’s worth.

Alexander Pereira, artistic director of La Scala, the man who wouldn’t say no to Kurtág and chased him round the opera houses of Europe to secure this world premiere, said afterwards that it was as important and thrilling as hearing a new Britten opera. As the curtain rose at English National Opera’s War Requiem, I had his words in mind. Britten’s work isn’t an opera but has been given a full staging, in an opera house, by ENO, directed by Daniel Kramer, with designs by the Turner prize-winning photographer Wolfgang Tillmans.

Images of the dead or maimed, of nature destroyed, of the bombed shell of Coventry Cathedral (so closely associated with the 1962 premiere of this work) provide backdrops for contemplation. The chorus, much of the time, move as one, bodies strewn, bringing to mind the strange symmetries of CRW Nevinson’s war art. All culminates in a sensuous, green redemption, depicted by a huge tree in full leaf.

Whether you get on with the production will depend in part on your enthusiasm for grand choral works being staged. If it brings the music to a wider audience, all to the good. A literalness takes over – how can it not – which for some will underline, for others undermine, perception of the original. Many in the audience were visibly moved. I struggled to match what I heard and what I saw and was left somewhat unengaged.

ENO had an outstanding lineup of soloists – Emma Bell, David Butt Philip and Roderick Williams – with top-class singing from the company’s chorus, joined by ensemble singers from the recent *Porgy and Bess*, as well as Finchley Children’s Music Group choir. To sing or play in this work is an experience you never forget. Even if some of the spatial elements were lost, Martyn Brabbins, ENO’s music director, and the orchestra, brought out the music’s torment and grief.

MARKUS STENZ

By TIM SMITH

April 2, 2019

## Lots of D minor, choral cornucopia from the BSO in March

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra just wrapped up what I'd call March Gladness -- since it made me glad to encounter two action-packed programs and hear them performed very impressively.

Markus Stenz, the BSO's terrific principal guest conductor, closed out the month by wallowing in D minor, by way of Brahms' stormy-lyrical Piano Concerto No. 1 and Schoenberg's weighty-poetic *Pelleas und Melisande*.

The latter work, which expands for about 45 unbroken minutes (and covers a heckuva lot of ground way beyond D minor), doesn't come around often. That's a pity. There's a lot of meat on the score, composed before Schoenberg took his game-changing, 12-tone journey out of conventional tonality. A lot a urgent beauty, too.

On March 29 at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Stenz held a firm grip on this vivid evocation of Maeterlinck's classic tale of love and retribution, making it easy to appreciate the work's structure. And the conductor judged the frequent shifts in dynamics to such compelling effect that the loss of some details within the thick scoring during the most angst-y passages proved insignificant. A few moments could have been a little more polished (or, at the very close, more carefully tuned), the BSO still hit home, delivering sumptuous, even downright sensuous waves of sound.

The Brahms concerto received one of the most satisfying performances I've

heard in years. Lars Vogt brought to the daunting solo role a formidable technique, along with seemingly limitless tone power and a wealth of expressive nuance. The tension the pianist summoned with the softest of touches proved as gripping as his most thunderous utterances. Throughout, he enjoyed spot-on partnering from Stenz, who again coaxed rich and vibrant playing from the BSO. This well-worn concerto sounded so fresh and jolting that I would have happily stayed put had they encored the whole thing.

The Ides of March found music director Marin Alsop leading the orchestra at the Meyerhoff in an ambitious concert dominated by choral music.

Since the vocal side of things was handled by the University of Maryland Concert Choir (Edward Maclary is the first-rate director), there was no question that some very fine singing would fill the hall. That it did in the world premiere of a BSO commission, Roxanna Panufnik's *Across the Line of Dreams*, a portrait of two heroines, Harriet Tubman and fellow 19th-century authority-challenger Rani Lakshmibai.

The new work, which calls for two conductors and two choruses (the UM ensemble was divided in half), abounds in distinctive vocal and instrumental writing, which Panufnik deftly applies to communicate a text by Jessica Duchon that incorporates words by Tubman and Lakshmibai. The dynamic, tautly



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organized piece received a dynamic, tautly organized performance.

Alsop also capitalized on the choir's technical assurance — not to mention the BSO's suppleness — in incisive accounts of Bernstein's open-hearted *Chichester Psalms* and Villa-

Lobos' propulsive, colorful *Choros* No. 10.

In this midst of this mini-chorus fest, the orchestra got to have the stage to itself with Alsop, who fashioned a nicely shaped, if slightly detached, performance of Copland's perennial pleaser, *Appalachian Spring*.



July 21, 2018

## Conductor Stenz makes auspicious Grant Park debut on a rainy night

By Lawrence A. Johnson



The weather gods may not have cooperated for half of Friday night's concert at the Pritzker Pavilion. But dampness and accompanying distractions apart, the evening's program offered two impressive Grant Park Music Festival debuts.

Markus Stenz has not been heard in Chicago since 2009 when he conducted both the CSO and Lyric Opera's production of *Katya Kabanova*. The German conductor currently enjoys a busy international career with an array of far-flung posts as principal conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, principal guest conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and conductor-in-residence of the Seoul Philharmonic.

Intermittent rain bedeviled the first half of the evening with umbrellas up and down and patrons noisily scurrying to find dry seats underneath Frank Gehry's billowing (and leaky) steel sails. Yet Stenz and the Grant Park Orchestra maintained admirable concentration and focus on the performances throughout.

Friday's program was a typically diverting one, framing a 20th century concerto with an early romantic symphony and a significant contemporary work.

Detlev Glanert's *Frenesia* led off the evening, and was heard in its Chicago





premiere. Written in 2013, *Frenesia* (Frenzy) was sort-of inspired by Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, though more in style than heroic spirit. Indeed, the German composer says this work can be considered more apposite to the "Romantic view of grand heroism" than embodying it.

Though more of an "anti-*Heldenleben*," as Glanert states, *Frenesia* opens in a similar vein of striding, big-boned confidence though the style is punchier and darker. As with his *Theatrum beastiarum*, performed by the CSO under Semyon Bychkov in 2010, Glanert writes for large orchestral forces with power and audacity. This is symphonic heavy metal—dark, driving and intense yet undeniably exhilarating in its churning, aggressive edge.

The thunderous agitation stops abruptly for a few plaintive notes from a solo flute, leading to a somewhat more impressionistic section with woodwinds prominent. The music returns to its mode of roiling dynamism before a surprising, gleaming major chord, and a winding down to a hushed and gloomy, decidedly unheroic throwaway coda.

Stenz led a powerful, surging performance with brilliant playing from the musicians across all sections that put across the sonic fury of Glanert's writing. Stenz also drew a wide dynamic range, the pianissimos barely audible yet registering clearly on an unusually quiet downtown evening.

The contrast could hardly have been greater with the ensuing work, Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto, which brought the night's second inspiring debut from soloist Paul Huang.

Winner of the 2015 Avery Fisher Career Grant, the young violinist was fully in

synch with Barber's vein of bittersweet nostalgia from his very first notes. Playing the 1742 ex-Wieniawski Guarneri del Gesu—on loan from the Stradivari Society of Chicago—Huang caressed the lyrical lines with a pure, luminous tune ideally suited to this score. Introduced by a lovely oboe rendering of the Andante's main theme, Huang brought both spacious phrasing and fresh intimacy to this introspective music.

The only slight letdown was in the finale where Huang's rather cautious style lacked virtuosic sizzle in the moto perpetuo fireworks, though he finished with a burst of adrenaline in the closing bars. Stenz and the orchestra were simpatico partners, the conductor alertly supporting the soloist and pointing lyric climaxes with fervor.

The sun come out belatedly for the closing work, Robert Schumann's Symphony No. 1.

Though the season doesn't quite align, with its rustic flavor and prevailing good cheer, Schumann's "Spring" symphony is such a natural for al fresco concerts, it's surprising the work doesn't turn up more often on summer programs.

Here too, Stenz led an incisive, highly focused performance, wonderfully spirited in the outer movements. Perhaps a less brisk tempo in the Larghetto might have allowed more room for the romantic idyll to bloom more effectively.

That quibble apart, Stenz was consistently on top of Schumann's balancing and tempo challenges. Apart from some wayward horn moments, the Grant Park musicians were clearly responsive to their conductor and delivered a polished and engaging performance.

MARKUS STENZ

# OPERA TODAY

OPERA NEWS, COMMENTARY, AND REVIEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

June 5, 2018

## A volcanic Elektra by the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic

By Jenny Camilleri

“There are no gods in heaven!” sings Elektra just before her brother Orest kills their mother. In the Greek plays about the cursed House of Atreus the Olympian gods command the banished Orestes to return home and avenge his father Agamemnon’s murder at the hands of his wife Clytemnestra. He dispatches both her and her lover Aegisthus.

The Furies then take up Clytemnestra’s cause and torment Orestes. In Richard Strauss’s opera *Elektra*, the first of several collaborations with his beloved librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the gods are deaf or absent. The characters must navigate a psychological quicksand, expressed in the elusive tonality of the score, on their own. Plagued by dark dreams, Klytaemnestra offers up blood sacrifices in vain. Her daughter Chrysothemis hopes to be released from her dysfunctional family by a man who will give her children, while the grieving Elektra effaces her womanhood and waits for Orest to satisfy her need for vengeance. It’s a terrifying world of impossible expectations and crushing loneliness, and the best performances of *Elektra* reveal this gaping horror. Last Saturday at the Concertgebouw Markus Stenz and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra did just that. Their *Elektra* was volcanic, seething and spitting from one terrifying eruption to the other. At the center of a vocally

strong cast was the marvelous soprano Elena Pankratova in the title role.

The painstaking casting typical of the NTR Zaterdag Matinee series ensured that talented singing actors staffed the royal palace of Mycenae. The performance had a gripping start with a terrific group of maids, led by Alwyn Mellor’s febrile Overseer. Mezzo-soprano Cécile van de Sant as the First Maid and Kirsten Mackinnon as the put-upon Fifth Maid were particularly fine. Laetitia Gerards and Renate Arends were Klytaemnestra’s glamorous attendants. Tenor James Kryshak and bass Charles Dekeyser gave their all as the male servants and baritone Florian Just made a vivid appearance as Orest’s tutor. The Orest of bass-baritone Károly Szemerédy was impassive and reverberant, a deluxe killing machine. With Stenz and his musicians afire, it isn’t any wonder that the whole cast seemed inspired. Propelled by the precise violence of the six percussionists, the orchestra found a middle ground between beauty and brutality. Each crashing dissonant chord held the awful fascination of shattering glass. Bravo to the woodwind soloists who slid through the chromatic figures like glossy cobras.

Although mostly sensitive to the singers, Stenz could not help releasing the floodgates at key moments, and the afternoon was all the more exciting for



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it. He never overwhelmed either Pankratova or Asmik Grigorian as Chrysothemis, but drowned out Thomas Piffka's yells for help when his obtuse Aegisth was slaughtered. Dalia Schaechter's mezzo-soprano also went under at times, but this was a small limitation to her rich interpretation of Klytaemnestra. Schaechter inflected intelligently, fully exploiting her instrument to color every word, every syllable even, with meaning. At times her Klytaemnestra was almost pitiable, in spite of hideous statements like the one comparing Elektra to a nettle sprouting from her body. The monologue about bad dreams was fascinating, delivered inwardly, as if the queen were drifting into a psychotic episode. Stenz provided nightmarish orchestral support, making those cloth-eating moths she talks about fly out as if from some hellish nest.

Elena Pankratova was vocally peerless. No part of this exacting role was beyond her. Her velvety soprano is too beautiful to make Elektra sound like a half-savage. Heartbreak stamped her portrayal. The repeated cries of "Agamemnon!" in the opening monologue were a loving summons and

the reunion with Orest achingly tender. You could really hear that she was once a replacement mother to her younger brother. This is not to say that her Elektra lacked fierceness. It was there, a righteous anger expressed in sumptuously swelling lines and spectacular fortes. Singing off book, Pankratova created the illusion of mounting nervousness while moving sparingly, stamping her foot defiantly during her fatal dance. It was a jubilant performance, acclaimed with frenzied applause. Asmik Grigorian was just as enthusiastically received. After her sensational Marie in *Wozzeck* last year, she returned to the ZaterdagMatinee for her role debut as Chrysothemis. Defying the orchestral decibels, her steely, platinum-clad soprano hurled raw hurt and desire at each corner of the house. The thrills just kept coming as the sisters hit one full, lustrous top note after another. No one who was there is ever likely to forget this duo, Pankratova in a black gown with chiffon wings, like a priestess, and Grigorian a proud, wounded princess in gold. They were the shining towers atop a thundering fortress of a performance.



April 15, 2018

## Pianist Louis Lortie brings elegance, excitement to Liszt's First Piano Concerto

By Terry Blaine

Pianists will tell you that it is relatively easy to play their instrument loudly. Doing so without also playing harshly is a more difficult matter. Volume isn't everything; finesse counts too.

In Friday evening's Minnesota Orchestra concert, the Canadian pianist Louis Lortie gave an object lesson in how to make thunderously loud eruptions from the keyboard seem like more than pianistic muscle-flexing and machismo.

In Liszt's First Piano Concerto, that is an important skill to muster. The work is frequently criticized as superficial and exhibitionistic, and in some performances it is.

Not in this one. Lortie's most volcanic bursts of passage-work were satisfyingly full in tone, with none of the brittle crumbling that results when soloists are simply pummeling the notes mindlessly.

The runs, trills and arabesques had elegance and dignity, an almost Chopinesque sophistication as beguiling as it was viscerally exciting.

Lortie had deep poetry too, in the brief but touching slow movement, and in the gentle ebb and flow of the reflective meanderings that follow the concerto's dramatic opening.

There is probably no reconciling the piece's virtually bipolar lurching from explosive extroversion to introspective musing.

But Lortie lent dignity and gravitas to both these elements of Liszt's creative personality in a riveting performance where his scintillating virtuosity was never

used simply for audience-wowing purposes.

Conductor Markus Stenz secured a vigilant accompaniment from the orchestra, relishing the spurt of wild activity at the concerto's almost impossibly pumped-up conclusion.

Extreme mood shifts are also a feature of Schumann's Second Symphony, which came after the intermission.

Stenz was again in his element in the work's ebullient finale, at one point dropping his arms below waist level and swaying like a happy dad dancer from side to side on the podium.

The orchestra's playing surged with energy, as it had done earlier in the hyperactive scherzo, where the strings made cogent sense of Schumann's trickily accented writing.

Between these movements came the wounded adagio espressivo, bearing the clear, disturbing imprint of the depressive episodes that Schumann was increasingly prone to as he got older.

Perhaps sensibly, Stenz kept this slow movement moving purposefully forward. Some of the music's pain and tragedy were diluted, but Stenz ensured that it never became self-pitying or morbid.

Impassioned playing from the violins in the two upwardly aspiring climaxes and a poignant solo by principal oboe John Snow were memorable.

A slimmed-down version of the orchestra opened the concert with Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll," a piece originally written



as a surprise present for his wife Cosima's 33rd birthday.

Stenz coaxed plenty of tenderness from the players, although as in the Schumann symphony the music was never allowed to become cloying.

The fade to near-inaudibility at the Idyll's rapt conclusion was beautifully managed

— a moment of uncomplicated placidity, like a long day ending happily, or a child slipping peacefully into deep slumber.

MARKUS STENZ



April 7, 2018

## Baltimore Symphony in colorful form with Stenz, Steinbacher

By Tim Smith

The tight chemistry between the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and principal guest conductor Markus Stenz has been easy to hear since he took up the post in 2015 with a three-year contract. This week, that contract was extended until June 2019. Do I hear 2020?

On Friday night at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Stenz got things started engagingly with a robust account of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1. Subtle details of tempo and phrasing kept everything sounding spontaneous, aided at each turn by the BSO's supple response.

There was much to admire at the end of the program, too, as the orchestra poured on the lush tone and vibrant character in Rachmaninoff's Symphonic Dances. Here, Stenz allowed the poetic passages plenty of room to flower, while maintaining a firm sense of momentum. A classy, rousing performance.

In between came Korngold's gorgeous Violin Concerto, crafted, like the Rachmaninoff work, in the 1940s and full of brilliantly orchestrated, late-Romantic lyricism.

As was the case when the concerto was new, you can still encounter elitists who get a smelling-cauliflower look on their faces whenever the piece is even mentioned. They can't abide its unabashed tunefulness, which Korngold largely derived from his own film scores.

Such people will probably never be won over. Their loss.

The rest of us are happy to surrender to this tender and soaring music, especially when it's in the hands of Korngold champions as effective as Stenz and the soloist for this program, Arabella Steinbacher. They made a fine team.

The violinist burrowed into the most exquisite melodies with a sweet, penetrating tone, creating an ethereal gleam in the first two movements, and she took the work's hefty technical demands in stride. The conductor coaxed finely shaded, personality-rich playing from the BSO throughout.

While the winter-into-spring weather of the past several weeks could not have been much more erratic, the orchestra has maintained admirable steadiness through a variety of repertoire.

Last month, for example, I enjoyed the expressive flair the musicians brought to operetta gems with principal pops conductor Jack Everly, amiable soloists and the dynamic Baltimore Choral Arts Society.

And there was a great deal to savor from a program led by Lahav Shani, the young music director-designate of the Israel Philharmonic making his BSO debut.

His approach to Schubert's Ninth Symphony was so natural in phrasing, so nuanced in tempo that he made you



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forget the work's famous long-windedness. And the seemingly effortless way he communicated to the orchestra (often without any conducting motions at all) yielded playing of remarkable sureness and eloquence.

Also making a memorable BSO debut on that program was pianist Nikolai Lugansky, who tore through Prokofiev's Concerto No. 2 with no end of technique and style.

MARKUS STENZ

# SAN DIEGO STORY

Reviewing San Diego's  
Professional Performing Arts

November 21, 2017

## A Mozart Requiem Performance to Cherish and Remember

By Ken Herman

It has been a long wait, but at this weekend's performance of Mozart's Requiem at the San Diego Symphony (November 17-19), we finally heard the San Diego Master Chorale many San Diegans and I have been waiting to experience: a well-balanced chorus that produced robust, focused fortes; crafted clean, energized phrasing, mastered a wide dynamic compass, and communicated the depth of every facet of a complex, impassioned major work. Of equal importance, this polished 80-voice chorus proved a worthy foil to the symphony in the significantly improved musical profile recently retired Music Director Jahja Ling left this orchestra.

The take no prisoners approach of guest conductor Markus Stenz made this account of a familiar staple of the concert hall choral repertory memorable. His vigorous yet completely detailed direction was clearly driven by Mozart's vibrant setting of the Requiem text, sharply illuminating its kaleidoscopic changes and chiaroscuro voicing—from the awe-inspiring proclamation of the "Dies Irae" and explosive shout of "Rex tremendae" to the shimmering cries of "Salve me" and pleading "Lacrimosa."

I was particularly impressed with the Master Chorale's muscular articulation of the mighty fugal sections: the bold, angular "Kyrie," the insistent "Quam olim Abrahae promisisti," as well as the blazing fugues of the Sanctus and Agnus Dei, each taken at bracing tempos. The assured preparation by Master Chorale Music Director John Russell clearly paid significant dividends in these challenging sections of the Requiem.

In the past, the quartet of vocal soloists has too often proven the weak link in an otherwise strong choral-orchestral performance in Copley Symphony Hall, but this quartet—soprano Jessica Rivera, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano, tenor Colin Balzer, and bass Adam Lau—proved to be strong individually and even more so as an ensemble. The differences in their vocal colors and techniques disappeared when they united in the glorious "Benedictus," for example.

The orchestra, as it amply demonstrated in Haydn's Symphony No. 103 that preceded the Requiem, delivered a bravura account of Mozart's instrumental score, equal to the Master Chorale's conviction and prowess, and filled with delectable wind solos that both touched the heart and amazed the



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mind. Second trombone Samuel Wamhoff's virtuoso roller coaster ride through the "Tuba mirum" could not have been more exciting or polished. During Ling's tenure as the orchestra's Music Director, the symphonies of Joseph Haydn did not receive significant attention, and when they were programmed, they rarely rose to great heights. Even with that caveat, Stenz and his players covered themselves with glory in Haydn's Symphony No. 103 ("Drum Roll") in the most compelling performance of a late classical symphony I have heard this orchestra play.

Stenz took the con spirito markings of the outer movements as his inspiration for the entire symphony, never rushing but always keeping Haydn's exuberance front and center. The tight sectional ensembles combined with the winning sonic warmth of the string sections made me want to hear more of Haydn's exquisite late symphonies, written with such craft and inspiration at the apex of his illustrious career. And I would be remiss if I failed to salute the spirited and impeccable contributions of timpanist Ryan J. DiLisi, who brought artistry as well as power to the many solos that give this work its beloved nickname.



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October 9, 2017

## Stenz leads transcendent Gaelic-themed program with BSO

By Charles T. Downey

One of the best things that has happened at the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in recent years was Markus Stenz coming aboard as principal guest conductor. The former general music director of the City of Cologne and Gürzenich-kapellmeister had an extraordinary debut season.

Stenz's first program of 2017-18, heard Sunday afternoon in the Music Center at Strathmore, reaffirmed that listeners should make an effort to hear what he does in front of the band from Charm City.

Certainly more of an effort than indicated by the paltry audience turnout in North Bethesda for the final performance of this program. Maybe it was because of the holiday weekend, maybe it was because of the choice of music—a second half of orchestral music and excerpts from Wagner's *Parsifal*. Whatever the reason, it was a shame, because the program, built around the theme of Gaelic legend, was inventive and rewarding.

Speaking before the first piece, Stenz relayed the desire of the musicians to dedicate the concert to the victims of the shooting in Las Vegas last week and to their family members.

Stenz elicited strikingly delicate playing from the violins and cellos in Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*, inspired by the 21-year-old composer's trip to the Scottish island of Staffa in 1829. The purpose of the visit was to see

the exposed basalt columns in a structure known as Fingal's Cave, named for the hero of James Macpherson's epic poem.

The German conductor's beat was impulsive, giving the piece a restless quality in the moving notes, never quite even and certainly not dragging. More settled woodwind lines hovered above limpidly, adding to the sense of romantic unpredictability. The playing of the BSO musicians had broad scope and elan, the aura of a mythic land connecting the Scottish locale to the liminal world of the Arthurian Parsifal legends heard later.

Jonathan Carney, the orchestra's concertmaster, then took the solo spotlight for Max Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*. Bruch wrote the piece before he had visited Scotland, basing its four movements on Scottish folk melodies he had found in a collection in Munich. Carney's clear tone on the 1687 "Mercur-Avery" Stradivarius was impeccable in the opening movement, a dirge-like setting of the tune "Through the Wood Laddie."

Carney and Stenz coordinated some folk music-like rubato in the second movement, on the fiddle tune "The Dusty Miller." Carney's simple and musical phrasing in the third movement was especially affecting, balancing out some imperfectly tuned double-stops in the more challenging parts of the piece.



The concerto has a prominent part for harp and it was a nice touch to have acting principal harpist Sarah Fuller placed next to the podium, especially for the duets with Carney in the last movement. That section utilizes the tune that goes with the words of Robert Burns in “Scots Wha Hae Wi’ Wallace Bled,” the unofficial national anthem of Scotland, and Bruch’s prominent part for harp added to the Gaelic flavor of the concert.

Stenz has conducted many of the Wagner operas, and his expertise shone through in his reading of the excerpts from *Parsifal*. He helped the orchestra shape the string unisons that run through the Act I Prelude, seemingly simple lines that have to be subtly inflected and flexible. The orchestra also created a shimmering texture to cloak the intense but soft trumpet solos of principal trumpeter Andrew Balio.

Baritone Stephen Powell deployed a puissant voice as Amfortas, the wounded king of the Grail Kingdom. In the Act I excerpt, “Nein! Lass ihn unhenthüllt,” his howling, anguished tone easily cut through Wagner’s vast

orchestration (especially at the climactic shouts “Erbarmen! Erbarmen!”). Jane Marvine’s plangent English horn solo gave just the right air of mystery to the moment of the unveiling of the Grail. The only disappointment of this performance was the use of tubular bells for the church bells called for in the score, an understandable but unsatisfactory substitution.

Stenz expertly paced the massing of sound in the “Transformation Music” from Act I, propelling the music steadily toward the sonic climax with the trombones blaring. Powell sang with grave dignity in the Act III excerpt (“Ja – Wehe!”), as Amfortas commands the Grail Knights to kill him so that the Grail’s light will shine once more. Stenz then conducted the final scene of the opera. Even with the vocal parts for Parsifal and the chorus excised, it was a transcendent moment made possible by Stenz and his growing, increasingly important relationship with the musicians of the BSO.

MARKUS STENZ

## ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

October 13, 2017

# Stenz and SLSO provide a high-energy performance

By Sarah Bryan Miller

This weekend's concerts by guest conductor Markus Stenz and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra provided three works that comprised an energetic survey of three versions of Romanticism from three countries. Along with certain stylistic characteristics, they shared a busy-ness in their composition and execution: This program was a workout for Stenz and the players.

Only the first could be termed a major popular favorite, Hector Berlioz's "Le carnaval romain (Roman Carnival Overture)." Drawn primarily from his musically colorful but dramatically inept opera "Benvenuto Cellini," it was a hit at its premiere in 1844 and has, deservedly, remained one ever since.

It received a vivid reading, from Cally Banham's English horn solo through the beating of twin tambourines at the end. It was an irresistible start to the program.

Aram Khachaturian's 1940 Violin Concerto in D minor, redolent of Armenia, features exotic harmonies and rhythms, catchy tunes and, at times, perpetual motion, particularly from the soloist.

SLSO concertmaster David Halen, in the soloist's spot, was up to the challenge; he has impressive technical chops and was in full command of the score, from the hyperactive first movement through the intense second movement (including a lovely duet with associate principal clarinet Diana Haskell) through the demanding conclusion.

He and Stenz seemed to have good rapport; the orchestra was with them every step of the way, for a winning performance of a relative rarity.

William Walton's Symphony No. 1 in B-flat minor, which had its premiere as a completed piece in 1935, is tonal and accessible, but otherwise very much a work of the mid-20th century. The heavy technical and physical demands it makes of the orchestra sometimes seem gratuitous (one hopes the musicians have been taking their vitamins); it can seem downright neurotic.

It starts off stormy and agitated, sweeping all before it in late (very late) Romantic style. In the aptly titled second movement, "Presto, con malizia (quick, with malice)," swirling woodwinds agitate with the brass and strings. The third movement, "Andante con malinconia," is melancholy indeed, ringing the changes of sadness.

The fourth and final movement returns to energy, with a big canon, a touch of English whimsy and a colossal conclusion that won an enthusiastic response from the audience. Written more than a year after the rest of the symphony, the time lapse shows in its rather bombastic style.

This weekend's performances are the symphony's first in a decade, and it received a first-rate rendition from Stenz and the orchestra. He invested the second movement with the requisite spitefulness and brought out the shades of sorrow in the third.



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The musicians were in top form, with fine contributions from (in particular) principal bassoon Andrew Cuneo, associate principal flute Andrea Kaplan and principal trumpet Karin Bliznik. The enhanced percussion

section seemed to be having a good time throughout.



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May 20, 2017

### May Festival opens with inspiring 'Ode to Joy'

By Janelle Gelfand

The Cincinnati May Festival kicked off its new era on Friday night with a galvanizing “Ode to Joy” led by Markus Stenz, the first of four guest conductors this year.

Opening night thunderstorms didn't deter festivalgoers, who nearly filled the 2,500-seat Taft Theatre, the choral festival's temporary home until it moves back into a newly-renovated Music Hall next year. A few of the charming festival traditions were still evident: Herald trumpeters in nearby P&G Gardens and flower-bedecked “fairies” greeted concertgoers as they arrived. (There were no little flower girls at concert's end due to space limitations onstage.)

It is the first season under a new leadership model without a music director since James Conlon, now music director laureate, stepped down last year after his celebrated 37-year tenure.

In his festival debut on the podium, Stenz impressed in Beethoven's Ninth, as well as in the little-known “Te Deum” by Walter Braunfels, which was given its first festival performance. The 52-year-old German conductor currently holds the posts of chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and principal guest conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. He is also newly appointed Conductor in Residence at the Seoul Philharmonic.

As always, the visual spectacle of the large choral and symphonic forces also made an impression. The 130-voice May Festival Chorus, superbly prepared

by longtime director of choruses Robert Porco, filled the risers behind the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Four excellent soloists, all making their festival debuts, graced the Taft Theatre's stage for the celebratory performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, “Choral,” which came after intermission.

Beethoven's final symphony is revolutionary in many ways, not least of them the massive choral finale that pushed musical boundaries of the time. Even today, Beethoven's profound music and his setting of Schiller's words continue to inspire.

Under Stenz's leadership, this performance was a rediscovery of the well-known masterpiece. From the start, one felt an inner drive, an undercurrent of electricity. Even the atmospheric opening, which rises out of nothingness, shimmered in an unusual way.

In the spirit of “historically informed” performance, the strings played with almost no vibrato, and Patrick Schleker used wooden sticks to strike his timpani. Tempos were brisk and articulation was crisp and detached. The musicians played with almost uncanny clarity and precision. The result made a powerful statement, even before the great entrance of the chorus in the final movement.

Leading without a baton, the conductor moved, crouched, leaped, stamped his feet and shook his fist. The second movement was electrifying for its combination of speed and lightness. The



winds played with terrific artistry, punctuated by a display of fireworks in the timpani. There was a transparency of texture that allowed soloists to emerge wonderfully. It was the kind of playing that had you on the edge of your seat. The audience didn't breathe.

The pure tone of the strings was ideal for the hymnlike slow movement. But despite its lyricism, Stenz kept the momentum up, all the way to the heaven-rending drumrolls and searing trumpets that announced the finale. Here, the chorus sang with incandescent power and navigated choral fugues expertly and with clipped enunciation. Tempos were urgent and quick. Stenz's dramatic pause just before the "Turkish march" seemed calculated for maximum dramatic effect.

The quartet of soloists did not disappoint. Bass-baritone Eric Owens announced the final movement powerfully and with palpable emotion, clearly communicating every word of the text. Tenor Thomas Cooley sang his aria with immense personality and joy. Soprano Carolyn Sampson easily soared over the large forces. She was joined by mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano. The many high points included the men of the chorus in "Seid umschlungen. Millionen!" ("You millions, I embrace you") against the trombones and basses. The drive to the finish was a pure

adrenalin rush, and listeners cheered their approval.

Stenz opened with the first movement of Braunfels' "Te Deum" of 1920-21. The music by this German composer, who was "half-Jewish" and converted to Catholicism, was banned by the Nazis as "degenerate" and is still rarely heard. Besides Stenz, Conlon is among those who have championed Braunfels.

Braunfels' setting of the Latin hymn of praise was a wonderful discovery, from the opening dramatic outcry in the chorus to the exciting conclusion with ringing chimes. The chorus summoned magnificent sonorities and navigated the supercharged finale impressively. But it also challenged the singers for its difficulty, evident in some uneven counterpoint in the Sanctus. It was also difficult to hear the text. Subtitles might have helped the audience follow along.

Yet its joys were many. Lush and late romantic in style, it was a simply radiant piece. Two soloists, the soprano, Sampson, and tenor, Cooley, alternated between the choral phrases and pointed drumrolls in the timpani. Stenz was a dynamic, confident leader. Let's hope we hear this work again, perhaps next time in its entirety.

# MARKUS STENZ



May 13, 2017

## A colorful sampling of styles from Markus Stenz, BSO

By Tim Smith

Markus Stenz leaves a distinctive mark each time he leads the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. It's felt as much in the repertoire choices as in the myriad sounds he draws from the ensemble.

After Friday's performance of an extra-colorful program at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, I found myself hoping that BSO officials were busy finalizing a nice, long contract renewal for Stenz, whose tenure as principal guest conductor has one more season left.

Chemistry between an orchestra and the person on the podium is impossible to predict. But, as a rule, when things do click, you can't miss it.

Stenz and the BSO seemed to find a common wave length from the first time he guest-conducted in 2012. The spark has only intensified since his official appointment. And no wonder. The man has something to say with music and knows how to communicate it.

This was in evidence throughout Friday's concert, which offered a sampling of times and styles -- the 18th and (just slightly) 20th centuries before intermission; the 19th and 20th after.

For the Mozart and Haydn pieces on the program's first half, a reduced complement of players was seated with symmetrical balance (violins on either side; pairs of basses likewise divided). That re-arrangement yielded an

acoustical advantage, allowing inner details to emerge.

And there abundant details, thanks to Stenz's supple, seemingly spontaneous way of shaping phrases and his appreciation for the finest nuances of dynamics.

Mozart's Symphony No. 29 emerged with great buoyancy, yet never felt rushed. The orchestra's response was lithe and polished (OK, a couple of wayward notes emerged from the horns, but they hardly mattered in light of the overall smoothness).

Haydn's popular Trumpet Concerto in E-flat underwent a cool tweak 15 years ago, when celebrated Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki crafted new cadenzas for it.

They manage to respect 18th-century conventions while introducing piquant elements that could only come from our time (having two horns join in with the trumpet soloist is just one of the distinctive touches).

This version of the concerto provided a showcase for BSO principal trumpet Andrew Balio. He was not entirely at his best on Friday, especially in those tricky Penderecki cadenzas, but he still delivered lots of gleaming tone and artful phrasing. The soloist enjoyed spot-on partnering from Stenz, who



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again ensured elegant work from the orchestra.

Before getting to the big, splashy, all-hands-on-deck finale of the program, Strauss' "Till Eulenspiegel," Stenz offered a big, splashy, all-hands-on-deck companion item -- "Frenesia," composed by Detlev Glanert for the 150th birthday of Strauss in 2014.

Glanert's brilliant score, which generates a combustible energy when it's not sustaining the most extraordinary calm, makes a valuable addition to the BSO's repertoire.

Although not a quotation-filled homage, the piece had me thinking of many an echt Straussian moment -- sweeping,

swooping themes that recalled "Don Juan" and other tone poems; low orchestral rumbles and slitherings that could fit into "Salome"; full-throttle waltzing passages redolent of "Der Rosenkavlier."

For all of that, the beauty of Glanert's composition is its thoroughly original content, as much in structure as content. The moments of hushed stasis are especially compelling.

Stenz guided the BSO through the eventual work authoritatively, drawing virtuosity from the ensemble across the board. He did the same with "Till Eulenspiegel," bringing this winning program to a most satisfying close.

MARKUS STENZ

# General-Anzeiger

March 27, 2017

## A perfectly matched team

Kölner Philharmonie: Markus Stenz conducts the Gürzenich Orchestra.

By Matthias Corvin

They are still a perfectly matched team, the Gürzenich Orchestra and its former Principal Conductor Markus Stenz (52). For the first time after he left in 2014, he stands on the conductor's podium again, and one can feel the symbiosis. Obviously, the musicians have memorized his conductor's language in a way that they are able to react to it blindfold.

It is stupendous especially in the first symphony (1935) by the Briton William Walton - here rehearsed and performed for the first time. The long musical phrases are wonderful, and so are the matching of the groups to each other and the dynamics. Even the laconic streaks of this symphony are hearable. The final chords, dryly aspirated into the room leave a surprised audience. The applause afterwards was all the more warm-heated.

Everywhere, the eighth symphony concert spread nothing but sunshine. That was also thanks to the Slovenian solo flutist Alja Velkaverh (34) who made her debut as a soloist with her orchestra. Her polished, most beautiful-sounding interpretation of Jaques Ibert's flute concerto (1935) convinced from beginning to end. She and Stenz choose a fresh but not overheated tempo. The performance gives a sweet

scent of a high degree of fineness and elegance, also in the interplay with concert master Ursula Maria Berg in the middle movement. Velkaverh masters technical devices such as the jaunty flutter tonguing part in the cadenza just brilliantly.

As an encore, the young professor of the Cologne Conservatory played Debussy's "Syrinx". Later, she takes over an important part within the orchestra in Walton's Symphony.

A completely different work opens the concert: Joseph Haydn's early symphony No. 26 "Lamentatione". A passion music with reminiscences/borrowings from the liturgy similar to his "The seven last words of Christ". Here, Stenz also shows his love for details. He nicely shades and listens to the orchestra, for example when solo-oboist Horst Eppendorf stands out in the Adagio. With bare hands and in classical orchestra seating order (violins left and right) in the Haydn symphony, Stenz changes to the baton and the "Cologne orchestra seating" (violas right) for the Walton.

His outlined interpretation of this underestimated English symphony is sure to remain in people's memory for a very long time.



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MARKUS STENZ

The San Diego  
**Union-Tribune.**

March 4, 2017

**For San Diego Symphony, risks pay off under  
the direction of gutsy conductor Stenz**

By Marcus Overton

If any proof is needed that music — to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin's proclamation about wine — is the proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy, Friday night's San Diego Symphony concert in Jacobs Music Center's Copley Symphony Hall offered abundant affirmation.

The auditorium buzzed with a sense of anticipation when the audience saw an unusual stage arrangement. Guest Conductor Markus Stenz had placed first and second violins facing each other. But Stenz went further, also splitting cellos and double basses on left and right, leaving an intact viola section in the middle. The French horns, on a raised platform on the upper left, were seated two over two, the two harps on a high platform at stage-right. Everybody else — woodwinds, brass, percussion — were in their usual places.

To hear a brief discussion of his reasons for this arrangement, visit YouTube to find a brief, articulate interview, hosted by a member of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, where Stenz is Principal Guest Conductor.

What was the point of it all? The high quality of the performances answered that question.

Beethoven masterpieces bookended the concert, one flawed but brilliant, the "Leonore Overture No. 2", the other the Fifth Symphony, which concluded with an anthem-like jubilation that made this performance the most goose-bump thrilling I've ever heard.

Beethoven struggled to create an overture that would not overshadow the opening scene of his opera "Fidelio." This one is itself a tightly compressed opera-without-words, and it is precisely this sense of compression that Stenz's seating arrangement eased and opened up, allowing the work's choked lyricism to flow to the surface. When the San Diego Symphony's trademark shimmering pianissimo is produced in this configuration, a luminous, spacious airiness surrounds the sound. Micah Wilkinson's offstage trumpet calls produced dramatic contrasts with Stenz's use of abrupt silences.

About Beethoven's Fifth, is there anything new to say? Yes, there is, when a conductor displays utter confidence in the players before him, often dropping his hands in happy acknowledgement that they know what they are doing. Stenz is a risk-taker who pushes both himself and the orchestra out to the edges of volume and clarity. But his technique is both crisp and fluid, and not a note — or a feeling — gets lost. I would wager that if the San Diego Symphony played in this or a similar configuration regularly, even the few places where double bass punctuation was missing or attenuated would be remedied.

As Shostakovich finished his first violin concerto in January 1948, the lightning storm of Stalin-era arts censorship broke over his head, and the composer hid it away until safer times came after



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Stalin's death in 1953. Old-fashioned in some ways, completely (and dangerously) individual in others, it requires a performer who combines world-class technical skill and an inner poetic sensibility. And that is what it had Friday evening in violinist Augustin Hadelich. This performance recalled an earlier era when violin-playing brilliance evoked a wizard's magic or a dealer with the devil. Hadelich is neither but something else quite wonderful: one of

the world's great players, working at the top of his form.

At the end, listeners paid the artists their highest compliments: I heard nothing but music talk on every side as the sidewalk filled with happy people on the way home.

# MARKUS STENZ



February 3, 2017

## A sweeping Bruckner 4th from Stenz, BSO

By Tim Smith

In much the same way that many a concertgoer frets about having to hear any contemporary atonal music, some folks get mighty queasy when faced with a symphony of Anton Bruckner. The fact that he's a solidly 19th-century, all-tonal composer isn't enough to assuage their fears.

If you happen to fall into that Bruckner-averse crowd, get up your courage this weekend and check out the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. It's a great opportunity to experience an absorbing, uplifting account of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 with principal guest conductor Markus Stenz in incisive form on the podium and the ensemble giving him an extra-expressive response.

That the program also fits in one of Mozart's most profound piano concertos — No. 24 in C minor, with the dynamic Gabriela Montero as soloist — sweetens the deal.

It's hard for some of us to understand the bad rap Bruckner gets today. He got it back in his day, too. No less than Brahms dismissed Bruckner's symphonies as "a swindle that will be forgotten in a few years." Otherwise sensible pianist/conductor Hans von Bulow compared the works "to the anti-musical ravings of a half-wit." Ouch.

Yes, Bruckner takes his sweet time. Yes, he keeps pulling the rug out from under you — going on tension-ratcheting melodic rides that carry you to the edge of some grand vista, then cutting everything off and starting all over.

But there's always a payoff with this guy. However distant his music might seem emotionally, it can get under your skin. Before you know it, you're swept up, caught up in an unexpected, heart-stirring force. And when Bruckner's climactic peaks finally arrive, it's like receiving a hearty hug from someone you always thought of as aloof and uncaring.

That sensation had wonderful impact Thursday night at the Music Center at Strathmore as Stenz propelled the BSO during the final, heaven's-gate-opening minutes of the Fourth Symphony. The hour-long journey leading up to that coda proved just as riveting.

The delicate tremolo in the strings at the start of the piece was superbly realized. "Ideally," as the late critic and musicologist Michael Steinberg wrote, "you do not hear the music begin; rather, you become aware that it has begun." That's exactly what we got.

Stenz continued to coax sensitive playing from each section and soloist within the BSO. A brief smudge or two hardly mattered in light of so much warmth and fire from the musicians. Among the highlights: the violas and cellos singing out beautifully in the mysterious Andante; the brass blazing away in the trotting Scherzo; the pinpoint work of principal horn Philip Munds throughout.

The Mozart concerto, with its mix of poetry and shadow, provided a potent warm-up to the Bruckner. Montero



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offered technical smoothness and pearly tone, sculpting pianissimo passages in the first two movements with particular sensitivity. She also effectively conveyed the finale's nearly Beethoven-weight drama.

Stenz was a model collaborator in a finely detailed performance. The strings summoned a rich sound; the woodwinds did shining work.

Montero, who improvised her cadenza in the first movement persuasively, also

treated the audience to an improvised encore, calling on audience members to suggest a theme. She settled on one, the agitated opening tune of Mozart's Symphony No. 40, and put it through various machinations, a la Rachmaninoff and Scott Joplin, with abundant flair.

The pianist stretched the improv out a little too long, but no matter. She couldn't have pleased the crowd more.

# MARKUS STENZ

## KOREA JOONGANG DAILY

January 23, 2017

### **Stenz makes Philharmonic debut: First concert of the year an emotive performance under a powerful baton**

By Yim Seung-Hye



Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra performs its first concert of the year under the baton of its newly appointed Conductor-in-Residence, Markus Stenz, on Friday at the Lotte Concert Hall in southern Seoul.

The Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra's first concert this year, held over the weekend at the Lotte Concert Hall, was highly anticipated by classical music fans for two reasons.

First, the concert program included the Asian premiere of Igor Stravinsky's "Funeral Song," which had been lost during the Russian Revolution, more than a century ago and had only been found in 2015. This 12-minute orchestral piece was written in 1908 as a tribute to his teacher Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Before Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra's

performance, it had only been played twice, once in 1909 and last December by the Mariinsky Orchestra after it was rediscovered.

Second, it was the debut performance of the orchestra's newly appointed Conductor-in-Residence Markus Stenz, who took the position last September.

The former should have made headlines, but what caught the audience's attention on Friday evening - the first day of the two-day concert - was Stenz's fantastic conducting, bringing out the best in the



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orchestra that has been in a rut for the past year without a music director.

The highlight was not Stravinsky's long lost work, but the orchestra's performance of Schumann's 40-minute "Symphony No. 2 in C major" under Stenz's baton.

They played all four movements of the piece, starting off powerfully with the fierce first movement "Sostenuto assai." Despite the fast tempo of the second movement "Scherzo," the orchestra managed to keep calm under Stenz. The third movement, "Adagio espressivo," swept the audience with its deep emotions that resonated throughout the performance, while the fourth movement's cheerful and rhythmic melody was enough to bring the crowd to its feet for a standing ovation.

According to the maestro, Schumann's "Symphony No. 2" is the best pick to start his work with an orchestra.

"I'm a very concrete worker," said Stenz during a press conference on Tuesday, prior to the concert. "I need a specific repertoire to start my work with an orchestra and Schumann - with all his freedom of thought and all his ideas, shapes and shades - is a wonderful starting point."

Indeed, it was a perfect selection to show off Stenz' great communication skills. The maestro with the baton is of course the commander. But it's also important for the conductor to act as a bridge and deliver the emotions conveyed in the music on stage to the

listeners in the auditorium. In that sense, there seems to be no doubts in Stenz's musicality and credentials to be leading the once-troubled Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra.

To stabilize the orchestra while its organizing committee looks for a music director, the committee created two new positions and appointed Stenz as the Conductor-in-Residence and Thierry Fischer as the Principal-Guest-Conductor, last September.

According to the orchestra's CEO Choe Heung-sik, its goal is to find a music director who can permanently lead the orchestra by the end of the year.

"As you know, because classical music engagements are decided two to three years in advance, it will take a few more years to make the official appointment," said Choe. "In the meantime, we believe the two conductors will help the orchestra to stabilize and not lose its reputation as the best orchestra in Korea."

The two conductors' contracts end in 2019.

Since Stenz began working with the orchestra, fans have anxiously hoped for him and the orchestra to get along and wished for his success. In return, the maestro showed how passionate and enthusiastic he feels about the orchestra and is even said to have literally broke his baton during rehearsal just before the concert.



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MARKUS STENZ

The logo for 'bachtrack' features the word 'bachtrack' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Above the text, there are four vertical white bars of varying heights, resembling a stylized musical staff or a barcode. The entire logo is set against a solid black rectangular background.

bachtrack

May 12, 2016

## **Ammann, Bartók and Schumann: three stars under Stenz at the Tonhalle**

By Sarah Batschelet

“A world whose inherent fullness, shaped into sound, is driving to get out towards the outside.” This is how Dieter Ammann describes his new orchestral work. Commissioned by the “Oeuvres Suisses” for both the Tonhalle and Bern Symphony orchestras, his work “glut” premiered here in Zurich under Markus Stenz’s baton.

Exploring frontiers in sound hitherto unknown, the work has an energetic and full-of-surprises profile. It features galloping tempi and densely textured sounds. “Even by my standards,” says Ammann, the new work is “characterised by an exceptionally high concentration of events... (not only)... to what is heard simultaneously – that is the vertical – but also to the multitude and complexity of ... the great diversity of textures which successively unfold...” To realise that demanding acoustic vision, and because the topography of sound was constantly changing, the “machinery” of the orchestra had to be driven from various angles. Associations ran rampant: even after the first few minutes I heard church bells, buzzing insects, a traffic jam, a few Steve Reich moments, some sheer cacophony, parallel dissonances. The programme notes suggested such might be held together dramaturgically by references both forward and

backwards, but also through steady harmonic fields, some of extended duration.

“Glut” as fervour is also a metaphor for the laborious process of composing: researching for months at a time or “stumbling into areas ... unknown to you before”(Ammann). As such, the composer is on a journey as a seeker, while also serving as the creator of what he or she finds. For me, the piece was baseline democratic; each instrument family was equally represented; there were no soloists; every player had a crack at some form of musical dynamite. But since “glut” often contained sounds that were distinctively vulgar and brash, I was hard put to access it by any conventional standard, and stepped up, instead, to another set of rules. I particularly relished this piece for its orchestral bravado. In effect, too, it could be seen as a timepiece: its backbone is unleashed nervous energy – “not a second’s rest” – that clearly reflects our digital age.

Next came Béla Bartók’s Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, commissioned in 1944 by viola player William Primrose – who knew Bartók’s would be a challenge for him to perform – and completed from substantive beginnings in 1949 by Tibor Serly, after sketches Bartók left at the time of his death. Primrose had



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insisted Bartók disregard "...the apparent technical limitations of the instrument"; and that was precisely the persuasion that the young German virtuoso Nils Mönkemeyer adapted in this performance. From the very first, his was a wholly individual interpretation, free from other performance histories, and marked by what seemed limitless energy. In the Moderato, Stenz took the tempi almost into overdrive, but nothing went lost. He underscored the work's dissonances and generously used a powerful vibrato to weigh down his sound, masterfully maintaining the treacherous balance between his left and his bow hand. For soloist and orchestra alike, some of the East European folk melodies were drawn out for jolly effect, seemingly squeezed out from a bottle to be expanded 10-fold, and principal soloists – notably oboe, clarinet, flute and horn – shone. But it was Mönkemeyer's risk-taking and vibrancy that gave us the Bartók as I have never heard it, and only made me want more. Everybody likes to go home humming on weeknights, so Schumann's Second Symphony was a fine choice for after the interval. The first movement included a fine brass fanfare, always a stirring event, in contrast to the legato melody of

the strings. The uplifting tone of the Scherzo was a cheery and well-paced offer, surprising given the depression and poor health Schumann was suffering at the time he composed it. The third movement's bronze, soothing melody – first introduced by the strings – was followed by counterpoint that showed the orchestra at its tightest. But it's in the final movement that the full brass opened the symphony's heroic hymn, something like a symbol of the rise of the human spirit even over the most abject circumstances.

Stenz has a broad back and a generous shock of white hair that makes him an easy object of rapt attention. Particularly in the Schumann, he zigzagged left to right, stretched forward to appeal to certain players, shuddered, crimped his fingers quickly for more volume, perched every so often on a single foot. Truly a dancer on stage – and typically holding the baton at a vertical angle like an exclamation mark – he always returned elegantly to centre, so there was no sense of deliberately calling attention to himself. Unquestionably, however, his pointed cues and graceful body movements added a telling and appealing visual to a tremendous audio experience.

MARKUS STENZ

# The Washington Post

March 13, 2016

## Guest conductor Markus Stenz pulls the BSO into an unknown but elite realm

By Robert Battey

Markus Stenz, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's new principal guest conductor, worked several kinds of magic Saturday at Strathmore. It was an all-Beethoven program, so I can't say much about his range, but I can say that he elicited playing at a level I've never heard from this middling-to-good group. Everything sounded different; this German maestro uses unconventional gestures and no baton. He reseated the strings, with divided violins, cellos spread out horizontally onstage and the four basses placed antiphonally, two and two. And he forbade vibrato. In Beethoven! The result was both a cleaner and warmer blend, which somewhat ameliorated the sad fact of the shrinking numbers overall. He shapes every phrase, has an innate feel for drama and made the orchestra play more softly than I thought possible.

And Stenz achieved all of this without the BSO's heavy hitters. In the past, I've observed that the group doesn't have a deep bench in its winds or that, when assistants or other fill-ins take principal parts, the results can be unfortunate. But none of the principal winds played in the first half of the concert, yet the blend and tuning were exemplary.

The program had two welcome and fascinating rarities surrounding the

familiar Piano Concerto No. 1. The "Leonore" Overture No. 2 contains all of the themes of its famous successor but is a little more discursive. The overture and incidental music to "Egmont" is not completely satisfying as standalone music (the numbers don't add up to a satisfying whole, given the length), but it includes Beethoven's only attempt at melodrama (narration on top of the music). Soprano Lauren Snouffer was superb in her two brief numbers; they need to get her back for something substantial. In both works, Stenz kept a tight grip, with nary a routine bar anywhere.

Pianist Lars Vogt plays a good deal of chamber music, and it showed in his intimate interactions with the musicians in the concerto, most especially in the Largo, where he seemed to be almost improvising off of the phrases from the orchestra. Elsewhere, his playing was fluent and strong, if not strikingly individual. And he selected the longest of cadenzas, which interrupts the flow of the piece too much. Still, paired with the richly detailed accompaniment, this was a fine outing.

This new appointment by the BSO was a coup; Stenz makes the orchestra play beyond itself, and future appearances should not be missed.



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# MARKUS STENZ



March 8, 2016

## Markus Stenz leads BSO, UM Concert Choir, stellar soloists in 'German Requiem'

By Tim Smith

When Markus Stenz was appointed principal guest conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in 2014, effective this season, the musicians made their enthusiasm known. When he led the ensemble in a program of Bach and Brahms last weekend, they made their enthusiasm heard.

Sunday afternoon's concert at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall reconfirmed how inspiring a force Stenz can be on the podium, and how effortlessly he can get the BSO to respond with genuine impact.

The conductor's well-judged tempos for Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D major had the energetic movements dancing along nimbly, the famous Air unfolding at a graceful gait. The strings offered clean and dynamic playing; the trumpets added especially colorful touches.

The sparkle in the performance captured the life-affirming quality of Bach — and provided a good balance to the death-centric, concluding piece on the program, "A German Requiem" by Brahms.

Although not a fire-and-brimstone sort of Requiem, on the order of Verdi, this

reflection on those who are gone and those who mourn them contains plenty of drama. Stenz emphasized that point by applying terrific urgency to the most aggressive passages in the score (crescendos were given stirring force).

But the conductor hardly stinted on the work's lyrical beauty, coaxing wonderful refinements of tone and articulation not just from the orchestra, but the University of Maryland Concert Choir (Edward Maclary, director).

The supple singers, alert to each slight turn of Stenz's hands, hit quite a peak addressing the second movement's mix of darkness and light.

There was luxury casting for the soloists. Bass-baritone Eric Owens, in a welcome return to the BSO, offered his accustomed depth of tone and intensity of phrasing. Making her debut with the orchestra, soprano Lisette Oropesa spun out a radiant sound that communicated every hopeful, calming word in the fifth movement.

Each section of the BSO did communicative, supple work, providing the foundation for a freshly electric account of this profound Requiem.



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MARKUS STENZ

London  
**Evening  
Standard**

February 23, 2016

**BBC Symphony Orchestra / Stenz, classic  
music review: Night of German musical might**

Pianist Hong Xu achieved a natural balance between piano and  
orchestra in collaboration with conductor Markus Stenz

By Nick Kimberley



The experts tell us that, to keep its economy on track, China must rein in exports and concentrate on domestic consumers. Will that curtail its seemingly endless supply of world-class pianists? Let's hope not. Hong Xu is one of the latest to emerge, and to judge from his performance of Schumann's

Piano Concerto, he'll be around for some time.

Both orchestra and soloist made a grand entrance but Hong Xu didn't overplay the flamboyance. In collaboration with conductor Markus Stenz he achieved a natural balance between piano and orchestra. Throughout, his playing was



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free of exaggeration, nor did he linger over expressive details, yet there was a powerful sense of the work's turbulent drama.

In this country Stenz is best known for his expertise in contemporary music, and he needed it for Detlev Glanert's *Frenesia*, here receiving its UK premiere. Glanert wrote it for the 2014 celebration of Richard Strauss's 150th birthday, and Strauss would have envied the mighty orchestral exuberance the piece released. There were moments that could have accompanied a car

chase; elsewhere it was menacing or sinuous; at every point Glanert demanded and got minutely controlled shifts, from maximal activity to something just this side of silence.

On paper, finishing with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony looked like playing safe, but that's not how it felt. Opting for a large ensemble by today's standards, Stenz achieved a sound that was weighty but never clogged, the BBC Symphony Orchestra playing as if confronting a thrillingly new piece.

**MARKUS STENZ**

**ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**

October 10, 2015

## **Great music, great sentiments and great performances at SLSO**

By Sarah Bryan Miller

It was the perfect October evening in St. Louis: The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra presented an evening of great music, with fine performances to make it come alive. By intermission, the St. Louis Cardinals had won their first postseason game, 4-0. What's not to like?

Guest conductor Markus Stenz is a master of the German repertoire, as demonstrated from the first notes of Wagner's "Parsifal," played with beauty and clarity, through the triumphant final notes of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. He led without a baton, using his expressive hands to communicate to the furthest corners of the stage. The large and diverse audience responded enthusiastically throughout.

The story of Parsifal has ancient Celtic roots, coalescing in Arthurian legend. Thomas Mallory's 15th century "Morte d'Arthur" called him Percivale, the healer of the wounded Fisher King, Keeper of the Grail. He was Parzival in Wagner's 12th century source, Wolfram von Eschenbach, who gave the King a name.

The first half of the program focused on Amfortas, the Grail Keeper, his misery, regret and healing. Bass-baritone Eric Owens gave an amazing performance, using his magnificently dark voice with intelligence and dramatic commitment, and conveying his wounded body and soul by leaning on a chair.

Tenor Thomas Cooley was heroic in his brief turn as the Parsifal. Amy Kaiser's chorus, deployed in the balconies and offstage, sounded celestial. The orchestra was all-in, with the brass in top voice.

The theme of absolution and redemption made an inspired segue to the "Choral" symphony, with its call for brotherhood and hope: "Above the starry canopy/ A loving father must dwell."

Stenz divided the orchestra, with the first and second violins along the front and the other strings arranged upstage until they met the woodwinds and brass in the center. Risers across the back were crammed with choristers, with four chairs in the middle of the front row for the soloists.

Those soloists — soprano Angela Meade (replacing an ill Heidi Melton), mezzo-soprano Theodora Hanslowe (her fuchsia shawl vivid in a sea of concert black), Cooley and Owens — were tightly squeezed, but acoustically it was the right choice for this hall.

Stenz's reading had energy to burn, but stayed on the right side of bombast; everything was intentional. Some of his choices could be quibbled with, but all were justifiable. The balance was just right.

The orchestra was in terrific form. The SLSO landed on its feet with Meade, who sang gloriously. The quartet was well-matched, although there were a couple of minor tuning issues. The St. Louis Symphony Chorus currently has a better male-to-female ratio than has sometimes been the case, and their clean, full-throated singing was unconquered by Beethoven's killer tessituras, the capstone on a terrific performance.



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MARKUS STENZ



October 2, 2015

## BSO offers kinetic Mozart program with Stenz, Meade

By Tim Smith

Mozart is getting a vigorous -- very vigorous -- workout this week from the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

To open his first season as the BSO's new principal guest conductor, Markus Stenz put together a program that balances a couple of Mozart's orchestral works with a sampling of scenes from one of his greatest operas, "Don Giovanni." (The opera excerpts will be the sole focus of the "Off the Cuff" presentation Friday at Strathmore, Saturday at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall.) On Thursday at the Meyerhoff, Stenz exuded endless energy from the podium. Even in moments of lyrical reflection, he kept a sense of tension going, so that the music seemed capable of sprinting off again at any moment.

The orchestra -- reseated, in a more 18th-century-ish fashion, with first and second violins on opposite sides (pairs of basses were likewise separated) -- seemed firmly centered on the conductor's wave length the whole evening.

All of that tight focus helped to put extra snap into Mozart's Symphony No. 1, the product of an 8-year-old who would have more profound things to say a little later on. Stenz had the musicians paying keen attention to variety of dynamics, which brought considerable color and

character to the phrasing (a couple smudges in articulation passed quickly). There is no mistaking the maturity of the Sinfonia Concertante for violin, viola and orchestra, written when Mozart was in his early 20s. The score offers a feast of melodic invention and, in the second movement, a peak of poetic thought.

Two of the BSO's star players, associate concertmaster Madeline Adkins and principal violist Lisa Steltenpohl, took the solo parts with confidence and style. Backed solidly by Stenz and the ensemble, they zipped nimbly through the outer movements; in the Andante, their expressive tenderness and well-blended tone yielded particular pleasure.

For the "Don Giovanni" portion of the evening, the BSO engaged a stage director (Andrea Dorf McGray), put a few props onstage and brought in an accomplished cast that boasts one of today's most gifted singers, soprano Angela Meade, as Donna Anna.

The space of about an hour isn't enough to convey the full scope of the opera, but enough of the plot points emerged in this telling of the tale of the lecherous, treacherous anti-hero who ends up being dragged to hell by a statue.

Meade's account of "Non mi dir" was the high point Thursday, her rich, ample voice filling the hall with ease, her



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phrasing beautifully sculpted. This was vocalism that made you think of older, grander days in the opera world.

In the title role, Morgan Smith demonstrated sufficient tonal heft and stylish flair, especially in "La ci darem la mano," partnered by the bright-voiced Pureum Jo as Zerlina. Smith also did valiant work in the Champagne Aria, despite Stenz's supersonic tempo.

Thomas Richards brought lots of vocal color to the role of Leporello. Jennifer Black was the expressive Donna Elvira, Timothy Bruno the relatively imposing Commendatore.

As Don Ottavio, tenor Ti Li sounded promising, but only got to sing a few lines; I would have welcomed either of the wonderful arias Mozart wrote for the character. Peabody Institute students jumped heartily into the finale (with a bit of stage shtick).

The BSO signaled its strength at the start of the Overture and proceeded to play with admirable clarity and nuance as Stenz shaped a richly detailed, not to mention propulsive, account of the brilliant music.

## GRAMOPHONE THE CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE

December 19, 2016

### Recordings of the Year Gramophone Awards



#### Choral

**Schoenberg** *Gurrelieder*  
Soloists; choirs; Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / Markus Stenz  
Hyperion ② CD A68081/2 (B/R5)  
Producer **Jens Schönemann**  
Engineer **Christian Feldgen**

Reviewing Markus Stenz's *Gurrelieder* on its release, Hugo Shirley admired its 'fierce conviction and integrity', as well as describing it as a 'formidable' achievement technically. Made in the Cologne Philharmonie, and superbly engineered by Christian Feldgen, it represents state-of-the-art sound at its best – breathtaking in its clarity and detail, yet always seeming natural and unforced over an extreme dynamic range. Some, HS included, have expressed reservations about the backward placing of the multiple choirs, though this is, I think, integral to a recording in which sound and interpretation are carefully aligned.

Like his engineers, Stenz strives for detailed clarity, both orchestral and choral. The Gürzenich Orchestra's playing has great immediacy throughout, and the sensual textures that envelope Schoenberg's lovers at the start are wonderfully seductive. As the idyll turns into a metaphysical nightmare, the thematic fragmentation and stark, at times desiccated

orchestration take on an almost hallucinatory vividness. Stenz blends intelligence with great passion and a refusal to countenance coarseness of effect. The choral placings ensure we hear far more of the orchestra in the night-ride than we usually do, and the passage's force derives from its ferocious energy and momentum rather than its decibel count alone.

The choral singing is outstanding – rich in tone and beautifully focused; nowhere more so, perhaps, than at 'Der Hahn erhebt den Kopf zur Kraht', where the dynamic shading over a narrow, quiet range is at once immaculate and harrowing in its impact. The soloists are strong, with Brandon Jovanovich's virile yet reckless Waldemar and Claudia Mahnke's passionate Wood Dove among the finest in disc, though Barbara Haveman's Tove is no match in either lustre or subtlety for Inge Borkh on Rafael Kubelik's otherwise variably sung 1965 DG set. Over all, though, it's a major achievement and a more than worthy winner. **Tim Ashley**

MARKUS STENZ

GRAMOPHONE  
THE CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE

December 19, 2016

Recordings of the Year



Reviewing Markus Stenz's *Gurrelieder* on its release, Hugo Shirley admired its 'fierce conviction and integrity', as well as describing it as a 'formidable' achievement technically. Made in the Cologne Philharmonic, and superbly engineered by Christian Feldgen, it represents state-of-the-art sound at its best – breathtaking in its clarity and detail, yet always seeming natural and unforced over an extreme dynamic range. Some, HS included, have expressed reservations about the backward placing of the multiple choirs, though this is, I think, integral to a recording in which sound and interpretation are carefully aligned.

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MARKUS STENZ

ALEXANDER K. ROTHE, PH.D.

August 7, 2016

## An Homage and Farewell to Wagner: Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder*

The *Gurre-Lieder* are simultaneously a tribute to Richard Wagner and a farewell to a tradition that Arnold Schoenberg wanted to leave behind. In no other work by Schoenberg is the examination of Wagner's legacy so evident. Markus Stenz, who manages to make the Gürzenich Orchestral play with the virtuosity of a chamber-ensemble, ultimately highlights the forward-looking aspects of Schoenberg's music, especially the profound attention to tone-color and the rhythmic sophistication.

A cantata for five soloists, a narrator, three male choruses, a mixed chorus, and an orchestra of 150 musicians, *Gurre-Lieder* is a work that brings the Wagnerian orchestra to the concert stage. Also Wagnerian is the work's enormous temporal scale: it lasts one hour and forty-five minutes. Schoenberg's work is based on a text by the nineteenth-century Danish poet Jens Peter Jacobsen, who draws on legends surrounding Waldemar IV, king of Denmark from 1340 to 1375. Waldemar falls in love with a young woman, Tove, who is in turn killed by Queen Helvig. According to the legend, Waldemar – who curses God for Tove's death – is condemned to take part in a wild hunt accompanied by the undead until the end of time. Drawing on medieval myth and legend, Jacobsen's text shares many features in common with Wagner's operas – forbidden love, a fatal curse, and a cosmic war between humans and gods. Schoenberg's work is divided into three parts: the first focuses on the relationship between Waldemar

and Tove; the second on Waldemar cursing God; the third on Waldemar's wild hunt.

Schoenberg began working on the *Gurre-Lieder* in 1900 but broke off composition in 1903, fearing that he would not have the financial resources to perform such an enormous work. According to the musicologist Brian G. Campbell, the work was more or less finished in 1903 except for the orchestration of Part III (Campbell 2000). A performance of Part I in 1910 led Schoenberg to finish the orchestration between 1910 and 1911. In keeping with the compositional break, Part III features a different orchestration style: Schoenberg now sharply juxtaposes contrasting timbres, as opposed to the smooth transitions found in his earlier style.

This was my first time hearing the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln. I was surprised to read that the orchestra has been in existence since 1827, and that it premiered such works as Brahms's *Double Concerto*, Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Quixote*, and Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*. Though no longer in Cologne, Markus Stenz served as Chief Conductor between 2003 to 2014 and is currently Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Brandon Jovanovich, who sings the part of Waldemar, is a native of Montana and has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera, the Lyric Opera, the Wiener Staatsoper, and the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Equally



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accomplished, Barbara Haveman (Tove) is a Dutch soprano who specializes in German Lieder in addition to opera. Other singers on this album include Thomas Bauer, Gerhard Siegel, and Claudia Mahnke; and, the narrator is Johannes Martin Kränzle.

My favorite part of this CD is the Prelude and Waldemar's first song ("Nun dämpft die Dämm'ung). Schoenberg's model for the Prelude is the beginning of *Das Rheingold*, except that Schoenberg is depicting a sunset – not the morning, as Wagner does (Cherlin 2007). Like the Prelude of *Rheingold*, Schoenberg's opening layers multiple rhythmic figures over a static harmony. As a result, the music suggests flickering light, the imagery of which is further enhanced by the scoring (piccolo, flute, strings, harp) and the syncopation. Stenz's sensitivity to color is also apparent in Waldemar's first song, effectively balancing the heroic tenor voice of Brandon Jovanovich. Jovanovich and Barbara Haveman, whose voices are ideally paired on this recording, are both traditional Wagner singers – they have large voices that can be heard over the orchestra and carry well in the opera house – which highlights the Wagnerian nature of Schoenberg's early vocal writing. Jovanovich and Haveman are the

perfect choice for *Gurre-Lieder*, for it wasn't until *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) that Schoenberg really began experimenting with a new vocal style.

In conclusion, Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder* has both progressive and traditional aspects, and this recording brings out both sides. In addition to the vocal writing, Schoenberg adopts Wagner's idea of "endless melody," creating continuity and larger trajectories by deferring strong cadences and avoiding regular phrasing. Schoenberg also makes use of leitmotifs (recurring motives associated with a person, place, or thing) but not in the structural way that we find in Wagner's later works. What really makes *Gurre-Lieder* forward-looking is its orchestration, especially in Part III. Here we find techniques that Schoenberg had developed in the *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 16 (1909): frequent, abrupt changes of instrumentation, extended techniques, and the solo treatment of instruments in the context of a large orchestra. Ultimately, it is the forward-looking aspects of *Gurre-Lieder* that are highlighted in this CD through the supreme artistry of Markus Stenz and the Gürzenich Orchestra. I highly recommend this recording.

MARKUS STENZ

theartsdesk.com

August 14, 2015

## Classical CDs Weekly

By Graham Rickson

**Schoenberg: *Gurre-Lieder*** *Gürzenich-Orchester Köln/Markus Stenz* (Hyperion)

Schoenberg's vast *Gurre-Lieder* began life in 1900 as a modest song cycle for soprano, tenor and piano, its texts drawn from Danish poetry. He suspended work on the piece in 1903, returning to it in 1910 – by which time his musical style had radically changed. As had the scale of the piece, which ideally needs between 300 and 400 performers, six vocal soloists and over 100 minutes. Not forgetting the ratchet and some iron chains. The extravagant forces are used with admirable restraint, and performances remain an expensive rarity. Schoenberg was dismayed by the cantata's positive reception when it was first performed in 1913 and refused to face the audience – understandably irked that it was received more positively than his more radical later music. Economics dictate that most modern recordings are made live. Not here – this radiant new *Gurre-Lieder* was recorded over four days in June 2014. The gains are immense; Markus Stenz's theatrical nous never lets things sprawl, and the playing and singing are faultless. Crucially, no-one ever sounds on the point of collapse, and the closing chorus blazes.

Schoenberg's prelude, seven minutes of delectable minimalist twinkling, is extraordinary. Brandon Jovanovich's and Barbara Haveman excel as Waldemar and Tove, and there's a wonderful cameo from Claudia Mahnke as the Wood Dove at the close of Part One. Part Three's rattling coffin lids are judged to perfection, and there's a nice turn from Thomas Bauer as the Peasant. Stenz's male chorus, often a weak link, are heroic. The final melodrama's modernism is startling, taking us from early Mahler to expressionist, mature Schoenberg. It's some of the spookiest music ever composed. Johannes Martin Kränzle's *sprechstimme* is neatly handled, before the unexpectedly radiant final minutes. All judged to perfection, and Hyperion's sound has impact, warmth and plenty of detail. Essential listening if you've a weakness for late-romantic blockbusters, and this recording, along with Chailly's, is among the best.



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MARKUS STENZ

# *The* **Guardian**

July 30, 2015

## **Schoenberg: Pelleas und Melisande; Violin Concerto CD review – perfect control from master conductor Stenz**

By Andrew Clements

Markus Stenz's recording of Schoenberg's Gurrelieder, taken from his final concerts as the Gürzenich Orchestra's music director, appeared last month on Hyperion. These studio recordings of Schoenberg's first orchestral work, the symphonic poem Pelleas und Melisande and the Violin Concerto, the first he completed after emigrating to the US, underline Stenz's credential as a conductor of the Second Viennese School. He's equally at home in the romantic sweep of Pelleas as he is in the much more ambiguous world of the concerto, with its tensions between tradition and innovation, serialism and tonality, while never allowing the former to become too indulgent nor the latter to seem too dry and calculated. Kolja Blacher's account of the solo part in the concerto doesn't quite have the same intensity as Hilary Hahn generates on her Sony recording with Esa-Pekka Salonen, just as Stenz's account of Pelleas isn't quite as luxuriant as Herbert von Karajan's famous Deutsche Grammophon recording, but together the two works make an attractive package.



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June 29, 2015

## ALBUM OF THE WEEK

SCHOENBERG Gurrelieder Soloists, Choirs, Gürzenich-Orchester, cond Markus Stenz Hyperion CDA68081/2 "Songs of Gurre" - settings of German translations by Robert Franz Arnold of Jens Peter Jacobsen's original Danish verse - are transitional works in the Austrian composer's development. A close relation of Mahler's Song of Lamentation and of Sibelius's Kullervo, Gurrelieder took Schoenberg 11 years to complete, and by the time of its Vienna

premiere, in 1913, he had already shocked the world with his avant-garde "manifesto", Pierrot Lunaire. In Gurrelieder, we hear his transition from post-Wagnerian late Romantic - the adulterous love of King Waldemar and Tove clearly parallels Tristan und Isolde thematically and harmonically - to the leading purveyor of notated sprechgesang (speech-song) in the final solo of the Narrator (vividly sung-spoken by Johannes Martin Kränzle). This superb perfor-

mance crowns Stenz's tenure as Cologne's general music director, with opulent playing from the Gürzenichers and six Cologne and Dutch choirs. Brandon Jovanovich's thrilling Waldemar and Claudia Mahnke's plangent Wood Dove are the pick of a fine team of soloists. HC Listen to the classical album of the week at [spoti.fi/hugheanning](http://spoti.fi/hugheanning)





June 2015



## SCHOENBERG

**Gurrelieder**

Barbara Haveman (soprano), Claudia Mahnke (mezzo), Brandon Jovanovich, Gerhard Siegel (tenor), Thomas Bauer (baritone), Johannes Martin Kränzle (speaker); Various choirs; Gürzenich-Orchester Köln/Markus Stenz

Hyperion CDA 68081-2

108:04 mins (2 discs)

BBC Music Direct £28.99

Even with the sophistications of current sound technology, the young Schoenberg's hyper-Romantic monster masterpiece *Gurrelieder* remains a challenge to record.

Dynamics and scoring range from the most delicate chamber textures to the mass sonorities of a vast choir and an orchestra of some 140 players. The score also teems with volatile interior details and figurations – by no means all discernable in this latest recording. All the same, the new version recorded in the Philharmonie in Cologne makes a vivid and spacious overall impression thanks to the alternately measured and passionate sway of Markus Stenz and the golden tones of the Gürzenich Orchestra.

It is also strongly cast with the heroic Brandon Jovanovich and the full-voiced Barbara Haveman as the illicit lovers King Waldemar and Tove, and the austere-toned Claudia Mahnke as the wood dove who announces the murder of Tove by Waldemar's jealous queen. The men from the no less than six assembled Cologne choirs rampage wildly through the ghostly night hunt that Waldemar is condemned to pursue after he has cursed God. And Johannes Martin Kränzle makes a convincing stab at Schoenberg's earliest use of *sprechstimme* in the exquisitely scored summer-wind section in which the souls of Waldemar and Tove are supposedly

reunited, before the lift off into the work's glorious culminating sunrise.

Bayan Northcott

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

RECORDING ★★★★★

MARKUS STENZ

THE  TIMES

December 7, 2014

100 BEST RECORDS OF THE YEAR 100  
BEST RECORDS OF THE YEAR

These fitting Hugh Canning CONTEMPORARY CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS COMPOSERS

4 JOHN CASKEN Violin Concerto, Concerto for Orchestra, Orion Over Farne Hallé, Sophie Jaffé, cond Markus Stenz (NMC) These fine performances distil Casken's musical thought. The Violin Concerto, a classical structure, unfolds with immense fluency and some vehemence. Orion Over Farne evokes Basil Bunting.



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MARKUS STENZ

# *The* Guardian

September 4, 2014

## Hartmann: *Simplicius Simplicissimus* CD review – Stenz captures opera's raw intensity

By Andrew Clements



Karl Amadeus Hartmann's opera, based upon Grimmelshausen's picaresque novel of the thirty years' war, has not been seen on stage or heard in concert in the UK. Yet it's one of the most important German operas of the 20th century; it was composed during the mid-30s, but couldn't be performed under the Nazis because of the unmistakable parallels it draws with the situation in Europe. (It was staged for the first time only in 1949.) Markus Stenz's fine performance – with an outstanding Juliane Banse as the naive shepherd boy, *Simplicius*, who finds himself surrounded by the horror, corruption and farce of war – was recorded in 2012 at one of Netherlands Radio's invaluable Saturday matinees, at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw. Like the BR Klassik recording of the opera from 2009, with Camilla Nylund in the title role, it uses the original version of the score, which is more unsparingly pessimistic and much more indebted to the principles of Brechtian epic theatre than the substantial revision that Hartmann made in the 1950s. Stenz and his cast capture that raw intensity very truthfully.



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July 2014



**HARTMANN**

**Simplicius Simplicissimus**

Juliane Banse, Peter Marsch, Will Hartmann, Ashley Holland, Kristof Klorek, Michael Elder, Harry Peters; Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra/Markus Stenz  
Challenge CC 72637 (hybrid CD/SACD)  
85:01 mins (2 discs)

BBC Music Direct £28.99

One of the most significant German operas of the 20th century, Karl Amadeus Hartmann's *Simplicius Simplicissimus* still awaits a British performance, but has done relatively well on disc. Recorded in the Saturday matinee series at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam a couple of seasons ago, this performance brings the work to vivid life as it tells a story – based on Grimmelshausen's novel – drawn from the Thirty Years War.

Composed in the 1930s as a protest against the Nazis by a composer who went into 'inner exile', the opera was not staged until 1949. But the version heard here is Hartmann's second version from the 1950s, in which he pruned some of the Brechtian agitprop aspects without diluting its impact as a musical and ideological manifesto. From Jewish song to Bach chorale, the quotes are as integral as the allusions to such composers as Stravinsky and

Prokofiev. The impact is similar to that of Hindemith's operas.

Leading a strong cast, Juliane Banse as the shepherd brilliantly meets the soprano part's technical challenges while evoking the naivety of the idealistic character. Ashley Holland, as the mercenary, Landsknecht, uses his baritone to impressive effect, and the tenor Will Hartmann captures the visionary spirit of the hermit Einsiedel. Conducting the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic forces, Markus Stenz proves himself an ideal exponent of this music, drawing a performance of conviction and intensity. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★  
RECORDING ★★★★★

**Markus Stenz**  
**Repertoire**

Adams: Absolute Jest  
Adams: El Niño  
Adams: Harmonielehre  
Adams: The Gospel according to the Other Mary:Oratorium  
Ades: 'Asyla'  
Ades: Absolute Jest  
Ammann: UA  
Arnold Schonberg: Gurrelieder  
Bach: Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr, BWV 663  
Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No.3 in G BWV1048  
Bach: Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesus Christ, BWV 639  
Barber: Violin Concerto, Op 14  
Bartok: Dance Suite  
Bartok: Viola Concerto  
Bartok: Violin Concerto No 2  
Beethoven: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D, Op 61  
Beethoven: Egmont Overture  
Beethoven: Overture Leonore No 2, Op 72a  
Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 1 in C major Op 15  
Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major  
Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 Op.73 'Emperor'  
Beethoven: Symphony no. 5  
Beethoven: Symphony no.1 in C major op.21  
Beethoven: Symphony no.2 in D major op.36  
Beethoven: Symphony no.5 in C minor op.67  
Beethoven: Symphony no.6 in F major 'Pastoral' op.68  
Beethoven: Symphony No.7 in A major Op.92  
Beethoven: Symphony no.9 in D minor, 'Choral' op.125  
Beethoven: Violin Concerto in D, Op. 61  
Berg: Drei Bruchstücke aus 'Wozzeck'  
Berg: Wozzeck  
Berio: Quattro versioni originali della 'Titirata notturno de Madrid' di L. Boccherini  
Brahms: Ein Deutsches Requiem  
Brahms: Piano Concerto no.1 in D minor op.15  
Brahms: Symphony No.1 in C minor Op.68  
Brahms: Violin Concerto in D, Op 77  
Brahms arr Glanert: Vier Ernste Gesänge op. 121 (1896, arr. 2004) 18'  
Braunfels: Te Deum, Op 32

Bruckner: Symphony No 6 in A  
Bruckner: Symphony No 7 in E  
Bruckner: Symphony No.4 in Eb  
Bruckner: Te Deum  
Bruno Hartl: Concerto for percussion and orchestra  
Busoni: Tanwalzer  
Busoni arr. John Adams: Berceuse élégiaque  
Chabrier: Espana  
Chabrier: Rhapsody Espana  
Chin: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra  
Chin: Concerto for Violoncello and orchestra  
Chin: Šu  
Copland: Fanfare for the Common Man  
Dean: Carlo  
Dean, Brett: Amphitheatre - Scene for Orchestra  
Debussy: Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune  
Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune  
Diepenbrock Alphons: Les Elfes  
Dieter Ammann: New Work  
Dutilleux: Symphony No 2 'Le double'  
Dutilleux: Tout un monde lointain  
Eisler: Fünf orchesterstücke  
Eisler: Kuhle Wampe -Suite – Suite Nr. 3 op. 26  
Eisler: Rapsodie  
Faure: Pelléas et Mélisande - concert suite from incidental music, Op 80  
Gielen: D 797 Eine Collage von Michael Gielen  
Glanert: Frenesia  
Glanert Detlev: Den Bosch Requiem  
Goemans: Aan de Amsterdamse grachten  
Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor op.16  
Guarnieri: Piano concerto No.4  
Haydn: Piano Concerto in D major Hob XVIII:11  
Haydn: Symphony No 22 in E flat 'The Philosopher'  
Haydn: Symphony No 45 in F sharp minor 'Farewell'  
Haydn: Symphony No. 94 'Surprise'  
Haydn: Symphony no.104 in D, London  
Helen Grime: Concerto for Trumpet and Clarinet  
Henze: Das Floß der Medusa  
Henze: La selva incantata - der verwunschene Wald  
Henze: Nebelheim und Sonnenland - Suite aus der Oper Gisela  
Henze: Sebastian Im Traum  
Henze: Symphony No 7  
Henze: Symphony No 8

Hindemith: Der Schwanendreher - Concerto after folksongs for viola and small orchestra (1935)  
Hindemith: Mathis der Maler  
Honegger: Jeanne d'Arc au bucher  
Honegger: Le Bucher de St Jeanne  
Humperdinck: Hänsel und Gretel  
Ives: The unanswered question  
Jeths: Concerto for recorder and orchestra  
Kancheli: 'Styx' for viola, chorus and orchestra  
Korngold: Violin Concerto in D Op.35  
Larcher: Concerto for Violin  
Leeuw, T.d.: Mouvements retrogrades  
Lindberg: Violin Concerto  
Liszt: Totentanz S126  
Loevendie: The Loneliness of Spinoza  
Macmillan: St Luke's Passion  
Mahler: Adagio from Symphony No 10  
Mahler: Das Klagende Lied  
Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde  
Mahler: Rückert Lieder  
Mahler: Symphony No 1 in D  
Mahler: Symphony No 4  
Mahler: Symphony No 5 in C# min  
Mahler: Symphony No 6 in A minor  
Mahler: Symphony No. 9 in D  
Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream  
Mendelssohn: Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt op. 27  
Mendelssohn: Symphony No 2 (Lobgesang)  
Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto No 1 in E minor, Op 64  
Mozart: Concerto for Two Pianos in E flat, K365  
Mozart: Piano Concerto no.09 in E flat major K271  
Mozart: Piano Concerto no.21 in C major K467  
Mozart: Scenes from Don Giovanni  
Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante K364  
Mozart: Symphony No. 01 in E flat major K 16  
Mozart: Symphony no. 29 in A major K201  
Mozart: Symphony no. 39 in E flat K543  
Mozart: Symphony No. 40 in G minor K 550  
Mozart: Symphony No. 41 in C K 551 (Jupiter)  
Mussorgsky: Night on the Bare Mountain  
Nielsen: Maskarade  
Pascal Dusapin: New Cello Colncerto  
Paul Ruders: Tundra  
Poul Ruders: Solar Trilogy

Puccini: Tosca  
Raaff: (werktitel)  
Raaff: Atlantis  
Raaffde: Atlantis  
Rachmaninov: Symphonic Dances, Op. 45  
Rachmaninov: The Isle of the Dead, Op 29  
Rameau: Les Indes Galantes  
Ravel: Daphnis et Chloë - Suite 2  
Ravel: Piano Concerto for left hand in D major  
Ravel: Piano Concerto in G major  
Ravel: Shéhérazade  
Rebel: Caos  
Respighi: Pines of Rome  
Richard Strauss: Four Last Songs  
Rihm: A Tribute (Über die Linie VIII)  
Rihm: Deus Passus, Passions-Stücke nach Lukas  
Rihm: In-Schrift für Orchester  
Rihm: Symphony No 3  
Rijnovs: Asie  
Roukens: The Building of the Temple  
Schoenberg: 5 Orchestral Pieces op.16  
Schoenberg: Concerto for String Quartet (after Handel Concerto grosso Op 6. No. 7)  
Schoenberg: Gurrelieder  
Schoenberg: Pelleas und Melisande, Op 5  
Schreker: Der Ferne Klang  
Schreker: Die Gezeichneten  
Schreker: Suite: Geburtstag der Infantin  
Schreker: Vom ewigen Leben  
Schreker: Vorspiel zu einem Drama (Prelude to a Drama)  
Schubert: Symphony No 7 D759  
Schubert: Symphony No 8 in B minor, D759 (Unfinished)  
Schubert: Symphony No 9 'Great' in C, D.944  
Schubert arr. Webern: Sechs Stücke für Orchester op. 6 / Musik zu "Rosamunde"  
Schumann: Das Paradies und die Peri, Op 50  
Schumann: Manfred Opus 115  
Schumann: Piano Concerto in A minor op.54  
Schumann: Symphony No 2 in C, Op 61  
Schumann: Symphony No 3 in E flat major , Op 97 (Rhenish)  
Scriabin: Le Poème de l'extase, Op.54  
Scriabin: Mysterium  
Scriabin: Prometheus of Fire  
Sibelius: Symphony No 4 in A minor, Op 63  
Sibelius: Violin Concerto in D Minor op. 47



Strauss: Also sprach Zarathustra  
Strauss: Till Eulenspiegel  
Strauss: Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op 28  
Strauss: Tod und Verklärung, Op 24 (Death and Transfiguration)  
Strauss: Vier Letzte Lieder  
Strauss R: Don Juan Tone Poem, Op. 20 (19)  
Strauss R: Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks: Symphonic Poem  
Stravinsky: Firebird (Complete - 1910)  
Stravinsky: Firebird Suite (1919)  
Stravinsky: Oedipus Rex  
Stravinsky: Petrouchka (1911)  
Stravinsky: Rite of Spring  
Szymanowski: Stabat Mater  
Tchaikovsky: Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture  
Tiessen: Vorspiel zu einem Revolutionsdrama  
Wagemans: Pangea  
Wagenaar: Canzone sull'infinito  
Wagenaar: Preludio all'infinito  
Wagner: Der fliegende Holländer  
Wagner: Excerpts from Parsifal  
Wagner: Parsifal  
Wagner: Prelude to Lohengrin (Act III)  
Wagner: Siegfried Idyll  
Wagner: The Ring: An Orchestral Adventure  
Walton: Symphony No.1  
Weber: Clarinet Concerto no.1 in F minor  
Weber: Der Freischütz  
Weber: Overture to 'Oberon'  
Weber: Overture to Der Freischütz  
Weill: Der Silbersee  
Weill: Selections from Der Silbersee  
Weill: Suite: The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny  
Widmann: Babylon  
Yun: Tapis







