

SHOSTAKOVICH
Symphony No. 6
Sinfonietta

ESTONIAN FESTIVAL ORCHSTRA
PAAVO JÄRVI

ALPHA CLASSICS RELEASE January 2018



It's the challenging playing that makes me want to get on my toes and scandalize with joy.

On the surface, Järvi and the gang must impress in Shostakovich's sixth symphony. But you just have to scratch a little bit to see that the album is as much about the Nato member Republic of Estonia and this year's hundred-year-old struggle for independence as well as about great orchestral playing.

The struggle continues with Russian neighbours still milling around at the border, as Järvi mentions in interviews. And it is during his annual music festival in Estonian Pärnu, one of the former Soviet's westernmost outposts, geographically as well as psychologically, where the Alpha classics album was recorded. During the Soviet era, both Shostakovich and the Järvi family came to Pärnu because it allowed them to feel like they were almost in Europe.

It is this background which Järvi and his young, playful orchestra gladly highlight when they are now working on establishing the festival as Estonia's fine cultural focal point. A bridge between west and east where western Europeans, young Estonian musicians and Russians play together side by side - on this first album also with Russian repertoire, even though it is written by Shostakovich who lived in terror under Stalin and eventually became the largest antitotalitarian musical symbol in the west.

For Järvi, who grew up during the Soviet occupation, this is of course important.

After his father, conductor Neeme, had a number of stings with the political regime (inter alia, he conducted the regime-critical Arvo Pärt piece "Credo"), the family finally left the country in the 1980s and were not allowed to return until the Soviet Union was dissolved. Now Järvi quotes Estonia's declaration of independence in the CD-booklet and poses in black Adidas on Pärnu's sandy beach. Symbolism could hardly be clearer.

[Hanna Höglund, Sydsvenska](#) - 28 February 2018

It springs, it flows, you can feel the motor energy of the music. The sound of this ensemble holds addictive potential. Paavo Järvi conducts the Estonian Festival Orchestra with great precision and stringency. If it leads to dramatic climaxes, the music always has "under control". In the third movement of Shostakovich's Sixth Symphony almost with Rossini ease.

An Estonian among Estonians. Paavo Järvi and the Estonian Festival Orchestra. Conductor and musician on one wavelength. This Shostakovich album is a hit!

[Meinolf Bunsmann, Hessischer Rundfunk](#) - 26 February 2018

Like his father, Paavo Järvi plainly loves recording ... Since 2011 the peripatetic maestro has touched base at the Pärnu Festival every August, overseeing its evolution into a kind of alternative Lucerne, a summer season for the cream of Estonian musical talent drawing guest players from more venerable European ensembles. **The resulting super-group is not huge but its bright clarity, with violins antiphonally placed, does not preclude the plumbing of depths both physical and emotional ... this must be one of the finer Sixths of the digital era ... the finale whirls us to its end with articulate ferocity at a tempo almost faster than the players can manage ... Paavo rejects the funereal approach implied by the initial metronome mark, admitting a rare degree of light and shade.** I loved the idiosyncratic woodwind solos.

[David Gutman, Gramophone](#) - February 2018

... ein im Gewicht erleichterter, schwerelos auf Federfüßchen einerschwebender Schostakowitsch; was den raschen Sätzen vorzüglich zupass kommt und dem großen Einleitungs-Largo nicht wesentlich schadet. Hier wird ein fast optimistischer, überlebenstalentierter Survivor des sowjetischen Regimes vorgezeigt; nicht das beliebte Klischee des Opfers ... Aufgrund des außerordentlichen Niveaus des Orchesters und seiner kammerphilharmonisch originellen Ästhetik ist dieses CD-Debüt indes überaus reizvoll und erfreulich. Gern mehr davon.

[Kai Luehrs Kaiser, RBB Kulturradio](#) - 14 February 2018

The lower strings of the Estonian Festival Orchestra lend the downbeat opening astonishing depth of tone, though you might feel that something's being held back. Rightly, Järvi keeps things on a tight leash until the eruption five or so minutes in, the brass powerful enough to strip paint. The bleak mood is sustained brilliantly, before a consolatory horn solo ushers in some of the most ardently romantic music Shostakovich composed. **Phenomenal**: you might well need a sit down before continuing. What does ensue is a pair of quickfire scherzos, the first dark and mischievous, the second one a raucous gallop. Järvi's swift speeds push his players to the limit but they're with him all the way ... an **unmissable**, well-engineered disc ...

[Graham Rickson, Theartsdesk.com](#) - 10 February 2018

... So dringlich und so unpräntiös jedenfalls hat Schostakowitschs sechste Sinfonie lange nicht mehr geklungen, bei aller Zeitgeschichte, die hier natürlich auch mitschwingt ... Eine in jeder Beziehung aufregende Neueinspielung.

[Christine Lemke-Matwey, SWR](#) - 9 February 2018

Mit seinem Estonian Festival Orchestra hat der designierte Chefdirigent des Tonhalle-Orchesters nun **eine Einspielung vorgelegt, die fraglos zu den Besten zählt** Bereits das Largo setzt interpretatorisch starke Zeichen ... Mit hellhöriger, glasklar sezierender Reduktion entwirft Järvi ein schauderhaftes, atmosphärisch dichtes Bild der Angst. Hier wirkt die Musik wie ein persönlicher Kommentar Schostakowitschs auf den «Grossen Terror» Stalins Mitte der 1930er Jahre. ... Järvi zeigt exemplarisch auf, dass bei Schostakowitsch in der Entschlackung die Fratze des Bösen umso breiter grinst.

[Marco Frei, Neue Züricher Zeitung](#) - 29 January 2018

... **Järvi's is a reading (of Shostakovich 6) that is notably fluent and never dawdles.** At the same time, it doesn't rush over anything it shouldn't. His sense of pacing throughout is logical and reasoned - but, at the same time, well-attuned to the music's expressive features. The opening section offers plenty of momentum, but so do the soloistic parts that follow: **there's a sense of heartbeat and pulse in this interpretation that brings this complicated movement impressively to life** ... the EFO's playing ... **is brilliant throughout.** String tone is warm but uncompromising. Woodwinds and brass are perfectly secure, pitch-wise. And the percussion offers a sort of Mahlerian menace that jumps out powerfully. The movement's moments of true warmth - the chorale that

appears near the end, the reprise of the opening material – speak with an intensity and conviction that’s thoroughly lived and entirely of the moment ...

Filling out the disc is Abram Stasevich’s arrangement of the String Quartet no. 8 for string orchestra and timpani. Maybe it’s the addition of the drum – more likely it’s the sheer ferocity of the EFO’s playing – but I found this a far more convincing adaptation and orchestral reading of the piece than Dmitri Sitkoevsky’s more familiar strings-only setting. As in the Symphony, **the orchestra’s playing drives furiously ... while the music’s blistering pathos burns through every queasy phrase.**

In all, this is an unsettling performance of a deeply disturbing, if familiar, piece. It’s one with which you really can’t go wrong.

[Jonathan Baumhofer, artfuse.org](#) - 29 January 2018

Frisch weht der Wind an der Ostseeküste. Besonders inspirierend bläst er in diesem Jahr wieder rund um die estnische Hauptstadt Tallinn, wo der Dirigent Paavo Järvi geboren wurde und in deren Nähe er seine Festival-Zelte aufschlagen wird. Viel steht für Järvi 2018 auf dem Programm, aber ein wenig davon hat er schon unter Dach und Fach: Seine neue Einspielung der sechsten Symphonie von Dmitri Schostakowitsch (1906-1975) komprimiert Eleganz, Temperament und konzise Interpretation. Eben genau das, was die Musik des russischen Komponisten ausmacht.

Für Järvi kein Problem: Er kennt seinen Schostakowitsch und traf den Komponisten sogar 1973 noch als Kind. Für diese brandneue Einspielung stand ihm darüber hinaus ein Ensemble internationaler junger Talente zur Seite, die offenbar eine ähnlich innige Beziehung zu Schostakowitsch pflegen. Das von Järvi ins Leben gerufene Estonian Festival Orchestra gibt auf Anhieb eine beeindruckende musikalische Visitenkarte ab.

[Der Spiegel](#) - 28 January 2018

These young players making their recording debut with founder and conductor Paavo Järvi. **You can sense the zeal and commitment to one another with the project. Not everything is immaculate but the immediacy and excitement of the playing more than compensates and the coupling is the Sinfoniela with the 8 string quartet - it’s a pretty exhilarating debut.**

[BBC Radio 3, Record Review](#), 20 January 2018

Though [Järvi's] clearly the musical as well as organisational driving-force behind the enterprise **the prevailing atmosphere is of chamber-music on a grand scale** rather than simply a calling-card from a slick new super-orchestra...the first appearance of the timpani launches the ferocious Allegro molto like a starting-pistol, and the strings respond in kind with playing that's raw and percussive.

[Presto Classical - Recording of the Week](#), 19 January 2018

... This new account (of Shostakovich Symphony No. 6) from Järvi can take its place as **among the very best of modern readings of the work ... a performance that is genuinely engaging and, ultimately, affirmative.**

Recorded in July 2017, a year after the Sixth Symphony, the Sinfonietta is an arrangement by Shostakovich's friend Abram Stasevich that was made with the composer's blessing ... **Even for purists, this is as powerful a performance of this work as you are likely to hear, and it crowns a stunning debut from this vibrant young orchestra, with recording and presentation to match.**

[europadisc.co.uk](#) - 19 January 2018

Une enregistrement qui célèbre tout autant l'esprit musical estonien que ses liens avec les grands musiciens du Nord et de l'Est, ici Shostakovich.

[L'Avenir](#), 18 January 2018

Ein kräftiges Lebenszeichen der estnischen Orchesterlandschaft. Paavo Järvi bringt Schostakowitschs 6. Symphonie und die Sinfonietta auf den Punkt.

Radio Klassik, 17 January 2018

If any of Shostakovich's symphony testifies to the composer's lighter charm, it is his Sixth. In his debut recording by the Estonian Festival Orchestra that charm is spiritedly captured by the young musicians. **The playing is deliciously fresh and alive, the passive grit of the opening Largo offset by the whimsical twists of the progressively faster Allgero and Presto. The final moments are a veritable riot of colour.**

The Scotsman, 13 January 2018

Paavo Järvi isn't interested in a dramatic and passionate reading of Shostakovich's Sixth Symphony. He reaches the very center of the music with reduced dynamics, sometimes tending towards a near-silence and the resulting mystery ... **A mesmerizing performance** it is.

[Pizzicato](#), 5 January 2018