

ARVO PÄRT

THE COLLECTION

Spiegel im Spiegel · Für Alina · Tabula Rasa · Fratres · Magnificat
Stabat Mater · St. John Passion · The Beatitudes · Berliner Messe
Triodion · Symphony No.3 · Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten



Arvo Pärt b.1935
The Collection

- | | | | | |
|--|-------|---|--|---|
| 1. Spiegel im Spiegel
<i>for violin & piano</i> | 10'22 | Recording: 21-22 April 1999, Ulster Hall, Ilster, Ireland
Producer and engineer: Tim Handley
Publishers: Universal Edition AG Wien (7-8), Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd (9-11) and C F Peters Musikverlag (12-14)
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Licenced from Naxos of America, Inc. | Tibor Wambach, Ágnes Fodor,
Eszter Kendi, Béla Melis, Judit Faludi,
Péter Arató, Katalin Aldobólyi Nagy
<i>cello</i> (21)
József Erős <i>oboe, English horn</i>
Béla Horváth <i>oboe</i>
Géza Bánhegyi <i>clarinet</i>
László Kiss Gy. <i>clarinet, bass clarinet</i>
Károly Ambrus, Antal Szuromi <i>horn</i>
István Hartenstein, László Hunyadi
<i>basoon</i> (22) | Ensemble Le Nuove Musiche
Wendy Roobol, Mónica Monteiro
<i>sopranos</i>
Hugo Naessens, Kaspar Kröner <i>altos</i>
Falco van Loon, Emilio Aguilar <i>tenors</i>
Berend Eijkhout, Bas Ramselaar <i>bass</i>
Krijn Koetsveld <i>conductor</i> |
| 2. Variationen zur Gesundung von Arinuschka
<i>for piano solo</i> | 5'36 | | | |
| 3. Für Alina <i>for piano solo</i> | 3'31 | | | |
| 4. Spiegel im Spiegel
<i>for viola & piano</i> | 10'04 | | | |
| 5. Mozart-Adagio
<i>for violin, cello & piano</i> | 7'45 | | | |
| 6. Spiegel im Spiegel
<i>for cello & piano</i> | 9'33 | 15. Fratres
<i>for strings and percussion</i> 8'54
16. Fratres <i>for violin, strings and percussion</i> 10'44
17. Festina lente <i>for strings and harp ad libitum</i> 7'50
18. Fratres <i>for string quartet</i> 8'41
19. Fratres <i>for cello and piano</i> 11'52
20. Summa <i>for strings</i> 3'45
21. Fratres <i>for eight cellos</i> 11'50
22. Fratres <i>for wind octet and percussion</i> (arr. Beat Brinner) 7'45
23. Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten
<i>for strings and bell</i> 7'39 | Strings of Hungarian State Opera Orchestra (15,17,20,23)
Tamás Benedek <i>conductor</i> | 33. Stabat Mater (1985) 25'11

Ensemble Le Nuove Musiche
Wendy Roobol <i>soprano</i>
Hugo Naessens <i>alto</i>
Falco van Loon <i>tenor</i>
Kees Hulsmans <i>violin</i>
Bernadette Verhagen <i>viola</i>
Sanne de Graaf <i>cello</i>
Krijn Koetsveld <i>conductor</i> |
| Benjamin Hudson <i>violin/viola</i>
Sebastian Klinger <i>cello</i>
Jürgen Kruse <i>piano</i> | | | | |
| Recording: 2006, Bauer Studios Ludwigsburg, Germany
© 2010 & © 2021 Brilliant Classics | | | Recording: 10-16 December 1995, Festerich Castle, Budapest
Recording: Alpha-Line Studio · Recording
Supervision: Jenő Simon
Producer: Tamás Benedek · Engineer: Gábor Moc'sáry
Publisher: Universal Edition A.G.
© 1997 HNH International Ltd.
© 2021 Brilliant Classics
Licenced from Naxos of America, Inc. | Recording: February 2008 (24-32)
Mijnsherenland; October 2016 (33), St. Martinuskerk, Hoogland, The Netherlands
Producer: Peter Arts, Arts Music Recordings
© 2017 (10) & 2019 Brilliant Classics
© 2021 Brilliant Classics |
| Tabula Rasa * | | | | |
| 7. Ludus | 9'50 | | | |
| 8. Silentium | 14'41 | | | |
| Collage über Bach | | Hungarian State Opera Orchestra
Tamás Benedek <i>conductor</i> | 24. Magnificat (1989) 6'17
25. Nunc dimittis (2001) 7'15 | Passio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem (1982)
<i>(The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to John)</i> |
| 9. Toccata | 2'47 | | | |
| 10. Sarabande | 3'07 | | | |
| 11. Ricercare | 1'44 | Antal Eisrich <i>percussion instruments</i> (15,16,22,23)
Miklós Kovács <i>percussion instruments</i> (15,16,22) | Maria Antifonen (1988, 1991) | 34. Jesus is betrayed and arrested in Gethsemane
(exordium; John 18:1-12) 9'38
"Passio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem.... ..et ligaverunt eum:" |
| Symphony No.3 | | Béla Nagy <i>violin</i> (16,18)
Márta Haraszti <i>harp</i> (17)
Katalin Schneider <i>violin</i>
Rezső Hajna <i>viola</i>
Judit Kis Domonkos <i>cello</i> (18)
Tibor Párkányi <i>cello</i> (19,20)
Sándor Falvai <i>piano</i> (19) | 26. O Weisheit 1'04
27. O Adonai 2'03
28. O Spross aus Isias Wurzel 0'56
29. O Schlüssel Davids 1'41
30. O Morgenstern 1'40
31. O König aller Völker 1'29
32. O Immanuel 2'24 | 35. Jesus is interrogated by the high priest and denied by Peter
(John 18:13-27) 11'28
"Et adduxerunt eum ad Annam primum... ..et statim gallus cantavit." |
| 12. First Movement | 6'29 | | | |
| 13. Second Movement | 6'09 | | | |
| 14. Third Movement | 7'44 | | | |
| Leslie Hatfield & Rebecca Hirsch
<i>violins *</i> | | | | |
| Ulster Orchestra
Takuo Yuasa <i>conductor</i> | | | | |

36. **Jesus is judged by Pilate and reviled by the people** (John 18:28-19:15) 26'18
 "Adducunt ergo Jesum a Caipha in praetorium... ..Non habemus Regem, nisi Caesarem."
37. **Jesus is crucified at Golgotha** (John 19:16-30; conclusio) 14'27
 "Tunc ergo tradidit eis illum ut crucifigeretur... ..Qui passus es pro nobis, miserere nobis. Amen."

Tonus Peregrinus

Robert Macdonald *bass* (Jesus)
 Mark Anderson *tenor* (Pilate)
 Joanna Forbes *soprano*
 Rebecca Hickey *soprano*
 (Evangelist Quartet)
 Kathryn Oswald *alto*
 (Evangelist Quartet)
 Alexander L'Estrange *countertenor*
 Alexander Hickey *tenor*
 Benjamin Rayfield *tenor*
 (Evangelist Quartet)
 Francis Brett *bass* (Evangelist Quartet)
 Nick Flower *bass*
 Elizabeth Hodson *violin*
 Geoffrey Coates *oboe*
 Augusta Harris *cello*
 Gwyn Parry-Jones *bassoon*
 Paul Ayres *organ*
 Antony Pitts *director*

Recording: 15-18 May & 28 June 2001,
 Abbey Church of St Peter & St Paul,
 Dorchester-on-Thames, UK
 Producers: Jeremy Summerly and Alexander
 L'Estrange
 Engineer: Geoff Miles · Editor: Antony Pitts
 Publisher: Universal Edition, Vienna (UE 17568)
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38. **The Beatitudes** 7'49
- Berliner Messe**
39. Kyrie 3'09
 40. Gloria 4'01
 41. Erster Alleluiavers
 (First Alleluia) 1'22
 42. Zweiter Alleluiavers
 (Second Alleluia) 1'26
 43. Veni Sancte Spiritus 6'50
 44. Credo 4'28
 45. Sanctus 3'17
 46. Agnus Dei 1'58
47. **Cantate Domino** 3'59
 48. **Annum per Annum**
Einleitung – K – G – C – S – A –
Coda 11'54
 49. **Mein Weg hat Gipfel und**
Wellentäler 8'27
 50. **Pari Intervallo** 5'27
 51. **Trivium** 7'37
 52. **Spiegel im Spiegel** 8'11

Daniel Justin *organ* (38-47)
 Thomas Leech *organ* (48-52)

Leeds Cathedral Choir
 Benjamin Saunders *conductor*

Recording: 30-31 March, 1 April and 18 May
 2014, Leeds Cathedral, UK
 Recording engineer: Craig Golding
 (Leeds College) and Buphinder Chaggar
 (Hotdog Productions)
 Publisher: Universal Edition, edition sikorski
 (51)
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Music for Unaccompanied Choir

Triodion (1998)

53. Introduction: ad libitum – Ode I:
 'O Jesus the Son of God,
 Have Mercy upon Us' 4'20
 54. Ode II: 'O Most Holy
 Birth-giver of God, Save Us' 4'10
 55. Ode III: 'O Holy Saint Nicholas,
 Pray to God for Us' Coda:
 ad libitum 5'10
56. **Tribute to Caesar** (1997)
 St Matthew 22, 15-22 5'33
 57. **Nunc dimittis** (2001)
 St Luke 2, 29-32 6'12
 58. **Ode VII** (Memento)
 from *Kanon Pokajanen* (1994) 7'37
 59. **I Am the True Vine** (1996) 6'50
 60. **The Woman with the Alabaster Box**
 (1997) St Matthew 26, 6-13 5'28
 61. **Dopo la vittoria** (After the Victory)
 (1996/1998) 10'34
 62. **Bogoróditse Djévo** (Mother of God
 and Virgin) (1990) 1'23

Elora Festival Singers

Sheila Dietrich, Heather Fleming,
 Merry-Anne Hutton, Linda Kemp,
 Catherine Robertson, Jill Ross,
 Robin Vaillancourt *sopranos*
 Meghan Prescott, Nellie Scholtes,
 Susan Suchard, Sara-Lynn Weiler *altos*
 Brian Emery, Bryan Rankine,
 David Rogers, Steve Szmutni *tenors*
 Kevin Bradshaw, Kirk Lackenbauer,
 Neil McLaren, John McLean,
 Michael Tansley, Mike Uloth,
 Michael York *bass*

Noel Edison *conductor*

Recording: 19-21 May 2006,
 St John Chrysostom Church, Newmarket,
 Ontario, Canada
 Producers: Bonnie Silver and Norbert Kraft
 Engineer: Norbert Kraft · Editing: Bonnie Silver
 Publisher: Universal Edition A.G., Vienna
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63. **Für Alina** (1976) 20'18
 64. **Variationen zur Gesundung von**
Arinuscka (1977) 5'56
 65. **Ukuaru valss** (1973, rev. 2010) 2'54
 66. **Für Anna Maria** (2006) 1'21
 67. **Für Alina** (1976) 2'41
 68. **Pari intervallo***
 (1976, rev. 2008) 5'26
 69. **Hymn to a Great City***
 (1984, rev. 2004) 5'08
 (dedicated to Mirjam and
 William Miesse)
 70. **Für Anna Maria** (2006) 1'07
 71. **Für Alina** (1976) 3'15
 72. **Fratres†** (1977, rev. 1980) 11'52
 73. **Spiegel im Spiegel†** (1978) 9'10

Jeroen van Veen *piano*
 *played on two pianos with
 Sandra van Veen

†Bonus track: Douw Fonda *cello*

Recording: March 2013, Van Veen
 Productions, Studio 1, Culemborg;
 March 2014, Zeeuwse Concertzaal,
 Middelburg (72 & 73)
 Producer: Van Veen Productions
 Executive producer: Jeroen van Veen
 Engineering & mastering: Pianomania
 Software: Pro Tools, & Samplitude
 Microphones: NT5, SE 2200, 16 track
 multichannel ADAT
 Publishers: © Universal Edition, Vienna
 & © Edition Eres, Lilienthal - UE 19 823
 (63,67,71); UE 19 823 (64); UE 34 746
 (65,70); UE 33 363 (66); UE 30 336 (73); UE
 34 564 (68); UE 30 439 (69); UE 17 274 (72)
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Vier leichte Tanzstücke

'Musik für Kindertheater' (1956–57)	
74. I. Der gestiefelte Kater	0'43
75. II. Rotkäppchen und der Wolf	2'15
76. III. Schmetterlinge	2'06
77. IV. Tanz der Entenküken	2'34

Sonatina No.1 (for Bruno Lukk) (1959)

78. I. Allegro	2'32
79. II. Larghetto	4'18
80. III. Allegro	0'25

Sonatine No.2 (for Bruno Lukk) (1959)

81. I. Allegro energico	1'52
82. II. Largo	2'03
83. III. Allegro	1'47

Partita Op.2 (for Bruno Lukk) (1958)

84. I. Toccata	0'50
85. II. Fughetta	1'04
86. III. Larghetto	3'16
87. IV. Ostinato	2'08

88. Für Alina (1976) 23'07

Jeroen van Veen *piano*

Recording: March 2013, Van Veen Productions, Studio 1, Culemborg
Producer: Van Veen Productions · Executive producer: Jeroen van Veen
Engineering & mastering: Pianomania · Software: Pro Tools, & Samplitude
Microphones: NT5, SE 2200, 16 track multichannel ADAT
Publishers: © Universal Edition, Vienna & © Edition Eres, Lilienthal - Eres 2163 (74-77); UE 30 411 (78-83); UE 30 410 (84-87); EU 19 823 (88)
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Tracks 1-6

Arvo Pärt (b.1935) is a composer with a remarkable career. In the early phase of his life (until the beginning of the seventies) he tried to contribute in his way to the western avant-garde, as far as this was possible for an Estonian composer living under the communist regime. Although the iron curtain was not rigid, it certainly kept a lot of information about the non-official avant-garde art outside Soviet Union. The traits of this avant-garde are clearly audible in his music written before the early seventies: an appetite for atonality, for collage-like forms with sudden and great transitions between sections, with a neglect of romantic melodies and a non-predictable treatment of rhythm and metre.

Around the early seventies he felt the avant-garde could not inspire him anymore and he started looking for other sources of inspiration. These he found in, among others, medieval religious music, from western and eastern Europe. [He appreciated the tonality coloured by modality (or vice versa, opinions differ), largely ignored chromaticism, liked the regular handling of rhythm and metre, the architecture with gradual changes between the sections, and has a preference for slow tempos, a love for the sound of bells and a vocal approach to melodies.] This change of style, which took him some years to develop during which he hardly composed, first came to light in his short piano piece written in 1976 *Für Alina, for piano solo* (Alina is the composer's daughter).

In a nutshell it presents the main features of Pärt's later style which brought him huge popularity. It is easy to play, has a slow tempo and has two layers: one giving the key notes of the chord of the central key, the other filling in this chord with notes from the scale. The central key is often not presented as such, but the listener feels its presence and its character as the harmonic centre of the music. This style, often called tintinnabuli, named after the sound of bells, became the hallmark of his style, certainly since the early eighties when he immigrated to the west. From then on he started to write big vocal works with a religious content which show the features of his style on a very large scale. The short, instrumental pieces on this album show them in a much more concise way.

Spiegel im Spiegel (mirror in mirror) adds a new feature to the ones already mentioned. In classical music there is a clear distinction between main and subordinate motifs. Often a piece begins with apparently the main motif, but which is then contrasted with a second motif which turns out to be the main one. From then

on the hierarchy is clear and, basically, never ambiguous, at best an aspect to play with incidentally. Pärt subverts this hierarchy drastically. Take *Spiegel im Spiegel*. The opening bar sounds like an accompaniment, but it is played at such a low speed and for such a long time, that it realizes an intensity, in classical music only excluded to main motifs, mainly thanks to the tempo and the ongoing and declining sound of the piano and the string instruments. The so to speak traditional main melody or motif is played in the string instruments. The melody, if played fast, looks like a classical melody. If played slowly it achieves its own emotionality, liberated from classical strictures. If Pärt had a source of inspiration for this piece, it was the first Prelude from part one of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier* which also consists of a series of broken chords with between them melodic lines. What Pärt did with his broken chords, Gounod did with Bach's Prelude: to add a text (Ave Maria) and a melodic line with a rhythm so prolonged that the classical framework becomes vague or (as in Pärt's case) distorted. (In his avant-garde period Pärt made a very personal orchestration of this prelude under the title *Collage sur B-A-C-H*.)

Pärt did not entirely ignore this framework. *Variationen zur Gesundung von Arimuschka* is a mix of classical and Pärtian features. The theme looks like a repetition of Für Alina. The architecture of the melody and the entire composition sounds familiar, only with this difference that the pianistic demands are higher. But when Pärt comes to write variations, he tries to combine the tintinnabula style with the ingredients of a conventional, Mozartean classical set of variations: the filling in of the chords with scales and arpeggios in an ever increasing pianistic virtuosity, a clear and regular rhythmic pattern which of course, as part of the variation process, may be temporarily changed, a transition from major to minor and vice versa and a triumphant ending, if not in mood, then in pianistic ability. Of course Pärt felt the clash and tried to use to best of them in a piece which respects both styles. Virtuosity is almost absent, regularity in rhythm and the game with registers are crucial.

Also influenced by Mozart, but in its result much less a clash and much more a piece by the dogmatic Pärt, is the *Mozart-Adagio* for violin, cello and piano. It is based on the same principles as of *Spiegel im Spiegel*, but exploited in a different manner. *Spiegel im Spiegel* is built on very simple triads played slowly, repeated almost endlessly and supplemented with a melody in the strings and stretched out to such an extent that one hears separate notes rather than melodic lines. All these elements are also present in *Mozart-Adagio* (an arrangement of the slow movement

from Mozart's Piano Sonata K280), but not always in this relation. Each instrument can play each ingredient and the composer likes to mix them permanently which makes the piece much less predictable than *Spiegel im Spiegel*. The piano plays Mozart's music and the strings play Pärt's additions which harmonically contrast with the original (the opposite also occurs), the piano part may be divided between several instruments and occasionally Pärt adds in Mozart's music a few notes which give the tonal original a modal flavour.

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Tracks 7-14

Arvo Pärt was an only child, his parents divorced when he was three, and he was brought up by his mother (a kindergarten teacher) and stepfather. With piano lessons from the age of eight (after the family had moved to a house in Rakvere in the north east of Estonia, containing a concert grand), he received his rudimentary musical education at the Rakvere Children's Music School between 1946-1953. Finding that the repertoire of piano pieces he was given to play did not tax him fully enough he soon began writing his own short pieces, mainly for piano, although he also composed songs.

Studies continued in 1954 at Rakvere Secondary School and Tallinn Music School, where Pärt studied composition and music theory. Whilst at Secondary School in Rakvere he was able to hear classical orchestral music from recordings transmitted over the public loudspeaker system in the town square, extending his somewhat limited musical horizons by cycling round and round the square on these occasions. His composition teachers at the Tallinn Music School were Harri Otsa (1926-2001) and Veljo Tormis (1930-2017), a study that was interrupted by two years of compulsory military service during which he worked as a snare drummer in an army band. It was not until autumn 1957 that he was finally able to enrol as a postgraduate student at the Tallinn Conservatory. His composition teacher there was Heino Eller (1887-1970), who had himself studied composition at the St Petersburg Conservatory under Glazunov (whom Pärt acknowledges as his musical grandfather) and who played a central role in the development of Estonian music both as composer and teacher.

Pärt's first works, two piano *Sonatas* and a *Partita*, were neoclassical student

pieces. Then in 1960 he became the first Estonian composer to espouse serialism (*Nekrolog*) and, using other avant-garde techniques including pointillism and aleatoricism, explored its potential in a number of experimental works – *Perpetuum Mobile* (1963), *Symphony No.1* (1964), *Diagrams* (1964), *Musica Sillabica* (1964), and *Solfeggio* (1964). In an attempt to extricate himself from what soon became a musical impasse, his next works adopted (and played with) baroque and classical forms and incorporated borrowed tonal gestures – the brief *Quintettino* (1964), *Collage on B-A-C-H* (1964) and the cello concerto *Pro et Contra* (1966). With the composition of *Credo* (1968), the quintessential work of the early period and the first to set a religious text, Pärt finally reached the impasse that had been threatening, created by the fact that his own compositional voice had effectively been eclipsed by that of Bach.

Having discovered plainchant in 1969 (followed by an intensive study of medieval and Renaissance music) he pared down and reconstructed both his musical ideas and his technique. Two traditional works, *Symphony No.3* (1971) and the cantata *Laul Armastatule* (subsequently withdrawn), led to a period of close collaboration with the Estonian early music group, Hortus Musicus. Finally, with the piano miniature *Für Alina* (1976) the new tintinnabula style appeared, in which a generally stepwise ‘melodic’ line is accompanied by a triadic, or tintinnabula, ‘harmony’. The acme of the style, its most perfect realisation, came with the *St John Passion*, complete in 1982. Sketches for this work date back to the same year, 1977, as three of the most enduring instrumental works of the new style – *Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten*, *Tabula Rasa* and *Fratres*. Further new traits of the style were introduced in subsequent works, including the *Te Deum* (1984/5, rev. 1986), *Stabat Mater* (1985) and *Miserere* (1989), perhaps the most significant of all being the setting of Church Slavonic in works such as the tiny *Bogoroditse Dyevo* (1990) and the vast *Kanon Pokajanen* (1997), the soundworlds of which seem to owe less to the tintinnabula style than to the tradition of Russian Orthodox Church music. Both works may yet turn out to be progenitors of a further stylistic shift.

The three works here included cover all three distinct periods of Pärt’s work as a composer: *Collage on B-A-C-H* from the earlier serial/collage period, *Symphony No.3* from the transitional period of the early 1970’s when Pärt was still formulating his new style, and one of the most frequently performed works of the new tintinnabula style, *Tabula Rasa*. This is a double concerto for two violin, string orchestra and

prepared piano, and is the most extended of the composer’s purely instrumental works to date. Dedicated to the violinists Gidon Kremer and Tatiana Grindenko and the conductor Eri Klas, it is cast in two movements – *Ludus* (Game) and *Silentium* (Without movement) respectively. Whilst the eight sections of *Ludus* bear surface resemblances to Vivaldi (its concerto grosso nature, its homogeneous instrumental blend with the prepared piano taking the continuo role, its equal distribution of material between the two soloists, the use of canonic techniques and the triadic nature of the material), the Vivaldi-like violin figurations are employed in an essentially static way. In stark contrast with the *Ludus*, the expanding melodic arcs of *Silentium*’s mensuration canon (the deeper the melodic line the slower it moves) slowly unwind into silence.

Collage on B-A-C-H is a short three-movement work in which the outer movements are scored for strings only whilst the slow central movement adds a solo oboe, harpsichord and piano. The first movement’s harmonic framework is predetermined by the B-A-C-H motif (the pitches B-flat-A-C-B natural), whilst in the second movement quotations of Bach’s *Sarabande* from *English Suite No.6 in D minor* enclose Pärt’s own eight-bar distortions of the same material. The third movement is, as its title *Ricercar* suggests, canonic. Not the return of the B-A-C-H motif as a note-cluster before the final close in D major.

The transitional *Symphony No.3*, heavily indebted to Pärt’s study of early polyphony and Gregorian chant, is dedicated to the conductor Neeme Järvi. A highly individual work, the thematic material of its three movements: a trun (A-B flat-A-G-A), another stepwise melodic line starting on and returning to the root note (D-E-F-E-D), and a cadential figure, the so-called Landini cadence, consisting of a falling semitone, falling tone and rising minor third (d-C sharp-C sharp-B flat-D).

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Tracks 15-23

Pärt worked for some ten years as a sound director for Estonian Radio, while studying for part of this period at the Tallinn Conservatory, where his composition teacher was Heino Eller, a composer whose own studies had been at the Petrograd Conservatory in the time of Glazunov, after earlier study of law at St Petersburg University. Eller was an important figure in the establishment of a form of Estonian music that combined elements of national tradition with symphonic writing.

Pärt was brought up in a country under Soviet rule and in a town and in conditions that made musical study difficult at first. His period of military service was spent as a drummer, but in 1958 he was able to embark on study at the Conservatory, from which he graduated in 1963. If Eller's work had been influenced by the teaching of Glazunov, director of the Petrograd Conservatory in his time as a student there, Pärt's early compositions varied in style, showing at first the influence of contemporary Russian composers like Prokofiev and Shostakovich and then moving to serial experiment, a technique of which the Soviet authorities expressed the strongest disapproval. There was further work with modified serial techniques, the use of collage and of elements of chance.

After leaving his position at Estonian Radio, Pärt found it possible to earn a living solely as a composer, in particular by the composition of film music. It was perhaps this field of activity that allowed him to develop a particular personal style, with its roots in tonality and, as it developed, to the disapproval of the authorities, in strong religious traditions a study of medieval and Renaissance music, of Gregorian chant, organum and the Netherlands school of Renaissance composers, Josquin and his contemporaries, and association with an Estonian early music ensemble, influenced his musical thought, leading to the formation of a musical language that he himself described as his "tintinnabular" style, not simply the occasional use of bells but a reference to the basic musical elements that he had found in plainchant and organum. He himself has described his fascination with a single note, beautifully played and his use of primitive materials, the three notes of the triad, like bells, in the context of a single tonality. There is, in his tintinnabular compositions, a static and contemplative beauty, a reflection of his religious beliefs and his immersion in the earlier world of Catholic Europe. Debts to American minimalism may be discounted, but there are dearer parallels with the work of Górecki or, perhaps, of John Tavener, a composer who shares Pärt's Orthodox faith.

In 1980 Arvo Pärt left Estonia for Vienna, taking Austrian citizenship, and the following year moved to Berlin, where he has since made his home.

Fratres (Brothers) was originally written in 1977 for string quintet and wind quintet, to be played by the early music ensemble Hortus Musicus with which Pärt was associated. It was later arranged for various ensembles. The version for string orchestra and percussion was arranged in 1983 and revised in 1991. A hymn is played over a continued drone of a fifth, with delicate punctuation from the percussion,

as the hymn grows richer in texture and deeper in pitch at each repetition, before subsiding into tranquillity.

The version of *Fratres* for solo violin, strings and percussion was written in 1992. Here the solo instrument offers its own arpeggiated interpretation of the material, again over the hushed drone that underpins the texture, before the more meditative statement of the hymn by the strings, with punctuation from the percussion, and the occasional plucked notes of the solo violin. The violin continues its elaboration of the simple quasi-Gregorian theme, sometimes in serenely contemplative mood and sometimes more energetically and with greater intensity, while the percussion provides a more sombre and even sinister division to the repetitions, which return to a meditative final silence, as the procession moves away once more.

The string quartet version of *Fratres*, written in 1989, offers the material in a very different texture. Again there is the simplicity of organum, over a continuing drone, even starker in this reduced scoring, the instruments of the quartet providing the division of each episode by their own simulation of percussion in plucked notes. Again the pitch is lowered, the music becomes louder, as if a procession of monks were approaching, soon to depart once more.

Pärt's re-arrangement of the material of *Fratres* for cello and piano was made in 1980. Here, as in the version for solo violin of 1992, the cello starts with an agitated arpeggiated version of the material, interrupted by the lower notes of the piano, which then offers the hymn in a higher register, over cello harmonics. Again there is a contrast between gently lyrical elaborations of the hymn and the intenser activity of arpeggiated texture for the cello. There is a division of verses, using the piano and plucked notes from the cello, with the former providing a basis for the cello. The climax is reached in a passage of strongly marked chordal writing for the cello, subsiding gradually into a mood of greater serenity, as the cello rises to Heaven.

Fratres for eight cellos was written in 1982. This treatment makes full use of the wide range of register possible from the instruments, which provide their own percussive verse divisions, as the material is transposed downwards and the dynamic level increases, in a version of the work that avoids the agitation of the solo instruments found in the arrangements with solo violin and solo cello.

The setting of *Fratres* for wind octet and percussion follows the original conception of 1977, on which later versions elaborated in their various ways.

Festina lente (Hurry slowly), the Latin tag generally anglicised as "More haste, less

speed”, is here a contrast of speeds, as the violas state the theme, played twice as fast by the violins and twice as slowly in the lower parts. The technique of simultaneous performance of the same theme at different speeds is derived from Renaissance polyphony and the form of the so-called mensuration canon, with a diminution of note-values in one part and an augmentation of them in another. The technique itself may be a purely intellectual or mathematical one: its result here is music that is serenely contemplative, ending in a prolonged silence. *Festina lente* was written in 1988 and revised in December 1990.

Written in 1978, originally for four voices, *Summa* set the words of the Credo, I believe in one God, reaching its present form in 1990, its forward impetus suggesting the Baroque rather than earlier musical periods, although the contrasted grouping of parts may suggest Renaissance procedures.

Pärt's *Cantus in memory of Benjamin Britten* was first performed in London in 1979, three years after Britten's early death. The work opens with the sound of a single bell and makes use of a slowly descending minor scale, overlapping and appearing at different speeds simultaneously, in diminution and augmentation, while the funeral bell tolls above. The descent grows slower and more prolonged, until it reaches its final resting-place.

© Keith Anderson

Tracks 24-33

It seems so simple. Just a few notes, repeated harmonies, often at a very calm pace, declamations on a note or a chord. No complex patterns, with many surprising dissonant harmonies or extremely complex voice leading. Then what makes for this intriguing, dazing atmosphere, which is cherished by, and enraptures so many?

In 1977, Arvo Pärt (1935) invents a name for his new style: *tintinnabuli*, a Latin word meaning little bells. The crisp sound of those bells rings in a serene, almost meditative, religious environment and entrals the attentive listener, who is never shocked by sudden changes, but is softly led into an enchanted universe of sounds.

Is it correct to award Pärt, together with Henryk Górecki and John Tavener, the predicate of 'holy minimalist'? In a far more positive light we view his quest for a new idiom, inspired by the Gregorian style and old polyphony from the 15th and 16th centuries.

In the **Magnificat** (1989) he arranges the text in a free declamatory style. Sometimes on a note, or a dissonance stemming from that one note, like the entry of the soprano, or as a simple harmonic world, which subsequently emerges in the male voices. The declamation feels completely free, thanks to an accurate notation. Notes are slightly lengthened or shortened, resulting in a free, declamatory style rather than in a strict metrical idiom. The notation shows Pärt's intention: the intermittent measures are only there to order the words, not to put the words to music. Pärt's familiar song of praise is spoken with a soft and almost timid voice, with a surprising, triumphant 'et misericordia eius', and his mercy is from generation to generation. It is as if the very pious Pärt wants to present it to us as the qualifying message of a silently rejoicing Mary. Again, this movement ends with a whisper on a major chord: *Magnificat anima mia*.

Nunc Dimittis, the Song of Simeon, forms a liturgic unity with the Magnificat. We know that the composer doesn't consider them as such, nonetheless they connect strikingly well to one another. The *Nunc Dimittis* (2001) opens with a long chord, which slowly reveals a fragment of a melody, with shreds of text passed on by the voices and gradually brought to rest on 'pace'. Here, again, there is a simple harmony, peacefully undulating and moving, with subtle dynamic wanderings, in the same notation, where each word fills a measure and has its own declamation. Suddenly a majestic major chord lights up on 'lumen ad revelationem gentium', an imaginative form of word painting. The *Gloria Patri* seems to be destined for eternity. On an harmonic base in the low voices, melodic fragments appear in a seemingly improvised way, not metric, but free and light and loose. Once the sound stops, it is not over, but a beautiful dissonance is released into the silence.

The seven **Maria Antiphons** (1988,1991) are invocations which in the Roman Catholic liturgy belong to the week before Christmas. These invocations are sometimes dubbed the o-antiphons and all originate from the Old Testament

Proverbs 8: 1-6: O Weisheit

Deuteronomy 10: 16-22: O Adonai

Isaiah 11: 1-10: O Spross aus Israels Wurzel

Isaiah 22: 20-22: O Schlüssel Davids

Malachi 4: 1-3: O Morgenstern

Jeremiah 10: 1-7: O König aller Völker

Isaiah 7: 14: O Immanuel.

We can consider these miniatures as a sample sheet of variations of the seemingly simple compositional technique which Pärt applies.

Declamation on a single chord in parts 1, 4 and 7.

In part 2, O Adonai, a held fifth, alternately in the high and low voices, with the text in another voice above or underneath.

In part 3, O Spross, with a variation with a third or second, with an unexpected climax and a colon leading to part 4.

Part 5, O Morgenstern, has two layers, e major and e Phrygian, which softly chafing, fill one another, attract one another and assemble.

Part 6, O König aller Völker, consists of three layers. The tenors and bases vary and declamate homophonically on a single d minor chord. In an entirely free rhythm, fully autonomous from the lower voices, the altos declamate the entire text on a single note, again a d. A striking feature is the intense repetition of the text O Komm und errette den Menschen. Finally, both soprani have the same text in longer notes, albeit in a free-standing alla breve. Together, the four voices lead to a dynamic climax, building up throughout the part from an extremely soft pianissimo up to fortissimo.

The last part, O Immanuel, has from the onset, with the syncopated placement of the text between the voices, only one direction: O Immanuel: A major, radiant and intense, and once more, soft and compact, O Immanuel.

In the *Stabat Mater* (1985) for three voices (soprano, alto and tenor) and three string instruments (violin, viola and cello), Pärt for 25 minutes uses only one tonality: the aeolian mode, the white keys on the piano, beginning at a. The melodic material fits within this old church mode and often is reminiscent of 15th and 16th century church counterpoint. Obviously the consonance is different, but nowhere it collides. The same goes for the instruments, which descend from very high and fragile down to comfortable positions. Two instrumental, volatile and poignant intermezzi are then taken over by the emblematic image of the mourning mother Mary at the crucified Christ.

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Translation: Jan Tazelaar

Tracks 34-37

Arvo Pärt was born near Tallinn in Estonia in 1935. His childhood was stamped with the Soviet occupation of Estonia, an occupation that lasted for half a century until the mid-1990s. From an early age, Pärt turned his attention to exploring the world of music, first by improvising on the piano, and, as a teenager, by listening to the radio. This passion for the radio later led to a job as a recording engineer for Estonian Radio and brought him into contact with as much new music as was allowed in an era of ideological control. Pärt became the first Estonian composer to use Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique - in *Nekrolog* (1960/1961), an orchestral piece which he wrote while still a student at Tallinn Conservatory. This piece attracted strong official disapproval for its connection with the music of the decadent West, but not enough to prevent Pärt from being one of the winners of a USSR-wide competition for young composers in 1962.

Throughout the 1960s, Pärt continued trying to make sense of the Western musical canon and his own place in it. J.S. Bach and Tchaikovsky are the respective focal points in *Collage on the theme B-A-C-H* and his *Second Symphony*, while *Credo* (1968) is a nightmare metamorphosis of Bach's *C major Prelude* (from *Book I of The Well-Tempered Clavier*). The music of *Credo* is shocking enough, but what landed the composer in trouble this time was the blatant declaration of Christian faith: "I believe in Jesus Christ". The piece was banned across the Soviet Union.

Retreating from such hostility, Pärt spent time re-examining the music of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, and in 1971 wrote a *Third Symphony* in which these influences surface from time to time. For several years afterwards he produced almost no scores except music for films, which had always been part of his professional musical life. Away from public attention he immersed himself in plainchant and contemplated the absolute basic elements of musical language.

Pärt began to understand afresh the vast sonic possibilities within a single note, and the importance and omnipresence of the simple triad (a chord of three notes). These two discoveries were first made public in the tiny piano piece *For Alina* (1976), where one voice moves by step from and to a central note, first up then down, and the other voice articulates the three notes of a triad. Pärt formalised this principle and gave it the name of *tintinnabuli*: "*Tintinnabuli* is the mathematically exact connection from one line to another....*tintinnabuli* is the rule where the melody and the accompaniment [accompanying voice]...is one. One plus one, it is one - it is not two. This is the secret of this technique."

In 1980 the Pärt family emigrated from Estonia and after a short time in Vienna settled in Berlin. Soon after emigrating, Arvo Pärt wrote his setting of the St John Passion using the *tintinnabuli* principle, and since then he has concentrated mainly on sacred vocal works including the *Seven Magnificat Antiphons* (1988), the *Miserere* (1989), *The Beatitudes* (1990) and the *Litany* (1994).

For each new piece of music, Pärt devises a set of laws from which every pitch and every duration, and even the structure of the piece will naturally unfold. He compares this with the work of the original Creator: “my focus is what was ‘before’ the Big Bang...where God had created the formula”. In Pärt’s vocal music it is the text which provides both the emotional framework and a set of values (syllables, words, sentences) to be processed using this set of laws or formula. He considers the text to be “more important than the music” because “the text is stronger and it has given food for hundreds and thousands of composers, and it will continue so”. In order to devise the formula, he tries “to find what is behind every word”; he is keenly aware of “how rich the words are and how rich the words that are not so important....it is like people - if we look on the crowd, there is a king, there is a lord, there is a very poor man, there is a student.....the result is every time unexpected”. Formula, however, does not mean formulaic; Pärt shapes and re-shapes the set of laws until they are exactly right for the particular piece and its text: “during the writing I come several times back to the very beginning idea and I can rewrite.....the formula shorter and clear.....if I have found it, then I can leave the free walk for music after the rules of this formula, because nothing can happen wrong then”.

Settings of the Passion are part of an ancient tradition within the Church in which all four Gospel accounts of the Passion are sung to plainchant in Holy Week. Over the centuries the three main elements of the story were separated out onto different reciting tones, and later given to different singers: a priest to sing the words of Jesus, a deacon the main narrative, and a subdeacon the words of other minor characters including the crowd, Pilate and Peter. One of the earliest surviving Passion settings with polyphonic music for the crowd and minor characters is the late mediaeval anonymous *St Luke Passion* in an English manuscript, Egerton 3307. By the time of J.S. Bach, the Passion setting had developed into a much more elaborate sequence of solo recitative and arias, chorales and choruses, all characterized according to their emotional function, and set in the local tongue.

In his setting, Arvo Pärt eschews all such word-painting and mood-setting, and

instead returns to the neutrality of the Latin translation, with each part allocated a certain constant set of notes and durations throughout. Even the silences between sections have a precise duration specified by the number of syllables in the final word of the preceding sentence, and this is the first recording of *Passio* to take account of the composer’s recent clarification of that particular rule.

The main narrative in *Passio* is given to an Evangelist Quartet, accompanied by violin, oboe, cello and bassoon, whose music centres around the note A. Jesus’s words are set at a slower pace and sung by a bass continuously mirrored by the organ. Pilate is sung by a tenor, and his vocal part and organ accompaniment vacillate between an F and a B (exactly half an octave apart - the ambivalent tritone). All the other characters, including the crowd, are sung by the choir to music based around a triad of E major. Framing the biblical text are the opening title “*Passio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem*” and a final prayer in glorious D major: “*Qui passus es pro nobis, miserere nobis. Amen.*” – “*You who have suffered for us, have mercy upon us. Amen.*”

Despite the exactitude and apparent simplicity with which the notes are pre-determined by the composer, it is a testament to the power and refinement of the *tintinnabuli* principle that the text speaks through. A clear example of this is “*crucifigetur*”, the word with the greatest number of syllables in the entire text of the Passion. The singer’s melody moves, according to the formula, further from its home note than any other, which proves painfully apt as Jesus is handed over to be crucified.

© Antony Pitts

Quotations taken from a conversation between Arvo Pärt and Antony Pitts recorded for BBC Radio 3 at the Royal Academy of Music in London on 29th March 2000.

Tracks 38-52

“I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements - with one voice, with two voices. I build with the most primitive materials - with the triad, with one specific tonality.”

For Pärt, Estonian giant of contemporary music, it was not always so. His earliest works inhabit the neo-classical world, rapidly developing into complex textures

retaining some sense of tonality amidst serial dissonance and dense collages of sound. Aggressive modernism, coupled with proscribed faith, took an inevitable path to censure from the occupying Soviet regime, and then to a crisis of artistic confidence precipitated by the banning of his 1968 work *Credo*. This brought about a silence where “He had reached a position of complete despair in which the composition of music appeared to be the most futile of gestures, and he lacked the musical faith and willpower to write even a single note.” Study during this period led Pärt to create a new style, far removed from what came before, and equally different from its avowed roots in the medieval period.

Christened ‘tintinnabuli’, this technique emerges from a simple melodic voice embraced by an accompaniment taken from the tonic triad – the bell-like sound inspiring the label. Both choral and organ music featured here show the remarkable expressive resources found within such an apparently restricted frame; there are certainly many moments of ascetic detachment but these are balanced with a compelling range of emotion.

The Choral Works

For a text of such significance there are remarkably few settings of **The Beatitudes** – both length and formula of the text an obstacle to musical development. In Pärt, we of course find a style ideally suited to answer these difficulties. Granite slabs of sound come into focus over unyielding organ pedal notes, the message intensified in the silences. Intensity rises with pitch until the music is torn apart by the organ at the concluding Amen – the organ part (a harmonic mirror to the choral section) then dissolves rapidly.

Contemporary with *The Beatitudes* is the massive **Berliner Messe**, written for the 90th Deutsche Katholikentage (Catholic Day) in 1990. Presented here in the version for choir and organ the Mass belies the easy categorisation of Pärt’s style as impersonal. Harmonic economy doesn’t prevent a romantic range of expression, from the yearning of the *Kyrie*, through the to the nervous heartbeat of the *Sanctus* and stripped-down *Agnus Dei*. Jagged text setting, with exposed lines and enigmatic fragments add dramatic purpose. Of particular note is the *Credo*, a major-key reworking of *Summa* – written in Estonia when all expression of faith was forbidden.

The earlier **Cantate Domino** (1977) is an exemplar of the tintinnabuli style – a gently oscillating melodic line surrounded by a triadic accompaniment. Weight of expression is added through subtle changes to the scoring, the emphasis always following the weight of the text.

The Organ Works

The complete organ works heard here (with the exception of the withdrawn 1997 *Puzzle*) explore (exploit?) the instrument’s capacity for stasis and to extract meaning from minimal resources – expressive states so much organ repertoire attempts to cover at all costs.

The Mass – naturally an essential element of Pärt’s deep Catholicism – is found again in **Annun per annum**, a set of variations representing the Ordinary, and titled with the initials of the movements K, G, C, S, A. Hammering repetitions of the tonic chord serve as an introtit – and the composer instructs the organist to switch off the organ’s blowers whilst continuing to play. The coda mirrors this, building from the last sounds of the *Agnus Dei* to the massive sound of the full organ.

More complex and harmonically aggressive is the epic journey of **Mein Weg hat Gipfel und Wellentäler** – inspired by a poem taken from the *Livre des Questions* by Edmond Jabes. The rise and fall of the lines follows the text – *My road had its hours of greatness, its blows, its pain...My road. Yours.* – and the complex texture demands total immersion. The hands divide in an augmented rhythmic canon, cut through with a cantus firmus pedal line (the form is remarkably similar to the *Canon per Augmentatione* in Bach’s *Canonic Variations*).

Pari intervallo is one of the purest expressions of tintinnabuli, and one of the earliest (1976). In this tombeau for a friend, the melody unfolds in parallel lines between the alto and pedal, while the tintinnabuli voices simply repeat the e flat minor triad. There is an almost miraculous depth in this agonisingly bleak expression of grief.

The panelled structure of **Trivium** takes us to an altar in a vast gothic cathedral, seemingly ancient melodies in formal symmetry around a stark central section. Written in the same year as *Pari intervallo*, the language is flexible in its expression, perfectly suited to the instrument.

Popular imagination might place **Spiegel im Spiegel** (Mirror in the mirror) foremost amongst the composer’s output – minimalist and timeless. Its bare repetition and the possibility that this piece could unfold ad infinitum paradoxically making us aware of the passing moments – Pärt writes ‘[the] instant and eternity are struggling within us’. Here this iconic piece is heard in a 2010 transcription by Giovanni Battista Mazza.

Tracks 53-62

Arvo Pärt was born at Paide in Estonia on 11th September 1935. He studied with Harri Otsa and Veijo Tormis, then at the Tallinn Conservatory with Heino Eller, graduating in 1963. His first works adopt an undemanding neo-classical style, but a clandestine study of serial technique became apparent in *Nekrolog* (1960), heralding a series of scores, such as *Perpetuum Mobile* and the *First 'Polyphonic' Symphony*, which afforded Pärt notoriety amid the warily-conservative establishment of the period. A growing interest in the music of Bach led Pärt to combine the famous B-A-C-H motif with often wildly extraneous material, as in the cello concerto *Pro et Contra* and the *Second Symphony* (both 1966). The climax of this period came with *Credo* (1968), in which Bach and Modernism openly conflict in a work whose unabashed Christianity was considered a direct provocation to Soviet officialdom.

Rather than pursue this line of thinking, Pärt retreated into virtual silence. The *Third Symphony* of 1971 gave notice of an intense interest in early music, notably Gregorian chant, but not until 1976 did he begin to compose fluently, now using a tonal technique he termed 'tinnabuli', in which the bell-like resonance of notes in a triad underscores a melodic voice which revolves step-wise around a central pitch. Several works now considered classics followed, *Tabula Rasa*, *Fratres* and *Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten*, culminating in 1982 with the *St John Passion*. This paved the way for a sequence of mainly sacred choral works, consolidating Pärt's reputation among the most significant composers at work today. The present disc provides a view of his music over a decade: one in which the focussing on harmonic and rhythmic, thus expressive essentials is always apparent.

Written for a commission to mark the 350th anniversary of the Karlstad Diocese in Sweden, *Tribute to Caesar* (1997) sets verse from the Gospel of St Matthew, where Jesus confronts the Pharisees with their hypocrisy. Within its modest dimensions, the piece contrasts overtly choral passages with those in which a melodic declamation predominates, the two being integrated with the unassuming skill that is a hallmark of Pärt's most recent music for unaccompanied choir.

Although the coupling of *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* is a procedural 'given' in the Evening Service of the Anglican tradition, Pärt's setting of the former text was only joined by the latter after twelve years, his *Nunc dimittis* being written to a commission from St Mary's Episcopal Church in Edinburgh and first heard at the Edinburgh Festival in August 2001. The words taken from the Gospel of St Luke are

set with an emphasis on the gentle radiance that they so directly evoke: the part-writing shifts between degrees of dissonance with a sense of growing intensity, and reaches its brief but fervent climax at the words '*lumen ad revelationem*', with a simple but powerful shift to the major.

The setting of *Bogoróditse Djévo* was written for the annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge, in 1992. As befits this most emotionally-charged of hymns, Pärt imbues his tribute to the Virgin Mary with direct expressive vibrancy.

Triodion (1998) was a commission from Lancing College, Sussex, to mark the 150th anniversary of its founding. Fifty years before, Benjamin Britten, a composer much admired by Pärt, had composed his cantata *St Nicolas* for the centenary of the school, a connection Pärt underlined by commemorating the saint, who is also the patron saint of Lancing, in the last of three Odes drawn from the Orthodox Prayer Book. The work itself begins with an *Introduction*, offering praise to the Holy Trinity, then proceeds with Odes directed to *Jesus the Son of God*, the *Most Holy Birthgiver of God* and to the *Holy Saint Nicholas* respectively, before a brief dedicatory *Coda* (marked *ad libitum*, as is the *Introduction*). Each of the Odes is rhythmically static, while harmonic movement similarly ceases in each of the final supplications, where Pärt's music can be heard at its starkest and most unadorned.

A further commission from Karlstad to mark its 350th anniversary, *The Woman with the Alabaster Box* (1997), again sets verse from the Gospel of St Matthew, where Jesus reproaches his disciples for highhandedness shown to a woman who pours fine ointment over his head in tribute. Pärt is characteristically noninterventionist in his treatment of the conflicting points of view, the simple homophonic and stepwise melodic writing creating music of euphonious melancholy.

Composed to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the founding of Norwich Cathedral in 1996, *I Am the True Vine* sets verse from the Gospel of St John. Each stanza deals, to a greater or lesser degree, with the image of a branch in the process of growth that brings with it fruitfulness and hence fulfillment: hence the systematic repetition of notes, the entry of voices and the interplay of registers, to evoke the vine metaphor as one of change within continuity.

Completed in 1997, and first heard at Cologne Cathedral the following year, *Kanon Pokajanen* is Pärt's largest work after the *St John Passion*, its succession of odes emerging from the start of the 1990s. As with its companions in the cycle, *Ode VII*,

which takes its text from the liturgical morning canon of repentance, is permeated by Russian Orthodox idioms, whether in its sonorous, triadic harmonies or in the recourse to parallel motion, to create music of a dark-hued and also intensely felt contemplation.

Commissioned by the Cultural Department of Milan to commemorate the 1600th anniversary of the death of St Ambrose, often credited with the authorship of the *Te Deum*, *Dopo la vittoria* had its première at the city's San Simpliciano Basilica in December 1997. Unusually for Pärt, this description, translated into Italian from an original Russian source, of the baptism of St Augustine by St Ambrose, is set with keen responsiveness to its narrative qualities. At three points, words from the latter's famous text are given an especial emphasis, as if to confirm that this is a present-day 'sacred cantata' with direct textual and musical links to those from the past.

© Richard Whitehouse

Tracks 63-88

As one of the most radical representatives of the so-called 'Soviet avant-garde', Arvo Pärt's work passed through a profound evolutionary process. His first creative period began with Neoclassical piano music; then followed a ten-year period in which he made his own individual use of the most important compositional techniques of the avant-garde: dodecaphony, composition with sound masses, aleatoricism and collage technique. *Nekrolog* (1960), the first piece of dodecaphonic music written in Estonia, and *Perpetuum mobile* (1963) gained the composer his first recognition in the West. In his collage works, 'avant-garde' and 'early' music confront each other boldly and irreconcilably, a confrontation that attains its most extreme expression in his last collage piece *Credo* (1968). By the time of this composition, however, all the devices Pärt had employed to date had lost their former fascination and begun to seem pointless to him. The search for his own voice drove him into a withdrawal from creative work lasting nearly eight years, during which he engaged in the study of Gregorian chant, the Notre Dame school and classical vocal polyphony.

The music of Arvo Pärt is currently very popular, attracting the attention of many people around the world and appearing in the most eminent of concert halls. It appears to be both ancient and modern, and thus many have attempted to track down its origins, equating it with styles such as minimalism, spiritualism, holy minimalism and sacred music. These tags are correct to a degree – Pärt's music is recognised as

part of the American minimalist movement of the 1960s, as the usage of few notes and much repetition places him in the same category as the American minimalists Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Philip Glass. However, American minimalism is not fitting enough a term to define his style as a whole: his approach does not revolve around simple and hypnotic repetition, one of the main characteristics of this movement, but around the search for new tonality without the standard functions that were dominant in Classicism and Romanticism. (The late Dutch composer Simeon ten Holt was always talking about 'the rebirth of tonality after its death'.) Nevertheless, Pärt's music does contain both traditional minimalism and elements of medieval renaissance music intertwined with the technique he created called 'tintinnabuli' (Latin for 'little bells'), and these traits have defined his work right up to today. The 'tintinnabuli principle' does not strive towards a progressive increase in complexity, but rather towards an extreme reduction of sound materials and a limitation to the essential; minimalism with maximum effect, in other words. On the first half of the album are all the works for piano written by Arvo Pärt after 1976. On the second half you can hear the works he wrote prior to this radical change in compositional technique.

Für Alina (1976) showcases the composer's use of bell-like sounds, or 'tintinnabuli'. The listener perceives two musical lines, which while engaged in a slow progression never quite embrace each other. The space between the notes and the structure is very minimalistic. So far there have been several attempts to label the Tintinnabuli style with descriptions such as 'new simplicity', 'minimal music' etc., but it is in essence a new phenomenon that is difficult to analyse and classify by way of existing musicological standards. With his compositions, Pärt has brought about a paradigm-shift in modern music, and the attempt to analyse this shift has in turn given rise to its own process of creative discovery. The score of *Für Alina* (1976), for example, is only two pages long. It gives the performer the possibility to repeat and play the same material in different octaves, and while the left hand only uses notes from the triad of B minor, the right hand counterpoints with separate notes in 'tension and relief'. The build-up is as easy as it sounds, based on adding up notes in the grouping: first two, then three, then four, building up to eight notes and diminishing back to two. The only notation related to tempo is 'Ruhig, erhaben, in sich hineinhorchend', which roughly translates as 'Peacefully, in an elevated and introspective manner'. There is no time signature. The result is a changing landscape that travels through time. I decided

to record a long version and a shorter one, based on the knowledge that Pärt himself sometimes played it in a couple hours!

The *Variationen zur Gesundung von Arinuschka* were written in 1977 and have the same spacy atmosphere. The four-page long composition is written in A minor; again there's no time signature, but the music corresponds to 4/4 time. The open structure in which the piece is built creates an almost healing and spiritual atmosphere, and another composition method from minimalism can be seen here: shifting patterns, as we know them from the early music of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. The steady pulse and serene mood make this piece one of my favourites; I have recorded it several times, and each time I am stunned by its beauty.

Ukuaru valss was written in 1973 and completed in 2010. The tempo marking is 'Mäßig oder temperamentvoll' (a rather slow tempo) and the work is cast in A major. The recently written piece *Für Anna Maria* (2006) appears in two versions on this album, as the tempo marking leaves room for two possible accounts: *Fröhlich* and *Nachdenklich*. As part of my Minimal Piano Collection I had already recorded the *Hymn to a Great City* (1984/2004) for two pianos, but I later discovered another piece: *Pari intervallo* (1976/2008), composed by Pärt in the same year as his famous *Für Alina* and with a double performance option (for piano four hands or for two pianos). The work is written in 4/4 time (Larghetto) and in the key of E flat minor; with this piece we are entering the area in which many of Pärt's compositions are accorded multiple versions: *Pari intervallo* is available for organ, for four recorders, for clarinet, trombone and string orchestra, and also in a version for two pianos. *Spiegel im Spiegel* (1978) and *Fratres* both have their own well-known versions, but I decided to try to play the solo part of the two pieces on a second piano with Sandra van Veen (*Spiegel im Spiegel* is based on the cello and piano version, and for *Fratres* we played the violin and piano version – made in 1980 and dedicated to Elena and Gidon Kremer). The ongoing broken chords in combination with ascending and descending scales in *Spiegel im Spiegel* are hypnotising. Numerous versions of *Fratres* have been made up to now, but the only significant difference is in the instrumentation – the other versions have been scored for: strings and percussion; solo violin, strings and percussion; string quartet; cello and piano; violin and piano; and wind octet and percussion. *Fratres* can be regarded as a work based on a theme and eight variations – or even nine variations on top of the theme. Every variation is a six-bar phrase divided by two-bar fragments after each presentation of the theme. The

structure of the six-bar phrase remains the same throughout the piece, so it is easy to count the total number of bars: nine times six bars plus nine times two bars equals 72 bars. The six-bar phrase consists of three bars of very simple material and its inversion. The first bar is in 7/4 time, the next bar grows to 9/4 time due to expansion of the melodic line, and consequently the third bar is in 11/4 time. The same order repeats in the inversion. This pattern of times does not change throughout the piece. All variations are different in character.

It is always great to see and hear development in a composer's career. His first period of creativity began with Neoclassical piano music (the Sonatinas Op.1 and Partita Op.2), with the next ten years given over to the most important compositional techniques of the avant-garde – twelve-tone serialism, sonic fields, indeterminism, collage technique – all of which saw highly original use in his music. Pärt wrote his *Vier leichte Tanzstücke* for piano for children's theatre in the years 1956–57. Among his earliest published compositions, these pieces show a great imagination for sounds, colours and structures. The first of the two Sonatinas, Op.1 (1958), contains much of the language of Pärt's elder contemporary, Shostakovich, with acrobatic melodies supported by harmonies that become only occasionally dissonant, a characteristic of post-war piano music.

The second Sonata (1959) is quite another work, with an almost jazzy and improvisatory feel. The movements of the Partita, Op.2 (1959), recall baroque forms (Toccatina, Fughetta, Larghetto, Ostinato), but the musical language is decidedly modern, the first two movements charging aggressively up and down the keyboard and making full use of pitch material while not being constricted by serial techniques. The third movement is a study of chords, growing in complexity and dynamics and adhering to a touching, Schubertian, dotted triple meter. All these works inhabit a sound world that resembles the music of Shostakovich. After these pieces, Pärt did not write for piano for nine years; during this period, he had to 'learn how to walk all over again'. The long silence finally gave birth to new music in the year 1976 – to the piano miniature *Für Alina*, and that is the beginning and the end of our journey into the music of Arvo Pärt.

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