

Minnesota Orchestra booked "at normal tariff"

By Vesa Sirén

The Helsinki Festival has paid "the normal tariff" for the visit of the Minnesota Orchestra, even though the costs of the tour are being paid for by a private benefactor, according to the orchestra itself.

"As far as American orchestras go, the price was neither at the bottom end of the scale nor up at the top", says **Risto Nieminen**, Artistic Director of the Helsinki Festival. Nieminen points out that there is nothing very unusual in the idea of a U.S. orchestra having a strong local foundation for financing tours. It happens all the time, he says.

Nieminen is not willing even to offer up a ball-park figure for what the Festival paid to secure the Minnesotans' services.

In 2004, it was said that the Minnesota Orchestra came to Lahti - with a similar sponsorship deal under their belt - on "very attractive terms".

What might be the normal price? The even more eminent Philadelphia Orchestra were coaxed to Helsinki in 2000 for a sum that would be equivalent to EUR 200,000 in today's money.

The Philadelphia Orchestra also played two nights in Finlandia Hall, and for one of the concerts they were accompanied by a top international soloist, pianist **Yefim Bronfman**.

The Minnesota Orchestra is believed to have come to the capital with a slightly smaller price-tag.

According to Nieminen, the visit will not be "100% covered" through ticket sales. Around 1,600 tickets were on sale for each concert, with prices from EUR 62.00-75.00. A limited number of EUR 15.00 tickets were available for children, students, and persons doing their military service or the equivalent civil service duties.

Sunday's concert has sold out, in part through the presence of the popular violinist **Viktoria Mullova**. Mullova is always a welcome visitor hereabouts, as Helsinki was the location for her breakthrough at the 1981 Jean Sibelius Violin Competition. At the time of writing, some tickets were still available for Monday's event.

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VESA SIRÉN / Helsingin Sanomat
vesa.siren@sanoma.fi