

## MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA HAS ENERGY

Emotion and technique unite in the playing of Vänskä's orchestra

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When the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Osmo Vänskä, played in Sibelius Hall in Lahti two years ago it seemed like the big brother of the Lahti Symphony. There were similarities in its timbre and the whole way of playing although the degree of brilliance and virtuosity was higher.

In the acoustics of the Finlandia Hall the Minnesota Orchestra sounds much grander, more colorful and voluble than in Lahti. Musical Director Vänskä and the orchestra have reached a totally same wavelength and Vänskä has found a conducting concept that fits the character of the Minnesota Orchestra.

The starting point is of course Vänskä's meticulous work with details, which the American top orchestra carries out with virtuosity. Great energy and rhythmic drive are also traits typical of Vänskä. The sound of Minnesota Orchestra combined boiling energy and detail-mania in a way that has only seldom been heard in the Finlandia Hall.

One definitely can't call the musicians of the Minnesota Orchestra cool virtuosos. An emotional peak voltage is an inseparable part of the orchestra's energy charge, which is a result of Vänskä's total concentration on the structures of music and the "meanings" of a composer. "It is impossible for me to do any kind of a phrase unless I can live or feel it", Vänskä has said. In the concert, the orchestra and conductor did indeed make every phrase with passion.

As emotion and technique united in the playing of the Minnesotans it resulted in such tone power that caused wonder in the dry acoustics of the Finlandia Hall. In order to reach such a miracle many top instruments are needed, too – numerous valuable violins.

The orchestra's own piece was Gustav Mahler's Fifth Symphony in C minor. As stabbing and tragic as the massive going of the piece was, it also amused, albeit with a bitter tint. The Minnesota Orchestra seemed to understand especially well the entertaining and banal traits of Mahler's music, the bar jingles and sweet ball sentiments. Every now and then the music swayed as if drunk, and the life portrayed by the music appeared like a tragicomic hurly-burly.

The twinkle of humor was a by-plot, though, and both great anxiety and excited bursts ruled the symphony's beginning journey. Through all the stormy pain there were some exalted and warm moments that sounded delicate and chamber music-like.

The psychological strategy of Mahler was to accelerate his anxiety into extreme bursts. After suffering infernal depression he begun to see ethereal light and found release and peace for a moment.

The longed-for moment of the Fifth Symphony is the Fourth movement, Adagietto, of which singing peace, rich with nuances, offered a pleasant rest moment after the slating roar. The finale was a childishly happy and colorful instrumental circus free of all negative feelings.

Viktoria Mullova's, the soloist's, Stradivarius violin, radiated nobly and pithy in Jean Sibelius' Violin Concerto. This instrument fits splendidly in her play style of sinewy and striking virtuosity.

Mullova's bold solo was reminiscent of a piece of advice Sibelius once gave to Henryk Szeryng: Think of a high-flying eagle.

The general tone was interestingly dark. Also the rushing tone color of the orchestra underneath the gliding and virtuoso spurts of the solo violin was full of dark shadows. Mullova maintained the murky sense of destiny in her harshly cracking finale solo. In its entirety the interpretation represented classic, pure Sibelius style.

*Translation: Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner*