

philharmonia orchestra

Conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen and composer Magnus Lindberg

Sound of spray paint

Esa-Pekka Salonen - Conductor

We met some years ago, at fifteen I believe and it was Music Theory 1, at Sibelius Academy Youth Department, and I thought who the hell is this guy.

Magnus Lindberg - Composer

The teacher realized that these two boys will be a problem in his group, so he found us another teacher, and we happened to find a teacher, Väisänen, who then for all the years we both would spend at Sibelius academy, he spent all Saturdays with us and we did all the counter point harmony with him, but we did it in a lovely way because we always played on two pianos...

Esa-Pekka Salonen

And those years with this theory teacher were really crucial I think because he somehow showed how theory and practice go together. How there's no, how you can't justify only theory, there has to be this sort of living musical component to it all the time. We had some fantastic moments.

Magnus Lindberg

And then very much we did also such that one of us was conducting, and the two others were playing, site reading music. So we literally went through all the classical symphony repertoire...

Esa-Pekka Salonen

I would say that from my point of view as a conductor, when I get a score of Magnus, I know the style, I know where he comes from. I know the language very well, I know the harmonic language very well, and it's very interesting because when I look at the page it starts sounding right away in my ear, because I know how the harmony behaves in a way. That sort of familiarity is really wonderful because it's language, and he speaks his language but I understand it. And that's the basis of any communication between people.

Magnus Lindberg

When you have that kind of security with a long term friendship you can elaborate things also, there is no awkward situation of a first performance together with us because there is no trouble in saying, "Oh gosh, this doesn't really work, should we try something else?". And then you together quickly try to find a better solution for something, and there is no judgement in it.

Sound of spray paint

I encountered the amazing world of the inscriptions, the graffiti found in the ruins of Pompei. Which is a very special collection, because nothing else in terms of antique text has remained. It's everyday language that happened to be written two thousand years ago. I got absolutely fascinated by the amazing level of differences, actually the entire picture of a society through what was written on the walls of Pompei. The walls in those days played probably a much more important role in terms of passing on messages in a society than today. I kept text material as exact as they are documented. It became a huge work. It's a collection. What I have as text for the entire piece is sixty-four graffiti's from all types of aspects of life. Everything from the beautiful land, and poetic levels, all the way down to the rude types of graffiti you find in restrooms today, and so forth.

Esa-Pekka Salonen

I think it's an absolutely fascinating piece, and I'm especially pleased about the fact that we will have the Philharmonia Voices do this, because these people are fantastic singers. And that sort of collaboration is going to be a lot of joy.