

SOUNDS EMANATING LOVE

By IMMO MIHKELSON

In 2010, a sculpture dedicated to Pärt, "Young lad on a bicycle listening to music" by Seaküla Simson, was opened on the main square of Rakvere, the childhood hometown of Arvo Pärt.

In the final days of May and in early June, four concerts of Arvo Pärt's music will be performed in Washington D.C. and New York. The choir and orchestra will fly over the ocean, the recent Grammy-winner Tõnu Kaljuste will conduct and the composer himself has helped to put the programme together. Health permitting, the 78-year-old maestro will attend.

It is reminiscent of Arvo Pärt's first authorial concert, which took place almost thirty years ago in New York and was organised with great enthusiasm by the ensemble Continuum and Joel Sachs. The composer was present and helped the performers to fine-tune their performance.

In the years in between, Arvo Pärt's name has become very influential. It stands for music which many people love. Tranquillity, sadness and selfless love emanate from the sounds of that music. It consoles and gives strength.

Estonians are proud of Arvo Pärt because he is a world-famous Estonian. Fame creates respect. But when we look more closely, his compositions address everyone, attempting to appeal to that shared aspect of humankind which rises above nationality, skin colour and culture. It is as if the music wishes to say that we are all in it together.

The road to music

Arvo Pärt was born in 1935, in the Estonian provincial town of Paide, but his parents separated and, before the onset of the war, mother and son moved to Rakvere. The childhood and early youth of the future composer were spent in the tranquil milieu of that small town. When he started school, the Germans were still in charge in Estonia, but when he commenced his piano lessons at the age of nine, life was lived according to the directions set by the Soviet occupation regime. Those were restless and anxious times, and left a stamp on many people. When, on Stalin's command, tens of thousands of people were deported from Estonia to Siberia, Pärt's close relatives were among them. This left a thorn in his soul and a strong sense of revulsion towards the foreign powers.

The young lad attended school, fooled around with his friends, and became fixated on films screened in the local cinema. Music entered his life bit by bit, but from a certain point onwards it overshadowed everything else. The radio became the focal point of his life: after all it played classical music. On Fridays live concerts were transmitted and the boy biked to the central square of the town, which had a loudspeaker attached to a post. He used to circle around that post until the end of the concerts. Today the sculpture of a boy with a bicycle on the central square in Rakvere is reminiscent of those occasions.



Photo: Preet Grepp

In fact, this tale is of a person who merged with music from the word go. It is a story of the kind of love and yearning for what's beyond the horizon, which is often much more emotionally expressed by music than by other arts. And it is also the story of Arvo Pärt's music, music which many people all over the world feel an affinity with. The patterns of those melodies call people back into themselves, announce a sense of inexplicable harmony, and enable them to be part of or to hope for contact with something much larger. People need it. And this is what Arvo Pärt needed as he followed the call of music throughout his life. This path was, from the start, full of joy but also twists and obstacles, temptations and suffering. The composer has said in interviews that he does not think his life has differed much from the lives of many others. We share so much with each other: our main needs and our goals are the same. In one way or another, this is what his music is about.

In the draughts of power and spirit

After graduating from school, Pärt went to Tallinn, where the best Estonian musicians and teachers worked. His wish was to become a composer. By then the city had been cleaned up of war ruins, Stalin was dead and a whiff of newborn hope was floating in the air.

In the late 1950s, Pärt's early works first attracted attention in Tallinn, where they were approved of by older colleagues in the Union of Composers, and subsequently in Moscow. The times favoured young energy and the socialist society tried to guide it in the "right" direction. Culture also played a role in the bloodless battles of the Cold War, where competing ideologies tried to prove their supremacy to the masses on the other side. Sometimes it worked.

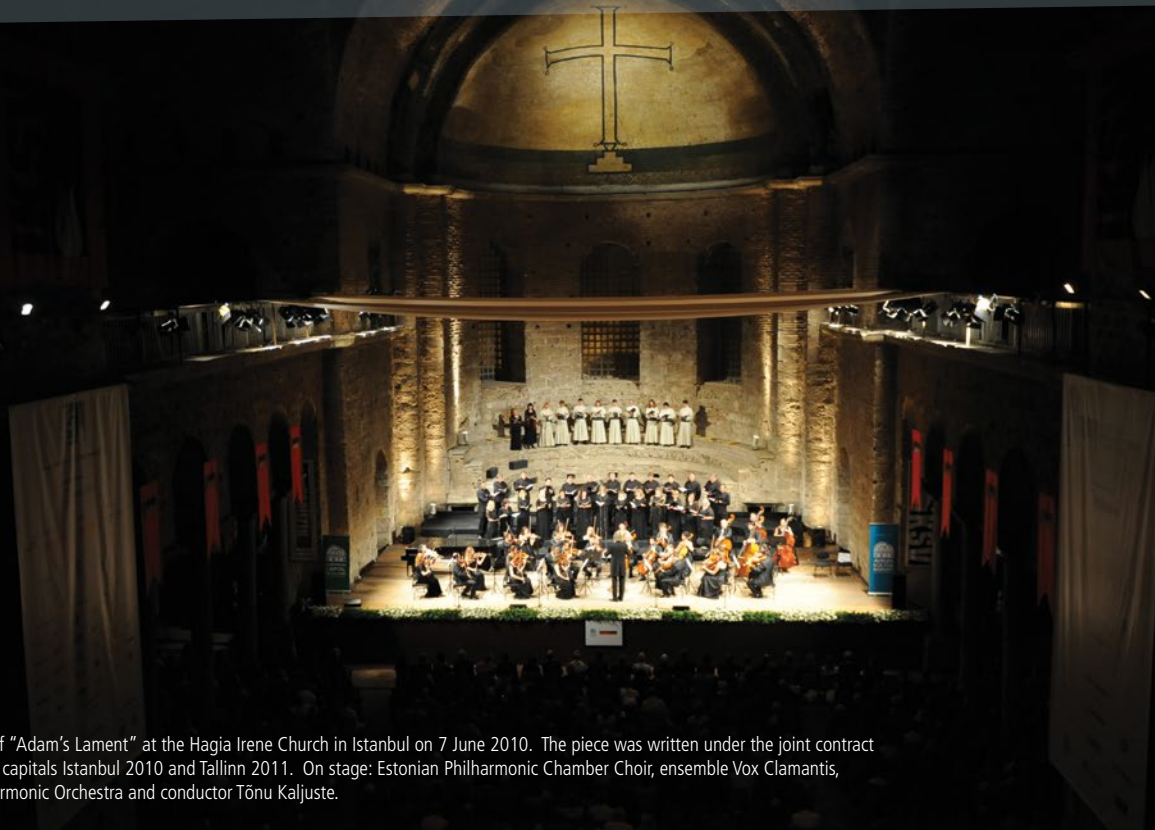


Photo: Mahmut Ceylan / Arvo Pärt Centre

The premiere of "Adam's Lament" at the Hagia Irene Church in Istanbul on 7 June 2010. The piece was written under the joint contract for the cultural capitals Istanbul 2010 and Tallinn 2011. On stage: Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, ensemble Vox Clamantis, Borusan Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Tõnu Kaljuste.

In this confrontation, every talent was seen as a future warrior and Pärt was favoured. But in Estonia, on the border of the huge red empire, the Iron Curtain was weaker and thus the echoes of modern Western composition techniques could be heard. Pärt became fascinated by them, the more so as they provided the opportunity to express his defiance of the regime. Problems soon developed, as the environment in which Pärt lived considered Western influences to be enemies. Defiance was unacceptable.

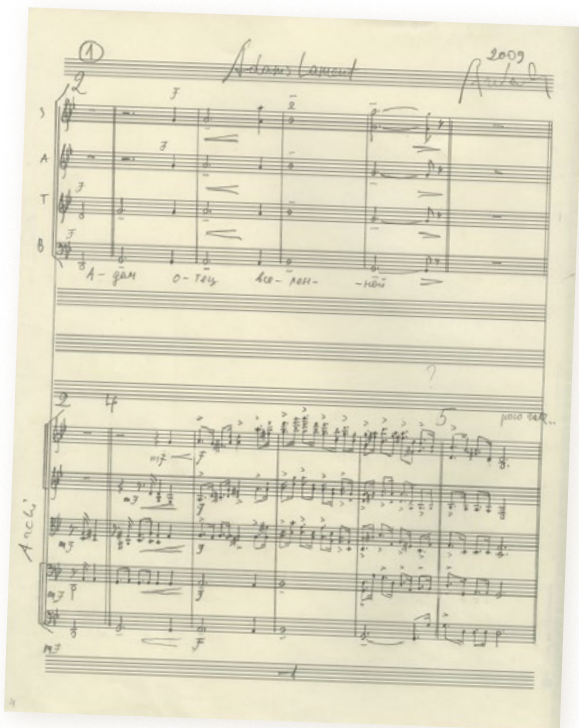
Ever since his student-time orchestral work **"Nekrolog"** (1960), strong pro and contra draughts had been blowing across his path as a Soviet composer. He was praised, only to be criticised later, persecuted and favoured. Audiences were keen on his music, but the officials had their doubts.

Working as the recording director at Estonian Radio in the 1960s taught him to listen to the fine nuances of sounds. This job probably also gave him a crash course in the psychology of musicians, which later helped him significantly in making his own special world of sound audible. Years later Arvo Pärt said that his crooked road of searching for beauty, purity and truth—of seeking God—began in the 1960s. It was the course he chose. Even as a young man, he had high ideals and the intuitive sense that making compromises could lead to losing everything.

A new breath of life

Around 1968, when there was anxiety throughout the world, Pärt lost faith in the contrasts and oppositions of his music. He began to look for a new shape and expression for sounds. This was a situation in which Pärt had a general sense of what he wanted to say, but he had not yet found the right words, the shapes of sentences and rhythms of speech to express it. Pärt turned to music from earlier centuries and tried to find a way to translate the tranquillity and clarity of that old music into his own language.

This was the great turn which changed his life, both internally and externally. He married for the second time and moved, living a modest life in a dismal housing estate on the outskirts of Tallinn. The searching years were difficult and those solitary attempts often brought only disappointments. His wife, **Nora Pärt**, has recalled witnessing Arvo almost losing faith and seemingly considering the idea of giving up trying to be a composer.



Manuscript of "Adam's Lament" by Pärt

Then came the spark which changed it all. Born one February morning in 1976, the piano piece **"Für Alina"** opened a new door and light poured in. Discovering **tintinnabuli** was a new start for Arvo Pärt in music, but the direction of his search remained the same. Tintinnabuli is often mentioned when talking about Arvo Pärt's music. It has been called a method of composing, a unique style and a way of thinking. There is no simple and clear definition, but many explanations have been offered. Interest in those explanations has grown in parallel with the interest in Pärt's music all around the world. We do not know if this interest has reached its peak, but we do know for a fact that **the music of this Estonian composer has been the most performed contemporary music in the world for several years running.**

The call in his music has been slow to reach people, just as the music itself has a slow tempo. When Arvo Pärt left the Soviet Union in 1980 and moved to Vienna with his family, there was nothing positive waiting for him there. The foreign environment made him withdraw ever more into himself and the spiritual world of his music was just as ill-suited for that environment as for the one he had left behind. He wasn't aware of the fact that a particular German had listened to his music on a car radio and become so excited by it that he wanted to release an album.

When **Manfred Eicher** and **ECM** released **"Tabula rasa"** in the autumn of 1984, it was a real statement and marked another significant turning point. Eicher later said that he believed the main piece on the album changed the awareness of music throughout the world in the late 1980s. This may sound a bit pretentious, but many people agree.

The story released by the American press, which has been cited on many occasions, tells of a journalist seeing young men with AIDS, waiting for death in a refugee centre, who listened to Pärt's **"Tabula rasa"** again and again. The sounds must have incorporated something very significant for people dealing with such a serious situation.



Photo: Mahmut Ceylan / Arvo Pärt Centre

Arvo Pärt and Manfred Eicher before the premiere of "Adam's Lament" at the Hagia Irene Church in Istanbul.

All is one

Later many articles asked what it was which pulled people from different parts of the world, people with different skin colours, who spoke different languages and had diverse world-views, towards the music composed by Arvo Pärt. Many answers have been proposed and, at the same time, his music has been criticised for being light and flirting with listeners. Such comments have come from representatives of modernist music. Such reactions may have been caused by the composer's clear desire to be on the same wavelength as his listeners, not to tire their perception with sound tangles and structures pushing their limits.

On the cover notes of the album "Tabula rasa", there is a beautiful comment by the composer in which he compares his music to white light, which after piercing the prism of the listener acquires different shades.

From this angle, all of the elements in this music meet each other: the composer, the musicians and the audience. "Me" and "they" become "us" and things find their natural place. There is balance and order. At least in the ideal world.

Arvo Pärt has said very little to explain his clear and simple music, which aims for unity. The fewer the words, the larger the space to interpret the music. "All is one" and "one and one makes one" are two of the most typical descriptions. The first sums up his world-view generally, and the second describes the unity of the polarities of tintinnabuli.

Music crossing borders

The universe of this music is spiritual and the sounds can be seen as "religious" in a way. People often wonder why Pärt's music communicates with people regardless of their religious confession or lack of it, regardless of age or ethnicity. Perhaps he has been able to translate something very human into sound which crosses the borders that normally separate people. We do not know; we can only accept this explanation or offer our own answers.

The Arvo Pärt Centre has been active for some years in Laulasmaa, near Tallinn, close to where Arvo and Nora Pärt reside. The Centre collects and systematises materials related to the composer. Once the Centre opens its doors to the public, researchers will be looking for answers to such questions.

St. Vladimir's Seminary in the USA has founded a research field called the Arvo Pärt Project and, on their website, they claim to attempt to uncover the part of Arvo Pärt's compositions which have been most in the shadow: everything linked to the Orthodox tradition. The seminary is also the organiser of the concerts of Arvo Pärt's music taking place in Washington and New York this year.

Pärt's latest piece, "Adam's Lament", has drawn inspiration from the Orthodox spiritual tradition. Written for choir and orchestra, the piece received acclaim at the Grammy Awards this year, and the BBC Music Magazine has nominated the album containing this piece for its own award ceremony to be held this year.



Photo: Priit Girepp / Arvo Pärt Centre

The composer taught pupils of the Old Town Music School as part of the collaborative project "Let's Play Pärt" between the Arvo Pärt Centre and the Old Town Educational College. The young cellist Johannes Sarapuu rehearses for his performance of "Spiegel im Spiegel". The rehearsals and the concert which took place in May-June 2011 have been released on DVD.



Photo: Evelyn Ilves

Arvo Pärt and President Ilves on 5 April 2011 at the Arvo Pärt Centre.

Having been kicked out of Paradise, because of sin, the story of Adam is the story of humankind, according to the composer. Pärt uses his music to tell a story which was once written down by Saint Silouan the Athonite. Actually it was made public by one of his disciples, Archimandrite Sophrony, who Arvo Pärt met in the 1980s in Essex, UK, and who became an important guide for Pärt, perhaps even the most important source of support at that time in his life.

The words of encouragement and teachings of Fr. Sophrony helped the composer who had relocated to the West to keep up his spirits in the foreign environment and this resulted in a lot of wonderful music. Pärt started to write the music for "Adam's Lament" in the early 1990s and Fr. Sophrony managed to share his thoughts with the composer before his passing. But then the rough drafts remained in a drawer until a few years ago, when Pärt finalised the work and made it public. He had matured and become wiser by twenty years; he was more experienced as a composer and his sense for life was much deeper.

Whoever listens to the music and tries to touch the sounds and words with his heart, may find a hopeful message in "Adam's Lament". This message says that, although many things have turned out badly, each person and humankind as a whole may find their way with the help of love.

This is not the end of the road but just a signpost.
A signpost to Arvo Pärt's music.

ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION for the Arvo Pärt Centre's new building

The Arvo Pärt Centre (APC), in co-operation with the Estonian Union of Architects, recently organised an international idea competition in order to find the best architectural solution for its building in Laulasmaa, near Tallinn.

Seventy-one applications from all over the world were submitted to the first round of the competition. Twenty participants were selected to continue in the second round. Among them is the bureau of the world famous architect Zaha Hadid, who has designed various arts venues and opera houses.

In four years, when the Republic of Estonia celebrates its hundredth birthday, the new APC will open its doors to the public in Laulasmaa, surrounded by the magnificent pine trees of the Lohusalu peninsula. The centre will be located near the former summer house of Arvo Pärt's beloved teacher Heino Eller. The plot of land in the forest has been given the name Kellasalu (grove of bells – ed.).

Anu Kivilo, Executive Manager of the APC, said: "Laulasmaa has always been a very special place for Arvo Pärt and his music. It was his wish that the centre be located away from the hustle and bustle of the city centre. People would then come to visit the centre on purpose and not just drop by on the spur of the moment. Thus the journey will take some time and visitors will be in the right frame of mind."

The APC architectural competition was the first of its kind in Estonia. In the first round of the competition, the quality of the architects was assessed. Applicants had to submit portfolios with four photos of their previous works. According to Peeter Pere, Head of the Estonian Union of Architects, the level of participants at a competition

organised in Estonia has never been as high. "Just as Arvo Pärt's music is special, it is our wish that the centre be designed to be a top architectural piece by world standards. The international level is demonstrated by us having a Fritzger winner—the Nobel Prize of architecture—among us," said Pere.

All of the twenty participants to make it past the first round are very well-known and will continue to compete anonymously and from the same starting position. "It is a paradox that special Estonian music and a special composer are about to bring special architecture into being. This is happening away from main centres and, as a result, the pine forest we have selected for the site of the building will become especially attractive," added Pere.

Michael Pärt, Head of the Selection Committee, said that their goal was to select those architects whose previous work best fit the concept and needs of the APC. "I am really looking forward to the next stop on this journey, when we see the building designs of the future Kellasalu venue," said Michael Pärt. It is planned to select the winning design by 20 June.

The future building will guarantee appropriate storage for archive materials. The new building will enable the APC to enlarge its activities, for example to cooperate with researchers, and organise educational programmes, conferences, exhibitions, and music and film evenings. This will enable the centre to be more appealing to visitors.

Visit the competition homepage at www.arhliit.ee/apc

The APC homepage: www.arvopart.ee

Tõnu Kaljuste and Arvo Pärt during the recording of "Adam's Lament" in the St Nicholas Church in Tallinn, November 2011. In 2014, conductor Tõnu Kaljuste won a Grammy for the album (released by ECM) in the Best Choral Performance category.

At the end of January, the conductor **Tõnu Kaljuste** won a Grammy for recording Arvo Pärt's "**Adam's Lament**". The high recognition was at the same time a tribute to Pärt's music. Released by ECM, this particular album is Pärt's latest.

In just a few decades, Tõnu Kaljuste has undoubtedly become the most outstanding interpreter of Arvo Pärt's music. ECM, the reputable Munich-based record company which has for decades worked closely with the composer in publishing his newest works, has released seven albums in which Kaljuste conducts Pärt's music.

Released in 1993, the first of those albums – "**Te Deum**" – was nominated for the Grammy Award in the Best Choral Performance category for the conductor, who back then was not well-known in the rest of the world. For several months, the album topped the classical charts in Billboard and received many positive reviews. Hence, their collaboration began at almost the very top. "Te Deum" was also the first record that Arvo Pärt made together with Estonian musicians since his move to the West. He later said that it was all Kaljuste's "fault".

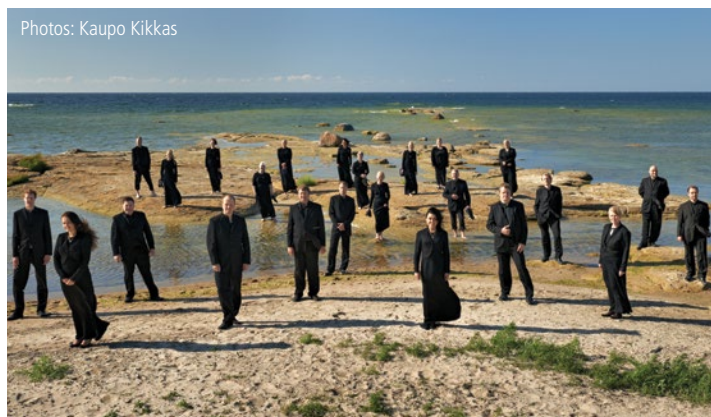
In the early 1980s, Arvo Pärt dedicated himself entirely to writing the choral and orchestral piece "Te Deum", but the work didn't find its right shape until the score somehow found its way to Estonia, and Tõnu Kaljuste managed to make the music come to life in a way which impressed the composer. Pärt decided to record "Te Deum" with the **Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir** and the **Tallinn Chamber Orchestra**, conducted by Kaljuste. The conductor brought the orchestra together precisely for that piece of music.

Kaljuste's chamber choir has a history. His father, Heino Kaljuste, founded the renowned children's choir "**Eil-lerhein**" in the early 1950s. Throughout the years, many young singers grew up in the choir and Tõnu

TÕNU KALJUSTE

& THE ESTONIAN PHILARMONIC CHAMBER CHOIR

Photos: Kaupo Kikkas



Kaljuste himself received his first experiences as a musician with the choir. In 1970, Tõnu Kaljuste gathered a group of former “Ellerhein” singers of his own age and founded the chamber choir. They were united by friendship, a shared history as singers and their desire to discover new perspectives in music. The sound aesthetics which the young conductor aimed for came from the chamber choir movement in Western Europe. Their repertoire included works by Bach, but also by **Veljo Tormis**: they connected sounds reaching to the sky with music which got its strength from its roots.

They manoeuvred between the restrictions established by the Soviet regime, and succeeded in spite of them. As more and more information about Arvo Pärt’s success as a composer abroad reached Estonia during the time when the Soviet Union was disintegrating and Estonia was becoming independent again, it was obvious that interest in Pärt’s music—which had been forbidden before—was starting to grow.

Tõnu Kaljuste points out that, after many years, it was the first opportunity for the composer to explain his wishes to musicians in his mother tongue. This was extremely significant, because the soundscape of Pärt’s music has a fragile and special essence, crystal-clear and yet pulsating like a living organism. The musical score often fails to describe this kind of sound precisely. The conductor recalls that the composer’s recommendations to confused musicians tended to be in the style of: “lean gently on the sound”. It seemed impossible to do. Yet such imaginary shapes have an unexplainable impact on musicians and they did indeed play with another kind of feeling.

Now sixty, Tõnu Kaljuste has, together with the composer, painted the “typical Pärt soundscape” for a couple of decades. During this time, the experiences have ranged from disappointments and setbacks, and the stresses of trying something out, to exhilaration at music that reaches the skies. Arvo Pärt has called Kaljuste the closest interpreter of his music.



ARVO PÄRT CONCERTS in Washington D.C. and New York

MAY 27 KENNEDY CENTER CONCERT HALL, WASHINGTON

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra conducted by Tõnu Kaljuste

MAY 29 PHILLIPS COLLECTION, WASHINGTON

musicians from the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra

MAY 31 CARNEGIE HALL, NEW YORK

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Tõnu Kaljuste

JUNE 2 METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, conducted by Tõnu Kaljuste

*In the presence of the President
of the Republic of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves
with Maestro Arvo Pärt*



ESTONIA IN CONCERT: THE MUSIC OF ARVO PÄRT

*Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir
Tallinn Chamber Orchestra
Conductor Tõnu Kaljuste*

May 27, 2014 6:00 PM
The John F. Kennedy Center for
the Performing Arts Concert Hall

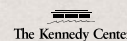
A FREE CONCERT



EMBASSY OF ESTONIA
IN WASHINGTON



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE



The Kennedy Center

Arvo Pärt will be in attendance at all concerts.

As Arvo Pärt is going to the US in conjunction with New York’s St. Vladimir’s Seminary’s decision to grant him an honorary degree, the New York concerts and the Phillips Collection concert will be organised by the Arvo Pärt Project at St. Vladimir’s Seminary.

arvopartproject.com

The concert in the Kennedy Center will be organised by the Embassy of Estonia in Washington on May 27. The event is free of charge and the Concert Hall seats 2,442 people. The event is supported by the Estonian Ministry of Culture, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonian

organisations, Honorary Consuls and individuals in the U.S.

www.estemb.org/arvopart

This event will be the highlight of Estonian culture in Washington, a unique opportunity to experience a world-class performance by Estonian musicians in the busiest concert venue in the United States. The concert is also the finale of European Month of Culture, a festival organised by the Delegation of the EU to the U.S.

A reception in the presence of President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Maestro Pärt will follow the concert. Funded by Enterprise Estonia, the event aims to promote the Estonian ICT sector, e-solutions and tourism.