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friday 14th july

art exhibition preview

6.30pm

yarrow gallery, oundle school

Two groups of craftsmen have combined to create an exhibition of exquisite objects in wood, precious metals, ceramics, glass, textiles and leather.

Konstantverkarna I Örebro Län is a co-operative which runs its own Gallery and shop in central Sweden; their beautifully made exhibits show the distinctive Scandinavian flair for design. Members of the Northamptonshire Guild of Designer Craftsmen are committed to the idea of quality and originality and are judged to be some of the most celebrated craftsmen in the county.

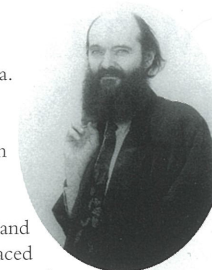
The Exhibition will be open daily from 15th to 29th July.

Opening times: Sat 15th to Sat 22nd: 2 - 7.30pm

Sun 23rd to Sun 29th: 2 - 6pm

Admission free. Work for sale.

arvo pärt

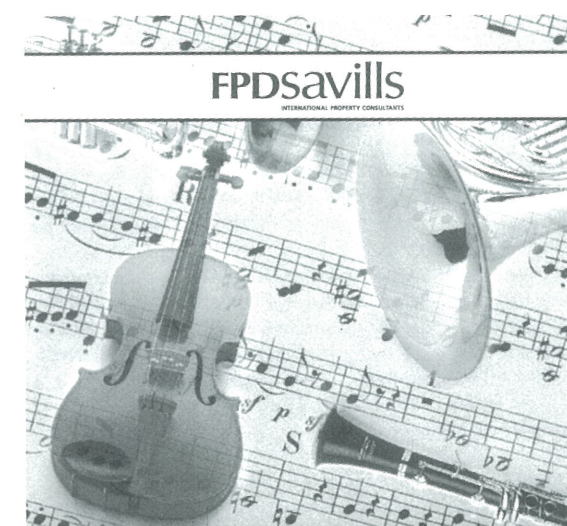


Arvo Pärt was born in Paide, Estonia. That simple fact hides many implications. Estonia had only become an independent state sixteen years before; within the composer's childhood it was 'given' by Stalin to Hitler, who invaded and occupied it, and then re-invaded by Stalin, who embraced Estonia and its neighbours to the bosom of Soviet power. The Baltic nations have a fierce sense of their own identities, aware of what sets them apart: their unusual languages, religions and individual folk cultures.

None of this might seem to be relevant to Arvo Pärt. His recent pieces do not set Estonian texts or suggest the Lutheran spirit (Pärt is, or has been, Russian Orthodox), and they certainly do not flirt with folk music. Yet the massive and deceptively simple strength of his musical personality does have much in common with the temperament of the culture from which he comes. It is intensely religious in a way that is perhaps only possible for music conceived in a political culture where religion has been charged with peculiar emotion.

The music for which Arvo Pärt is now most famous in the West was nearly all written over the last twenty years, but in his own country he is still remembered as a courageous pioneer of modernism, experimenting with a twelve-note series as early as 1959. Pärt moved to Vienna in 1980, and then in 1982 to Berlin; he now divides his time between Germany and England. It was in the years leading to emigration that he found, after enduring long stretches of near-silence, the way to the kind of music he really wanted to write. The year 1977 was particularly important. The pieces he wrote then, including *Tabula Rasa*, *Arbos* and the *Missa Syllabica* are remarkably varied; in them Pärt's newly won self-denial paradoxically reveals a profusion of expressive possibilities. But the triumph of this new output was the now celebrated *St John Passion*. With its immense scale and the astonishing richness of its apparent simplicity, the *Passion* has established Pärt's international reputation as a composer whose music seems to speak to listeners whatever their differences.

For the composer himself, however, this achievement seems only to have been another beginning. In the late 1980s he began a mighty triptych made up of a *Stabat Mater*, a *Miserere* (performed at the 1990 Proms) and a *Mass*, named after the city of Berlin where it was first performed. These grander works were soon followed by another withdrawal into smaller and more modest forms of expression. More recently Pärt has emerged once again as a composer of large-scale utterances with his *Litany on prayers of St John Chrysostom* (1994) and his lengthy *Kanon Pokajanen* (written for the 750th anniversary of Cologne Cathedral, where it received its premiere). The distinctive preoccupations of his *Passion* seem to have been pursued into ever more personal worlds of musical and religious expression. For this composer music and religion are quite certainly one and the same.



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