
Profile

A large photograph of conductor Anu Tali. She has short, wavy blonde hair and is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt with a black bow tie. She is captured in a dynamic conducting pose, with her right hand raised and holding a baton, and her left hand gesturing. Her eyes are closed and her mouth is slightly open, suggesting she is deeply immersed in the music.

Anu Tali

Humaneness is essential

By Gitte Hint

„I recognize myself the most in music,” admits conductor Anu Tali (39). „I am a rather inert person but there is one thing I have delved into in my life.”

As a kid Anu Tali studied piano at the Tallinn Music High School and she never dreamt of becoming a conductor on the world stage. „However at the age of 16 or 17 I started to have a feeling that music is an inseparable part of me.”

Today Anu Tali is conducting some of the world’s biggest orchestras, which does not mean that she has always had the chance to do things that inspired her. „You have to motivate yourself and find positive things in what you do,” says Anu. „Everything starts with yourself. If you dedicate yourself to something then it might help you persuade others. As a conductor you cannot be in bad sorts. Especially as you are facing the musicians and waiting something from them in return.”

This year you will have the chance to see Anu Tali in front of Nordic Symphony Orchestra on their European tour. She will also work with the National Orchestra of Paris and Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra; cooperation with Swedish Radio



Symphony Orchestra and London Sinfonietta will continue as well.

The peak is rather high

Talking about the music scene in Estonia Anu says that local music culture is improving all the time. „Whenever we do something the peak is pretty high. We do not allow ourselves to have bad days. And if we happen to have one then we tend to think that everything is lost. We should know that everybody has bad days and even the most famous orchestras in the world can give mediocre concerts,” says Anu about perfectionism that is so typical of Estonians. „That might be the biggest disadvantage of Estonians – that we are so harsh on ourselves. And on others.”

We are what we have experienced

Anu has a twin sister Kadri who is the director of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and the manager of the Nordic Symphony Orchestra. Anu acknowledges that they are totally different: they have some features in common but these characteristics have developed in dissimilar ways. „Life moulds each of us in a unique way. Everything you have done, places you have been to and people you have met change you. Things about yourself that you elaborate, you’ll be given even a bigger share of these things. In this sense we are responsible for our own happiness. During different periods of time we have been more or less similar with Kadri. There are times when you wouldn’t tell that we are even sisters. It has been said that the first 30 years of our lives we are as we were born and after that we are what we have experienced in life.”

No time to waste

Even though communicating with other people is part of Anu’s work she admits that she is not so good at it. „I am pretty honest. I had to learn to live in a bit different way than other citizens. Born as a twin and being used to sorting out things with my sister every day I found it natural that every next day is a new day and everything has been forgiven. The



real world is not like that as people are not as close to each other as Kadri and me. I had to learn this truth.”

Anu also considers herself to be uncompromising but she is proud of it in a way – it has kept her from doing remarkably stupid things. At the same time she says that she might have abandoned some ideas in a too early stage. „Maybe I have really missed something. But I haven’t wasted my time. If I have really learned something in life then the fact that nothing is what it appears to be. It’s our own fault if we do not realise it always.”

Humaneness helps you to be successful in any field

„God save us from growing up. The biggest difference between a young person and a

grown-up is that we stop dreaming when we grow up,” says Anu. „If one fine day it crosses your mind that you want to learn Italian then nothing stops you from doing it. But grown-ups often find plenty of pretexts not to do things. Nothing prevents you from picking up a textbook, even if it’s only for 15 minutes a day. We frame ourselves. Also in the wider sense – we tend to think that other people expect something from us. Usually it appears that you yourself expect something.

Other people don’t expect much. They only want us to be friendly and kind. As we were as kids. I’m convinced that humaneness is the basis of being successful in anything. People tend to think that being civilized means that you cannot be yourself.”

Only a human being can be better than music

One thing that Anu loves is listening to people talking in their native language. She



claims to speak 5 foreign languages pretty well and some others not so well. Learning languages has been inevitable for Anu – staying in various countries for many months has forced her to learn languages. “When we speak in English we usually imitate the language as we learnt it at school. We even change our tone,” explains Anu. “But if somebody speaks his native language you hear a lot more in his tone. It’s almost better than music.”

Love and sincerity are important qualities

Anu says that what makes a person successful is his way of thinking – how he is able to motivate himself. She realised it in Canada when a young conductor complained that nobody invited him to conduct orchestras although he would have so much to say and give and there were a lot worse conductors who kept being invited. “When I listened to him I understood why nobody wanted to work with him. Being negative and having an excessively high opinion of yourself are a lot worse than a bit of friendly inaptitude or vice. Arrogance is definitely a lot worse. If there’s nothing to take then you shouldn’t expect anything either. Everybody has his strong and weak sides but all of us prefer to work with amiable people. The biggest stars are those who sincerely enjoy what they are doing – making music. That’s the sign of quality.”

Sidebar:

Anu Tali (born on 18 June 1972) is the founder and conductor of Nordic Symphony Orchestra. She studied at the Tallinn Music High School, the Estonian Academy of Music and took extra courses at the Sibelius Academy with Jorma Panula, a Professor of Conducting. She continued her studies at the St. Petersburg State Conservatory with Professor Ilya Mussin and Leonid Korchmar.

She has conducted Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Bratislava Soloists and many other



orchestras in Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Latvia, Russia, Brussels, Vienna, Japan, Austria, France and USA.

In August 2002 Anu Tali recorded Estonian music with Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. Together with Estonian National Symphony Orchestra she has released a debut album *Swan Flight* (Warner Music / Finlandia Records). In 2003 she received the Echo Classic Award 2003 and was named Young Artist of the Year.

In 2004 Anu Tali was given the Young Cultural Figure Award of the Cultural Foundation of the President of Estonia.

In the world of music Anu Tali is known as a musician of the new generation who is searching for fresh musical ideas in the classical music.