



## Minnesota Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä - European Tour - February-March 2009

**A prestigious orchestral tour taking in eight European cities:**

- London, Barbican
- Berlin, Philharmonie
- Cologne, Philharmonie
- Düsseldorf, Tonhalle
- Stuttgart, Liederhalle
- Frankfurt, Alte Oper
- Luxembourg, Philharmonie
- Vienna, Musikverein

Accompanied by soloist Joshua Bell, the Minnesota Orchestra and Vänskä presented works by Adams, Bruch, Barber, Sibelius, Nielsen and Beethoven – the latter giving European audiences an opportunity to hear live their phenomenal Beethoven interpretations, which have received critical acclaim following the release of their cycle on the Swedish label BIS.

First stop on the tour was London's Barbican Centre. Host Sir Nicholas Kenyon said: "Osmo Vänskä was one of the most regular visitors to the BBC Proms in my time there, and it has been great to renew the relationship with the Minnesota Orchestra's recent concert at the Barbican. Osmo is a combination of energy and concentration, vigour and insight".

**Praise from the London leg of the tour...**

"Vänskä's account of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony was driven by an almost delirious vitality, a cut-to-the-bone incisiveness in which the Minnesota strings were very much the dominant force... Vänskä undoubtedly engendered a sense of communal excitement at the work's audacity and perennial newness."

– Edward Seckerson, *The Independent*

"...the Finnish conductor and his brilliant American orchestra punched, teased, charmed and thrilled their way through Beethoven's Eroica symphony. Why? From delicacy came ravishing expression. From precision — perhaps the Vänskä watchword — dazzling power... What impresses is the unanimity of purpose. Rarely does a full-sized symphony orchestra manage to thin itself down to a glowingly hushed pianissimo without losing its grip; with this band, it seems like second-nature."

– Neil Fisher, *The Times*

"...it was sheer adrenal excitement all the way. The opening movement was thrilling, the second movement tragic without heavy solemnity, the scherzo energised without being especially quick. But what made the performance outstanding was the finale. Vänskä and the Minnesotans built a cumulative tension through every twist and turn, right up to the final explosion of joy at the end."

– Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*

"The piece has a sense of a composer having fun, and the players did not miss any of it... It was Vänskä's attention to detail that infused the performance with vitality. He shades dynamics with such subtlety and has a sure sense of onward movement without losing any of the wonder along the way. The concert was part of the Barbican's "Great Performers" series. The Minnesota Orchestra certainly deserves the adjective."

– Keith Clarke, *Associated Press*



### ...and beyond

“In every phase of this remarkable concert—also in the encores, the *Valse triste* of Sibelius and a Slavonic dance by Dvořák—yet another universal notion, a totally different one, was shown to be absurd: that of the American “Big Five,” namely, the five leading music ensembles of the United States. They have long since become the “Big Ten.” And the Minnesota Orchestra from Minneapolis, which looks back on more than a century of tradition with conductors like Mitropoulos, Ormandy, Dorati and Neville Marriner, belongs to it undeniably as an ensemble that is absolutely made of the same stuff.”

– *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

„Denn Osmo Vänskä kann es wirklich. Beim vollen Paramount-Sound des Minnesota Orchestra wurde deutlich, dass der finnische Dirigent das extrem organisch agierende Ensemble völlig unter Kontrolle hat. Er riss es zu musikalischen Emotionsausbrüchen hin. Zweifellos hatte das Programm eine gewissenhafte Interpretation verdient: Mit John Adams und Samuel Barber hatte man zwei große Komponisten der US-amerikanischen Heimat im Gepäck, und Vänskä konnte mit Landsmann Jean Sibelius reüssieren. Bestimmt hat er die Ausgestaltung von dessen klingenden Weiten schon in den Jahren zu Hause beim Lahti Symphony Orchestra perfektioniert, aktuell waren auch mit seinen US-Freunden die bewegenden *Andante*-Kantilenen oder das jubelnde *Abschluss-Presto* zu erleben.“

“For Osmo Vänskä can really do it. With the full Paramount-[Theater-]sound of the Minnesota Orchestra it became clear that the Finnish conductor is completely in control of the ensemble, which functions in an extremely organic way. He carried it away to emotional outbursts in music. Without a doubt, the program deserved a scrupulous interpretation: the performers had packed up and brought along John Adams and Samuel Barber, two great composers from their American homeland, and Vänskä could count on success with his countryman Jean Sibelius. Certainly, already during his years at home with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, he had perfected the shaping of Sibelius’ resonant broad spaces; the *Andante* melody or the rejoicing *Presto* of the finale were also very effective with his friends from the U.S.”

– *Wiener Zeitung*



**The tour of the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Osmo Vänskä, was organised by HarrisonParrott.**

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