



Markus Stenz

Conductor

BEETHOVEN Fidelio, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra

This was a performance true to Beethoven's spirit. Enthusiastically led by Stenz, the orchestra played brilliantly, fortunately placed in a 'historically correct' manner with the two string groups mirroring each other, with impeccable precision in the ensemble and expressive wind solos.

Stavanger Aftenblad, February 2020

BRAHMS Symphony No 1, STRAUSS Til Eulenspiegel BBC PROMS 2019, BBC National Orchestra of Wales

Markus Stenz and his Welsh forces were full-blooded and precise; even better was their supple and refreshing performance of Brahms's First Symphony, which swayed like a willow over water.

Rebecca Franks, The Times July 26 2019

Stenz's reading of the Brahms had a terrific unaffected strength. One felt there was nothing between his mind and the music – no egotism, no false display. He had easily secured the requisite clarity and incisiveness for the Strauss.....How impossibly high the standard is!

Paul Driver, The Sunday Times August 4 2019

KURTAG Fin de Partie, Teatro alla Scala

The music, expertly and diligently conducted by Markus Stenz, traces the text in conversational sympathy, with stop-start blurts and urgent, delicate fluencies.

Fiona Maddocks, The Observer, November 2018 (5)*

Markus Stenz's conducting realises every detail of the score with the absolute precision Kurtág's music always demands.

Andrew Clements, The Guardian November 2018 (5)*

Conductor Markus Stenz draws razor-sharp playing from small clusters of instruments; the moment collective forces let rip, as Clov hovers at the door, is like dazzling light breaking through a dark veil.

James Imam, Financial Times, November 2018

Glistening and nimble, the Scala orchestra is conducted by Markus Stenz, who leads an exceptionally delicate score — its balances and pauses fragile and exposed — with naturalness and a sense of spontaneity.

Zachary Woolfe, New York Times, November 2018 (Critic's Pick)

Markus Stenz's conducting was equally accomplished, teasing out every detail of the score with the absolute precision that Kurtág's music always demands

Andrew Clements, Opera Magazine, November 2018

Kurtág's typically elusive soundworlds demand special attention when stretched over an unprecedented two hours, Conductor Markus Stenz's artful realisation is engaging. The closing orchestral passage, which resembles bright light bursting out of darkness, is dazzlingly hard won.

James Imam, Opera Now, January 2019

MENDELSSOHN, WAGNER Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Stenz elicited strikingly delicate playing from the violins and cellos in Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture. The German conductor's beat was impulsive, giving the piece a restless quality in the moving notes, never quite even and certainly not dragging. [...] Stenz has conducted many of the Wagner operas, and his expertise shone through. He helped the orchestra shape the string unisons that run through the Act I Prelude, seemingly simple lines that have to be subtly inflected and flexible. [...] Stenz expertly paced the massing of sound in the "Transformation Music" from Act I, propelling the music steadily toward the sonic climax with the trombones blaring. [...] it was a transcendent moment made possible by Stenz and his growing, increasingly important relationship with the musicians of the BSO.

Charles Downey, Washington Classical Review, 9 Oct 2017

STRAVINSKY Firebird Suite, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Stenz drew from the BSO no end of sonic atmosphere. Stravinsky's endless melodic and harmonic inventiveness emerged as fresh as ever. The tension the conductor achieved right at the start was followed by masterful timing and nuanced phrases that evoked each incident in the scenario tellingly.

Tim Smith The Baltimore Sun, 8 May 2017

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 4, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Even folks who hate Bruckner may be won over by the BSO's performance of the "Romantic" led by Markus Stenz [...] an absorbing, uplifting account of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 with principal guest conductor Markus Stenz in incisive form on the podium and the ensemble giving him an extra-expressive response [...] Stenz continued to coax sensitive playing from each section and soloist within the BSO [...] Stenz was a model collaborator in a finely detailed performance.

Tim Smith The Baltimore Sun, 3 February 2017

BEETHOVEN Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Markus Stenz, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's new principal guest conductor, worked several kinds of magic Saturday at Strathmore. [...] he elicited playing at a level I've never heard from this middling-to-good group. Everything sounded different; this German maestro uses unconventional gestures and no baton. [...] He shapes every phrase, has an innate feel for drama and made the orchestra play more softly than I thought possible.

Washington Post, 3 March 2016

Sunday afternoon's concert at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall reconfirmed how inspiring a force Stenz can be on the podium, and how effortlessly he can get the BSO to respond with genuine impact [...] the conductor hardly stinted on the work's lyrical beauty, coaxing wonderful refinements of tone and articulation...

Tim Smith The Baltimore Sun, 8 March 2016

BEETHOVEN, STRAVINSKY, LARCHER, London Philharmonic Orchestra

Stenz led a driven account. [...] Stenz gave such an enlivening presentation of this work that a few minor infelicities cannot be allowed to detract from praising this bold reading.

Antony Hodgson, Classical Source, 28 October 2015

Stenz's shaping of the opening theme in the second and indeed the progress of the movement as a whole proved strikingly Mozartian: a different sort of complexity, often overlooked in Beethoven [...]

A performance of The Rite of Spring should always be an 'occasion'; it certainly was here. As with the Beethoven, Stenz had clearly thought long and hard about the work. There was nothing routine to his interpretation; it undoubtedly had a logic and character of its own, without trying to be 'different' for the sake of it. [...] Stenz seemed to have rethought the music as a conscientious performer should naturally do. Throughout, it was the spirit of the Ballets Russes and of theatre in general that was most intriguingly apparent.

Mark Berry, Seen and Heard International 29 October 2015

SCHONBERG Gurrelieder, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, Hyperion

The performances of Schoenberg's last lingering celebration of late romantic luxuriance that Markus Stenz conducting in Cologne a year ago were his final concerts as chief conductor. The recording derived from them provides a good resume of Stenz's qualities, his confidence in handling massive forces and his affinity with music composed on the cusp of modernism...

The Guardian 25 June 2015

This superb performance crowns Stenz's tenure as Cologne's general music director, with opulent playing from the Gurzenichers...

The Sunday Times, Album of the week, 28 June 2015

Excellent performances throughout...rarely have the lush textures of Schoenberg's late-Romantic cantata sounded this fresh. The sound Stenz gets from his orchestra is leaner, the strings more silk than velvet, but no less beautiful as a result, offering a more delicate picture of longing in the first part [...] the musical structure and essential clarity are never lost in the clatter of Part 3. And Stenz retains a canny knack for opening the lyrical floodgates when required the ebb and flow he brings to Tove and Waldemar's final songs in Part 1 is exquisite.

Hugo Shirley, Gramophone, Editor's choice, August 2015

The playing is breath-taking [...] this is due in part to the recording itself, and in part to Stenz's way with the score, which combines probing intelligence with almost shocking emotional force. [...] Demands to be heard, for its conducting and playing above all.

Tim Ashley, Classical Source, August 2015

Markus Stenz's theatrical nous never lets things sprawl and the playing and singing are faultless. Essential listening if you've a weakness for late-romantic blockbusters, and this recording is among the best.

Graham Rickson, The Arts Desk, 15 August 2015

...makes a vivid and spacious overall impression thanks to the alternately measured and passionate sway of Markus Stenz and the golden tones of the Gurzenich Orchestra.

Bayan Northcott, BBC Music Magazine, October 2015

SCHONBERG Pelleas und Melisande | Violin Concerto, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, Oehms Classics

These studio recordings [...] underline Stenz's credential as a conductor of the Second Viennese School. He's equally at home in the romantic sweep of Pelleas as he is in the much more ambiguous world of the concerto, with its tensions between tradition and innovation, serialism and tonality, while never allowing the former to become too indulgent nor the latter to seem too dry and calculated.

Andrew Clements, The Guardian, 30 July 2015

Markus Stenz creates space around the baleful 'fate' motif without compromising a strong sense of pulse, which takes Schoenberg's tempo relationships at his word.

Peter Quantrill, The Guardian, September 2015

HARTMAAN Simplificus Simplicissimus, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra

Markus Stenz's fine performance [...] Stenz and his cast capture that raw intensity very truthfully.

Andrew Clements, The Guardian, 4 September 2014

Markus Stenz proves himself an ideal exponent of this music, drawing a performance of conviction and intensity.

John Allison, BBC Music Magazine, December 2014

A powerful piece given an astonishing sense of drama and force by Markus Stenz, the rich orchestral playing every bit as vivid as the singing.

Martin Cullingdord, Gramophone Magazine

Markus Stenz gets alert and attentive playing from the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic: his rendering of the Overture – a belated 'memorial' to Prokofiev – is the most persuasive yet on disc, while his building to the dramatic apexes of the first and third acts is similarly unrivalled.

Richard Whitehouse, International Record Review, December 2014

The inspired direction of Markus Stenz adds to the success of this recording, which the Dutch orchestra truly transcends with undeniable engagement. In a superlative sound recording, this double SACD is quite simply a must-have.

Jean-Jacques Millo, www.opushd.net, 16 February 2015

BRAHMS Symphony No. 1, The Halle

He always gets something special from the orchestra, and Wednesday afternoon's first outing was no exception [...] there was a great account of Brahms's first symphony to come. Markus Stenz combined vigour and clarity and emphasized the music's architecture and textural subtlety. The second movement had an endearing narrative quality (never say Brahms was no Romantic), and the third – about as fast as I've heard it – nervous energy that brought real surprises. The finale's tension was skilfully ratcheted up, with the main tempo producing surging optimism and a fiercely exciting end.

Robert Beale, Manchester Evening News, 7 February 2014