

Kronberg Festival: Successful start for Casals Forum

Ten days and more than 11,000 enraptured concertgoers / Masterclasses held during Festival for first time: 150 young cellists visited Kronberg from across globe / VioViva violin making exhibition proves popular attracting 1000 visitors / Topical social issues

Kronberg, 7 October As it drew to a close on Monday, it was clear that the ten-day Kronberg Festival (which took place from 24 September to 3 October) had been a major crowd-puller: more than 11,000 delighted concertgoers were able to experience the superb acoustics of the new concert hall for themselves. Once again, this turned Kronberg into an international meeting point for world class musicians, talented youngsters and eight orchestras, all playing concerts in the Casals Forum. Everyone was enraptured by the magnificent architecture of the building complex as well as by the acoustics of the concert hall. Alongside the Casals Forum, other venues across Kronberg, including the Johanniskirche and Kronberg Castle, were actively included in the Festival events. The Stadthalle likewise provided the perfect setting for the bustle of the six-day violin making exhibition VioViva, which played host to some 45 exhibitors. In addition, around 150 talented youngsters travelled from across the globe to attend the Cello Masterclasses and receive tuition from renowned musical figures. Raimund Trenkler, Kronberg Academy's Founder and Director, was delighted with the outcome: "We are extremely pleased that the Casals Forum has been so well received by the public. All the enthusiastic feedback we have been given presents us with both an obligation and a challenge: we want to continue to bring the great artists of our time to Kronberg, to inspire people through music and to create many wonderful concert experiences for our audiences into the future."

The ten-day Kronberg Festival (from 24 September to 3 October) comprised a total of 25 concerts, with three concerts to choose from on each day of the opening weekend alone. The Festival programme offered concertgoers, who numbered over 11,000, a diverse range of musical experiences – from chamber music and orchestral works through to jazz. Demand for tickets was huge, with every concert sold out. Virtually everyone who attended a concert in the new hall was fascinated by its acoustics: one delighted audience member said of her listening experience, "I had the feeling of being caressed by the music." Even during the acoustics testing with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (COE) in the spring, French oboist and conductor François Leleux said: "It's as if you are sitting in the middle of a violin and can hear its own sound augmented by Dolby surround sound."

However, the streets of Kronberg were not only filled with the many concertgoers who came from far and wide, but also with 150 talented young cellists who travelled to Kronberg from all over the world. The Cello Masterclasses formed an integral part of the Festival for the first time, and five renowned cellists – Frans Helmerson, Gary

Hoffman, Jens Peter Maintz, Jérôme Pernoo and Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt taught these international students at the event. The public tuition sessions likewise offered members of the public a chance to witness diverse artistic and teaching approaches whilst enjoying wonderful cello music at the same time. Some 300 interested audience members and music enthusiasts visited the Cello Masterclasses, as well as the many specialist talks that took place in a variety of venues around Kronberg and in the Casals Forum.

With circa 45 exhibitors from across Europe, the violin making exhibition VioViva presented a living craft steeped in tradition. Luthiers, bow makers, strings manufacturers and accessories suppliers provided the 1000 visitors to Kronberg's Stadthalle (Municipal Hall) with a fascinating insight into the world of violin making, as well as an opportunity to exchange ideas amongst themselves and with the experts.

In addition to the concerts, numerous masterclasses and the VioViva violin making exhibition, Kronberg Academy likewise used the Festival as a platform for dialogue on topical social issues, such as the question "Does music have to save the world?" Furthermore, through presentation of the new Pablo Casals Award, Kronberg Academy for the first time gave recognition to two artists (Martin Helmchen, piano, and Marie-Elisabeth Hecker, cello) for their exceptional social commitment.

The topic of "Art within Architecture" also formed part of the varied fringe programme and drew a favourable response: there was high demand for the "Work of Art" tours, which gave an overview of the special artworks displayed in and around the Casals Forum.

Next year's Kronberg Festival will take place from 21 September to 3 October, when it will be the turn of the Violin Masterclasses to play integral part.

About Kronberg Academy

Kronberg Academy is today considered one of the most important meeting and training places for young violinists, violists, cellists and now for young pianists as well. Located in the heart of Europe, it gathers the world's most gifted young musicians and brings them together with the great artists of our time. Through the Kronberg Academy Study Programmes, young soloists work intensively with leading musicians all year round in the pursuit of bachelor's and master's degrees. Kronberg Academy's events offer young artists a chance to share the stage with their role models, and also give audiences the opportunity to immerse themselves in this special atmosphere. Furthermore, Kronberg Academy's students go on tour together several times each year where they perform as an ensemble on international stages. The philosophy of Pablo Casals, the great cellist and champion of peace who believed that art, humanity and respect for nature are inextricably linked, is the guiding principle for all training and musical activities that take place at the new Casals Forum, which is the first concert hall and study centre in Europe capable of carbon neutral operation.

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