

# THE ARCOS ORCHESTRA

*"An extraordinary ensemble of the highest standard"*

---

## International Press Excerpts

### **"An Evening of Superlatives"**

"This evening in the series 'Master Concerts at Albrechtsberg Castle' will not soon be forgotten. Between Mozart and Bartók were works by Pole Krzysztof Meyer and Swede Anders Eliasson; both composers were present and were interviewed on the stage by Kelly. A glance in the Meyer score reveals barely two bars of the same length, and both the conductor and the musicians mastered the challenge with ease. The accomplishments of both the orchestra and its conductor deserve the highest praise, and this applies equally and without qualification to their fabulous performances of the Mozart and Bartók Divertimenti."

*– Dresdener Neueste Nachrichten, Dresden*

### **"A Young New York Orchestra Inspires in Dresden"**

"John-Edward Kelly created extra spark where it was needed, moderating with charm in excellent German and encouraging the listeners with personal anecdotes to embrace the contemporary works ... In Meyer's Symphony for Strings (1979) we heard a highly energetic, emotional music, like the story of the circuitous development of human relationships. Anders Eliasson's Ostacoli was fabulous, a river of intricate sound complexes that flows tirelessly across its many dams and falls. The Arcos Orchestra grasped fully the tart beauty of Bartók's Divertimento, and the young musicians got the folkloristic abandon of the third movement just right."

*– Sächsische Zeitung, Dresden*

### **"Superb"**

"This is a superb orchestra, and they presented the finest Eliasson performances I have ever heard."

*– Radio ORF, Vienna*

### **"A Fascinating Concert"**

"An outstanding program performed wonderfully by a fabulous young orchestra and a fabulous conductor. This was the Arcos Orchestra from New York on its first European tour, and it was fascinating from beginning to end."

*– Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Hamburg*

### **"Musical Time-Travel at the Highest Level"**

"The Arcos Orchestra from New York left an unforgettable impression. Under John-Edward Kelly's leadership, the ensemble sets well-defined musical accents and understands how to present composers' complicated musical languages in an impressive way. Bach's 3<sup>rd</sup> Brandenburg Concerto was given a stylistically inspiring rendering at the very highest level, in which every tone of the string ensemble contributed to a wonderful entirety. Precision and fine sensibility in all dynamic levels were evident everywhere, and uninterrupted streams of joy shone through until the last tone. Bartók's Divertimento was performed with character and conviction in the first movement, alternating with lovely cantabiles, and the molto adagio 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, with its tragic, expansive character, was lifted by the orchestra into a sphere of concise totality. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, robust folklore was interlaced with elements of dance that were performed with delicate precision."

*– Badisches Tagblatt, Baden-Baden, Germany*

### **"Emotional String Artistry"**

"The brightly alert playing spirit of this ensemble and its concentrated approach turned Mozart's youthful pearl KV 136 into a highly attractive affair: lively tempi and a refined, cultivated pianissimo attest to solid preparation by founder John-Edward Kelly. It is perhaps no wonder that a man whose professional spectrum has extended from saxophonist to flight instructor possesses the flexibility to smelt the musical passions of this young group into a harmonically concise body."

*– Badische Neueste Nachrichten, Karlsruhe, Germany*

### **“Sovereign Virtuosity with Ease”**

“Kelly, who leads his young, incredibly engaged musicians with sculpted physical gesture, made Mozart’s Divertimento sparkle with youthfulness and a resonant, finely-honed sound. Grieg’s masked-theater piece “From Holberg’s Time” received a very sensitive interpretation from the Arcos Orchestra that allowed this somewhat tired music to shine in a new light.”

– *Die Rheinpfalz, Karlsruhe, Germany*

### **“Musical Ambassadors: The Arcos Orchestra in Bruneck”**

“In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brandenburg Concerto all the dams gave way: with his brilliant tempi, the conductor opened the gates to a beguiling sonic universe in which both the soloists and the orchestra shone with intelligent dynamic gradations. This was a concert in which everything was simply right, even in Béla Bartók’s fabulous Divertimento for Strings. The title is a bit misleading, since the light character with its folk-music rhythms is actually a painful premonition of the Second World War. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, one can experience apocalyptic sadness, while the conclusion makes the impression of a percussive death-dance, all played wonderfully by these fabulous musicians. Jubilant enthusiasm!”

– *Dolomiten, Bruneck, Italy*

### **“Arcos Orchestra Inspiring”**

“The audience at the Concert House had the opportunity to feast on a special offering: the visiting Arcos Orchestra, a group that understands how to convey the passion of contemporary music. Together with pianist Haewon Shin in Mozart’s 13<sup>th</sup> Piano Concerto, we heard a dialogue with a fantastically polished orchestra that had seemed exquisite in the first movements. In the concluding rondo, however, the birdlike calls of the piano were answered by the orchestra with such conviction that the movement became an audible joy, completely freed from any kind of heaviness. It was in the contemporary music works, however, that the listener could really experience the admirable ensemble playing of the young musicians from America. Perhaps this is due to the special concept of this orchestra and its conductor John-Edward Kelly, who sees himself as a further musician of the orchestra. Both the Symphony for Strings, Op. 43 by Pehr Henrik Nordgren (1944-2008) and “Obstacles” by Anders Eliasson (b. 1947) were played by the orchestra with such passion and dynamic contrasts that the listener could actually feel the inner structures of the music. A lively interpretation of Bartók’s Divertimento for String Orchestra concluded a concert that was rewarded with enthusiastic applause.”

– *Lippische Landeszeitung, Detmold, Germany*

### **“The Musical Universe of Tomorrow”**

“Arcos is an excellent string orchestra, very talented and disciplined under the direction of John-Edward Kelly, and well represented by its expressive concertmistress Elissa Cassini. Berg’s Three Pieces from the Lyric Suite is less daunting than it is said to be, especially when it is in the capable hands of instrumentalists who play with such elegance, who performed it so eloquently and with such rhythmic precision. This is perhaps the right moment to underscore how, throughout the concert, the young soloists/principals were masters of their art form, rigorous in their acoustic attacks and also in unifying their respective string sections... The Arcos Orchestra offered to the Lorraine audience a fine example of youthful dynamism and artistic lucidity. It will be these accomplished artists who will build the musical universe of tomorrow, even if it means shaking up some of the traditional fixtures.”

– *Concerts Classiques d’Épinal, France*

### **“Concert of Contrasts with an Overwhelming Effect: The Young and Refreshing Arcos Orchestra in the Regency”**

“Right from the very beginning, the playing was defined by the greatest attention to the finest nuances and detail of both the individual voices and the ensemble. What is known about the biographical background of Alban Berg’s Lyric Suite is not important to the listener, especially when the work is played with such passion as by the Arcos Orchestra. The highpoint of the program was the Bartók Divertimento: the playing was rhythmically engaged and precise, and also concentrated in the contrasts between the dynamic inertia of the outer movements and the dark gravity of the middle movement.”

– *Fuldaer Zeitung, Fulda, Germany*

### **“The Joy of Music-Making”**

“The excited listeners were pleasantly surprised to hear the Divertimento KV 136 by Mozart in such a youthful, unspoiled and spirited rendition: highly musical, transparent, completely precise, confident intonation, homogenous and dynamically contoured. No dusty phrases here, but instead bowing so accurate it seemed clean as if straight from the car wash! Kelly, a passionately gesturing orchestral director, had prepared his players very well for the challenges of Bartók’s Divertimento: the players sparkled with great musical engagement and artfully drew the listener’s attention to all sorts of harmonic and dynamic intricacies, including complicated meter changes and the typically polyrhythmic underpinnings of the Hungarian provinces. This orchestra exudes the joy of music-making; every type of emotion is felt with great intensity, elevating the ensemble to a level rarely heard. This is an orchestra with a great future.”

– *Kieler Nachrichten, Kiel, Germany*

### **“Buoyant Interpretations”**

“The soloist Sabine Meyer was in constant agreement with the sensitive accompaniment of the Arcos Orchestra of New York: an exemplary collaboration! The young orchestra and its passionate leader John-Edward Kelly had already drawn attention to themselves with their buoyant, light-footed interpretation of Bach’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Brandenburg Concerto, and even more so with their evocative, tenderly delicate presentation of Samuel Barber’s Adagio for Strings. There was enthusiastic applause after Bartók and an impressionistic encore by Pehr Henrik Nordgren.”

– *Rheinische Post, Mönchengladbach, Germany*

### **“Sadness and Hope: Concert Captivates and Touches the Audience”**

“Conductor and co-founder John-Edward Kelly seemed to be a part of the orchestra, and he was able to evoke with his finely sensitive gestures the greatest possible tension and energy from its musicians. In an outstanding interpretation of Barber’s Adagio for Strings, the music gained intensity bar for bar, leading to quite a few breathless moments in the audience. An impressive concert that led the listener into a world of pain and resignation, but also of hopefulness.”

– *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Oberhausen, Germany*

### **“Darkness and Delicate Freshness: Audience Enthralled by a World-Class Orchestra”**

“A prominent quality of the interpretative art of the Arcos Orchestra became obvious right away: a delicately differentiated manner of tone-production that conveys the impression of a kind of floating weightlessness. In the famous Adagio of Samuel Barber, this quality expressed itself in a gradual vacuum-like materialization from otherworldly spheres that suddenly dissipates into nothingness after the climax. Eliasson’s Desert Point is an expressionistic, suggestive work – in quiet passages surreally eerie – that evokes images of Eduard Munch’s “The Scream”. The technical and formal intensity brought homogeneously to fruition in this enormously difficult score was nothing less than amazing. The Chamber Symphony of Dmitri Shostakovich was performed here in a new orchestration of the 8<sup>th</sup> quartet by John-Edward Kelly. Great clarity of structure – particularly in the presentation of the main motif D-S-C-H – and sharply contrasted expressivity were characteristic of an interpretation that was equal to that of the very best string quartet – and superior in terms of sheer sonic power.”

– *Nordrheinische Zeitung, Oberhausen, Germany*

### **“Joyous Conducting Animates Musicians”**

“The lengthy applause was well earned: as an upbeat to its 2<sup>nd</sup> European tour, the 22-member Arcos Orchestra performed works by Shostakovich, Barber, Eliasson, Nordgren and Bartók, bringing the listeners an exciting and multi-faceted overview of music from the last 100 years. With Pehr Henrik Nordgren’s Symphony for Strings, op. 43 (1979), the Arcos Orchestra had already begun approaching the finish line with bravura when John-Edward Kelly spoke of the conflicts of 20<sup>th</sup> century music and stressed the important role that Béla Bartók played in that century. This became audibly and even visually perceptible in Bartók’s three-movement Divertimento, which Kelly conducted joyously, animating the young musicians once again to the highest levels of excellence.”

– *Pforzheimer Zeitung, Pforzheim, Germany*

### **“Transparent, Light Playing: New York Chamber Orchestra with a Program of Contrasts”**

“Pirmasens music lovers had an opportunity to hear a first-rate international orchestra Tuesday night: the Arcos Orchestra from New York. Artistic director and co-founder John-Edward Kelly’s passionate conducting not only gave important interpretative indications to the musicians, but was also an invaluable aid to the listener. Right from the beginning, the orchestra demonstrated a particularly valuable quality in its transparent, light style of playing. This showed itself again and again in wonderful pianissimos, but also in powerful emotional sections. The young musicians were also able to effortlessly maintain very rapid tempi despite complicated technical challenges. First came the Impromptu of Jean Sibelius, in which the orchestra was able to produce an absolutely weightless pianissimo, and even in the dancelike middle section created an ambience of floating levity. The strong impression of Anders Eliasson’s Desert Point is owed in no small part to the brilliant performance by these excellent players. With superb technical skill, the musicians allowed the listener to experience the tension between restless inertia and static sound surfaces, expansive polyphony and chord clusters, tenderness and pointillism. After the interval came the Adagio for Strings by American composer Samuel Barber. Undoubtedly a neo-romantic, we can be grateful to the Arcos Orchestra that their disciplined and finely sensitive performance never crossed the borders of good taste. Extraordinarily impressive was the rendition of Bartók’s Divertimento, written in 1939 in part as a reaction to the dark cloud of national socialism spreading over Europe. Implied feelings of threat, despair and tragedy were evident again and again in the interpretation of the Arcos Orchestra, while the frequent swift transitions to lighthearted dance sections were well-executed. The enormous scope of detail in this work was made transparent by these musicians, and even individual bars and individual tones were finely sculpted. Neither ensemble playing in rhythmically complicated passages nor the neck-breaking tempi of the last movement presented the orchestra with even the slightest difficulties.”

– *Pirmasenser Zeitung, Pirmasens, Germany*

### **“A Crack in the Musical World: The Arcos Orchestra Inspires in Pirmasens”**

“One could hear a pin drop during the high-class music-making and the exciting program of the Arcos Orchestra. Bartók’s classical feeling for form and the modernism of his language were blended in the interpretation of the Arcos Orchestra into an impressive musical experience, especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, which in its darkly eerie colors far exceeds the expressive bounds usually associated with the “Divertimento” genre. This was certainly a performance that will long remain in the memory of this enthusiastically applauding audience.”

– *Die Rheinpfalz, Pirmasens, Germany*

### **“Introduction to Unknown Sonic Worlds”**

“Under the direction of conductor John-Edward Kelly, the Arcos Orchestra mastered with bravura the challenges presented by the 1<sup>st</sup> German performance of Krzysztof Meyer’s Symphony for Strings. The audience heard an exciting performance of the symphony, in which the contradictions of the work’s five movements were overcome with great verve and emotionally-charged playing. Kelly’s tasteful, flowing conducting helped the listener navigate the many complicated breaks, rests and challenging meter changes, as he led the way through muted bass tones and shrill violin pitches with a bouncing pulse and incredible precision.”

– *Neue Westfaelische, Rheda-Wiedenbrück, Germany*

### **“Music from Living Hearts: New York Orchestra Inspires with Barber, Berg and Bartók”**

“The audience listened intently, and right away the excellent string playing relayed meticulously-sculpted metropolitan scenes of a lonely observer, represented by the rapid passages in the beginning of the work. Later one heard fluttering sounds, as though from passing flocks of birds. There were sound layers interspersed with virtuoso solo passages, chord clusters, musically suggested aggressions, and, finally at the end, resignation in a secretive, sensitively contemplative quiet. After Eliasson, Samuel Barber’s Adagio for Strings seemed like a classic in which the musicians indulged themselves in harmony and carried the lengthy melodic themes in long, flowing arches. Following upon drawn-out dynamic increases, the single rest had the effect of a powerful, tension-laden expressive field. The strings achieved powerfully singing tones that radiated brilliantly before returning to a quiet recollection of the work’s beginning. After the Mozart Concerto KV 415 with Susanne Grützmann came Alban Berg’s Three Pieces from the Lyric Suite and the Divertimento by Béla Bartók. The audience responded with enthusiastic applause; this is how exciting new music can be!”

– *Wolfsburger Nachrichten, Wolfsburg, Germany*