Music Academy Festival Orchestra

Finnish Conductor **Hannu Lintu:**

Painting Big Pictures



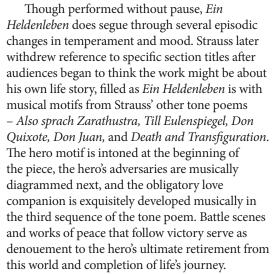
Review by Daniel Kepl / VOICE

RINGING TO VIVID LIFE, through a tsunami of orchestral color and valorous sound pageantry, two of the most explicitly narrative tone poems of the Romantic era, Richard Strauss' monumental 55 minute long through-composed masterpiece, Ein Heldenleben: A Hero's Life, Op. 40 (1898) and Tchaikovksy's eponymous tribute to eternal love, the Overture-Fantasia Romeo and Juliet (1880), The Music Academy Festival Orchestra's wrapped their 2023 summer season last Saturday at the Granada Theatre.

Tall, lean, long armed, and possibly endowed with extra digits on each of his ten fingers, Finnish conductor Hannu Lintu, Chief Conductor of Finnish National Opera and Ballet, wrapped his mind, body, and expressive arms around the task of painting these two graphic musical narratives in a manner that might illuminate and inspire. He succeeded handsomely.

Strauss calls for an enormous orchestra for $Ein\ Heldenleben$ which opened

Saturday's concert. Several Music Academy faculty members joined the orchestra Fellows to help achieve the composer's sonic demands. Nine horns, two harps, and two E-flat trumpets boosted the already huge string, wind, brass, and percussion sections of the orchestra to manifest a glimpse into the composer's massive vision; nothing less than an expression through music, of the pan-Germanic ideal taking shape in the last part of the nineteenth century that ultimately became the modern German state.



No stranger to the art of illuminating all manner of complex visual/musical scenes in his role as Chief Conductor at Finnish National Opera, Lintu danced and prowled the tiny confines of the Granada's podium, leaning precariously this way, then that as he addressed various matters of balance, color, and subtext in Strauss' magnum opus. During the battle sequence, which contains some of the most powerful brass ensemble writing in the repertoire,



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Music Academy President & Chief Executive Officer **Scott Reed** accepted the mic from **Maurice Singer**, Board Chair

Lintu flung his arms in cyclonic fits on more than one occasion to describe the imaginary scene. The Festival Orchestra responded appropriately, caught in the conductor's overwhelming energy vortex. Making nearly tangible his long-armed embrace of the entire orchestra during spacious arcs of lush string sound, or broad woodwind passages, Lintu breathed in his colleagues' enthusiasm to please, and exhaled with every sinew of his lithe physique and expressive intellect wave after wave of simply gorgeous music making. The hour-long *Ein Heldenleben* narrative flew by. That's synergy.

After a needed intermission to gossip about the epic Strauss tone poem just heard, Lintu and the Festival Orchestra gave us exactly what we needed to wind down the evening, Tchaikovsky's bittersweet yet somehow hopeful tone poem *Romeo and Juliet*, in a performance that shimmered with well-prepared sectional balances, featured carefully tapered and extended phrasing, and focused the confrontational sequences between rival Montague and Capulet clans on the musical virtues of clean articulation and controlled dynamic. A first-rate performance.



August 26 & 27 at the Music Academy

Join us on stage this season, starting with Beethoven's 9th Symphony in October as a guest chorus for Santa Barbara Symphony; The Hallelujah Project, our popular holiday concert in December; an Americana-centered program in February; and the Fauré Requiem paired with contemporary works in May.

Auditioning all voice parts, with paid section leadership positions available. **Weekly rehearsals start Sept. 6.**

Book your audition at sbchoral.org