

# Arsis Handbell Ensemble

## *Facts&Figures*

### About Arsis Handbell Ensemble

Arsis Handbell Ensemble, which developed from the chamber choir Arsis in 1993, today consists of eight professional players and one of the most perfect sets in the world, which includes 7+4 octave sets of handbells and 7 octave set of handchimes. The ensemble has toured nearly all over the world – in Sweden, Finland, Norway, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, South-Africa, USA, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Canada, Belgium. Five CDs have been released.

### Artistic Director

Aivar Mäe is the artistic director of Arsis Handbell Ensemble since its creation.

He acquired his musical education at Tallinn Music High School and Estonian Academy of Music. In 1992, Aivar Mäe studied in the USA improving his knowledge at the music department of Portland University with Prof Bruce Brown. He has been working with several choirs in Estonia as well as abroad. He has been the leader of international choir festivals, also running seminars for choral music and handbell music in USA and Finland. Since 2000, he has been working as the general manager of Eesti Kontsert, the National Concert Institute of Estonia, from 2003 until 2006 he was also the general manager of Theatre Vanemuine in Tartu City. Since 2007, he is also the chairman of the “Russian Theatre” foundation in Tallinn

### Actual Members

- Mart Schifrin
- Lemme-Liis Elp
- Marge Saarela
- Aivar Mäe, Artistic Director of Arsis Handbell Ensemble
- Indrek Jürimets
- Heli Kask
- Margus Bubert
- Tiina Kodumäe

## Discography

To date, Arsis Handbell Ensemble has released five CDs. Each of them is made unique by its musical approach and the pieces chosen, when all of them are marked by the professional interpretation that characterised the Ensemble.

Handbell Symphony, the first CD released in 1997, let a prominent place to composer Peeter Vähi's Handbell Symphony, a work for handbells and orchestra. This first and extremely successful collaboration between the renown Estonian composer and the Ensemble will find a prolongation the very next year, in 1998, with the record of Supreme Silence. This composition is not easily accommodated under any style or genre. Peeter Vähi himself characterised it as a reminiscent of stylized Oriental music.

The next album bears the name of a piece especially composed by René Espere, another well known Estonian composer, entitled In dies. This composition brings a surprisingly aesthetic modern touch to an album that is more classical in the choice of the remaining pieces, such as Tchaikovsky and Bizet.

In 2003, Arsis Handbell Ensemble dedicated the whole album to Estonian music. Arranged by Tõnu Kõrvits, Awake, my heart! is a musical journey taking us far back in time. Theses archaic and sacred folk songs from Estonian villages find their origin at the roots of Estonian national singing heritage. This album is the first performed at eight musicians.

Estonian music is almost absent of the last Arsis album, except for the very last piece of the CD, the quiet and warm Talveöö composed by A. Tammeorg. For the very first time, the release is mostly made of classical pieces. The truth is that arranged by V. Soonberg and interpreted by Arsis, even the most classical pieces have that ineffable touch that we enjoy so much in Arsis handbell music.

### night music (2007)

- W A Mozart / arr V Soonberg - Romance from Eine kleine Nachtmusik
- W A Mozart / arr R Herbek - Menuetto from Eine kleine Nachtmusik
- J S Bach / arr B B Kinyon - Sinfonia
- J S Bach / arr V Soonberg - Aria
- E Grieg / arr V Stephenson - Norwegian Dance from Peer Gynt Suite
- E Grieg / arr A Merrett - Anitra's Dance from Peer Gynt Suite
- P I Tchaikovsky / arr V Soonberg - October from The Four Seasons
- P I Tchaikovsky / arr V Soonberg - April from The Four Seasons
- T Albinoni / arr K McChesney - Adagio
- J Sibelius / arr V Soonberg - Giv mig ej glans (Give Me No Splendour)
- A-Ch Adam / arr V Soonberg - O Holy Night
- F Grüber / arr F L Callahan - Silent Night, Holy Night

- Trad / arr A L Page - Christmastime
- Antioch tune / arr M K Parrish - Joy to the World
- A Tammeorg / arr V Soonberg - Talveöö (Winter Night)

Performed by Arsis Handbell Ensemble

Artistic direction by Aivar Mäe

Recorded: March 3-4, 2007 in St.Mauritius Merchant Guild, Tallinn

Manufactured by Sony DADC, Austria

### **Awake, my Heart! (2003)**

- Mu süda, ärka üles!
- Neiu hääl
- Ladvad lindudele
- Kasva karjaseks
- Tule tursakene
- Lapse kiigutamise laul
- Tuule tuba
- Huiked ja helletused
- Maga, maga, Matsikene
- Laulud lutsu suust
- Äiutused
- Veere, päike!
- Ussi naine
- Tudu, tuvikene
- Karja kojukutse
- Nüüd on see päev ju lõppenud

Performed by Arsis Handbell Ensemble

Arranged by Tõnu Kõrvits

Artistic Director and Conductor Aivar Mäe

Produced by Peeter Vähi

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## In Dies

- René Eespere - 'In Dies'
- P. I. Tchaikovsky - The Nutcracker Suite:
  - Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy
  - Danse Russe Trepak
  - Danse of the Reed Flutes
  - Marche
- I Albeniz / arr J Meredith - Legenda from Cantos de Espana, Op 232
- K Nystedt - Laudamus Op 108
- B W Bisbee - Rondo del Espanol
- C Dobrinski - Scherzando
- K L Buckwalter - Soliloquy
- L Gillis - Pick A Winner
- G Bizet / arr K McChesney - Festive Dance / Farandole

Performed by Arsis Handbell Ensemble

Clarinet soloist Toomas Vavilov

Conductor Aivar Mäe

Manufactured by Sony DADC Austria

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## Supreme Silence

- Peeter Vähi - Supreme Silence

Performed by the Estonian National Male Choir, Arsis Handbell Ensemble, and the Hungarian singer Irén Lovász

Conductor Aivar Mäe

Produced by Ulrich Rützel, Kristjan Järvi, and Peeter Vähi

## Handbell Symphony

- Peeter Vähi - Handbell Symphony
- J S Bach / arr B B Kinyon - Pastorale
- Fr Schubert / arr W H Griffin - Ave Maria
- Trad. / arr B W Bisbee - A German Music Box

- J Strauss / arr M L Thompson - Radetzky March
- K L Buckwalter - Soliloquy
- G Fr Handel / arr W H Griffin - Passacaglia from the 7th Suite
- Trad. / arr M K Parrish - Joy to the World

Performed by the National Estonian Symphonic Orchestra and Arsis Handbell Ensemble

Conductor Aivar Mäe

Produced by Peeter Vähi

## History

### The Ensemble

#### 1991

Aivar Mäe, conductor of Arsis chamber choir, stays in the US for the purpose of retraining and hears handbells for the first time. It becomes his fixed idea to found a handbell ensemble also in Estonia.

#### 1993

The representatives of The American Guild of English Handbell Ringers visit Estonia, bringing along first three octaves of bells as a present to Aivar Mäe and his choir.

The idea becomes a reality - Arsis Handbell Ensemble is founded.

The 12-member ensemble, formed from singers of Arsis chamber choir, has its first concert at Christmas, touring in Estonian churches. Estonian audience is fascinated by the new musical instrument.

### Passed tours

#### 2007

Lithuania: Siauliai (participating in Music Festival);

Finland: Kuusankoski, Vantaa;

Spain-Andorra: Madrid (performance in a frame of Estonian President's visit), Ordino-Andorra;

#### 2006

Finland: Kuusankoski, Kuopio, Juva, Pori, and Vantaa;

**2004**

Spain: León

**2003**

Sweden: Göteborg

Belgium: Brussel

Lithuania: Vilnius, Alytus

**2002**

USA: Morris Plains, New Jersey-Lancaster, Pennsylvania-Manheim, Pennsylvania-Betlehem, Pennsylvania-Charlotte, North Carolina-Orlando, Florida (participating in Handbell Festival "Pinnacle 2002") -Wilson, North Carolina-Phoenix, Maryland.

**2001**

Sweden: Skara-Jönköping-Linköping-Värnamo-Älmhult-Fjälkinge

**2000**

Latvia: Aluksne

Canada-USA: New York City-Plumsteadville, Pennsylvania-Buffalo, New York-Jamestown, New York-Pittsfield, Massachusetts-Amherst, Massachusetts-Toronto, Ontario-Hamilton, Ontario-Brantford, Ontario-Kitchener, Ontario-Niagara Falls, Ontario-London, Ontario.

**1999**

Finland: Vaasa (participating in Vasa Music Festival)

USA: San Fransisco, California-Walnut Creek, California-Mi-Wuk Village, California-Las Vegas, Nevada-Goleta, California-Solvang, California-Anaheim, California (performing in Disneyland) - Los Angeles, California (participating to the XXIV West Coast Estonian Festival).

**1998**

Canada-USA: Montreal, Quebec-Toronto, Ontario-Sudbury, Ontario-Winnipeg, Manitoba-Regina, Saskatchewan-Vancouver, Britsh Columbia-Portland, Oregon-Spokane, Washington-Rapid City, South Dakota-Austin, Minnesota-Chicago, Illinois-Grand Rapids, Michigan-Flint, Michigan-Columbus, Ohio-Plumsteadville, Pennsylvania-New York City;

Finland: Rauma

**1997**

South African Republic: Johannesburg-Sun City-Pretoria

**1996**

Great Britain-Ireland, with Arsis chamber choir: London-Cork;

**1995**

Latvia: Aluksne-Gaudiēna;

Norway, with Arsis chamber choir: Oslo;

Sweden, with Arsis chamber choir: Skellefteå;

Germany-USA, with Arsis chamber choir;

Mechede, Germany (participating in Estonian Cultural Festival);

Portland, Oregon (participating in XXII West Coast Estonian Festival)- Astoria, Washington-  
Port Angeles, Washington-Issaquah, Washington-Vancouver, Washington-The Dalles,  
Oregon-Boise, Idaho-Ogden, Utah-Denver, Columbia-Lincoln, Nebraska-Chicago, Illinois-  
St.Louis, Illinois;

Italy: Rooma-Salerno (participating in Christmas Festival);

**1993**

Sweden-Great Britain-France-Spain, with Arsis chamber choir: Malmö,Sweden-  
Llangollen,Great Britain-London-Espenasses,France-Cantonigrós,Spain.

Italy: Salerno (participating in Christmas Festival).