

The Symphony Orchestra of the European School Brussels I

Flying high – from 2008 to 2018



Three students' orchestras at Alytus/Lithuania in 2015

Founded in 1976 by **Adrian Knott**, well-loved music teacher at the school, the School Orchestra of the EEB1 had developed over the years into a large and renowned symphony orchestra. His were difficult shoes to fill and a few difficult years followed his retirement. Fortunately, there was a connection with a young violinist, a master student at the Brussels Conservatory at the time. Offering to help out as conductor in 2004 while a long-term solution was found, he rekindled the spirit of the young musicians, urging them to persevere. Born in Gyumri/Armenia, educated at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, he relaunched the Symphony Orchestra of the EEB1. This young man was none other than **Arman Simonyan**, who still leads the School Orchestra all those years later. Now – in 2018 – this orchestra consists entirely of students from the school: 50-60 serious young musicians. Its repertoire has gradually evolved from easy arrangements to classical symphony orchestra music, such as Saint-Saens cello concert, Beethoven violin concert in D or Von Weber's clarinet concertino opus 26.

The pupils' ages range from 8 to 18 years. A strong emphasis has always been placed on supporting the young musicians. This is one important reason why the orchestra started to look out for a musical assistant, and we found **Agnieszka Zywert**. Agnieszka is a professional piano player, but she also leads a rhythm orchestra and pre-orchestra groups for smaller pupils at the school. She and Arman form a very effective and professional musical team, well-loved and respected by the orchestra members. Another factor for success is a well organised parents' orchestra committee that also strives for continuity behind the scenes and the constant support by the school - in the orchestra's recent history namely by the school's former headmaster Kari Kivinen and its present headmaster Antonia Ruiz Esturla.

"I remember when my parents convinced me at the beginning of my secondary years to enter the orchestra of the European School of Brussels I. I was a bit reluctant to the idea as was my brother Benjamin 3 years before when he entered the orchestra. But I will never regret this decision. I have been in the orchestra for 6 years alongside my violin teacher Arman Simonyan, my two brothers and wonderful friends from so many different cultures and nationalities. With the orchestra, I travelled in many countries including Portugal, Poland, Canary Islands, Germany, Italy and France. It is impossible to describe how those trips and those years in the orchestra impacted my personality, my feelings for music. The trips always ended with tears due to the incredible experience we had shared for 2 weeks with the big orchestra family. Not coming from the

same country but sharing the same language, the one of music, as well as vibes that I never found elsewhere. What makes the orchestra great are all those traditions that have been living for so many years and that still take place every year.

Even now, more than 5 years after having left the European School, I still assist to some concerts and enjoy seeing those young students playing, seeing myself at the same place some years ago with a touch of melancholy. And I know everything is going well when I talk to them and they tell me that the last orchestra trip was “the best experience of their life”. And I hope, and I know, the love for the orchestra will continue.” **Simon Hirsch** (former student of EEB1)



Mount Ararat behind the monastery in Echmiadzin, Armenia 2018

As a tradition the orchestra embarks on a concert journey to a different (mostly) European country every year during the Easter holidays.



Concert organized from the EU-delegation in Yerevan, Armenia 2018, younger and older students play side by side

“A wonderful model of coordination between primary and secondary school: the secondary orchestra playing in front of primary pupils twice a year since 2016. Thanks to the talented musicians from our secondary school showing the way to the younger ones.” **Patricia Staffe** (teacher, L2 primary, art coordination)



Arman Simonyan, conductor, Yerevan 2018

“On a trip with the orchestra in Italy there was mostly friendship, passion for music, sadness of the

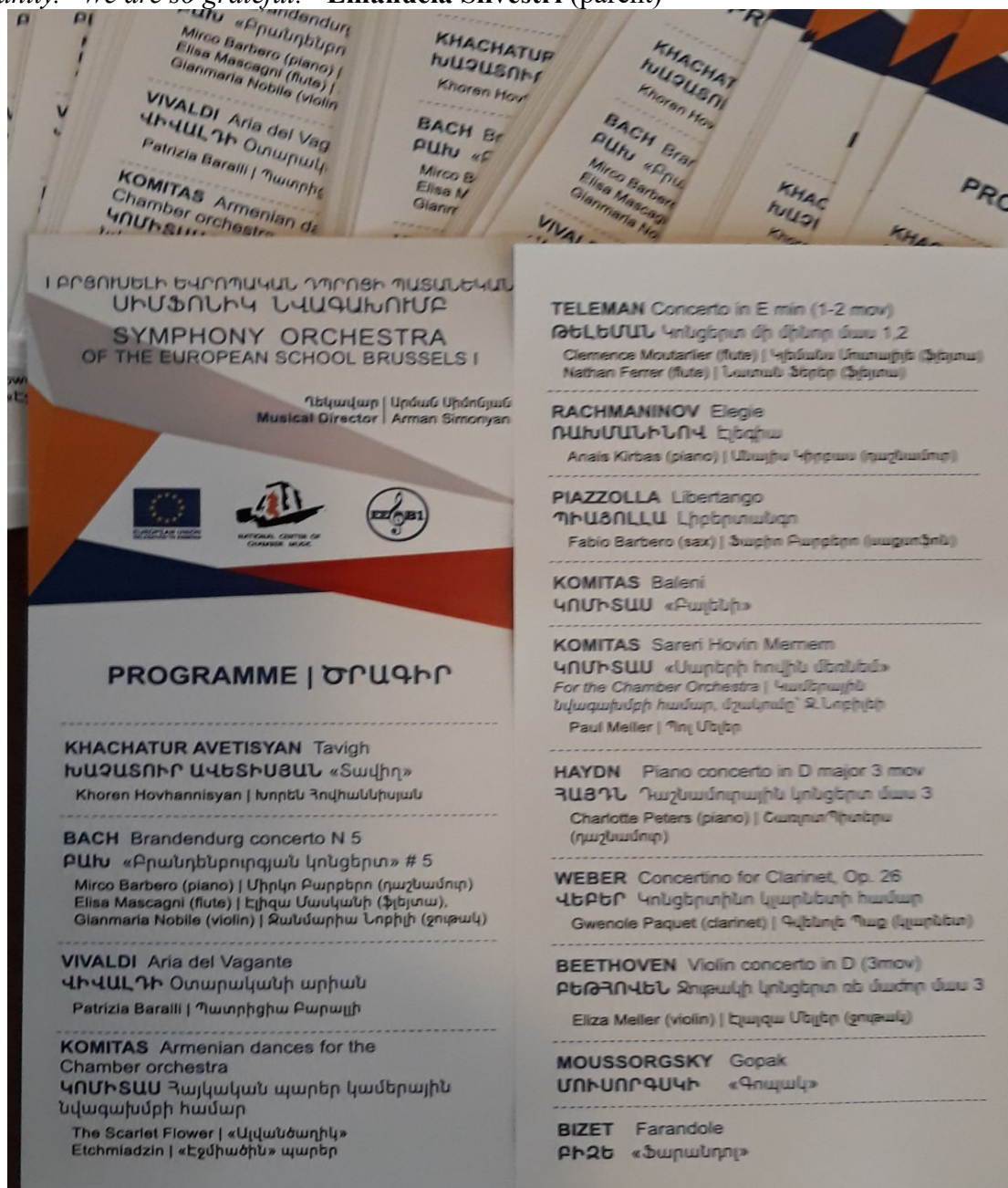
senior students at the last concert and tears of the younger ones anticipating their friends' departure from the orchestra after the bac.

There is so much to learn from these young players. The European School teaches them the value of integration across different languages and cultures and the Symphony Orchestra brings together the many nationalities into music. More than sixty students of all languages know how to communicate with others via music. Their concerts are a testimony of their openness.

Seemingly understated, rigorous in the method and aims, but also fun, motivating, charismatic, at the same time one of them, their music director Arman Simonyan makes it happen.

Yearly invisible work also ticks like a metronome in the background: the wholehearted backing of Mr. Kivinen and then of Mme Ruiz-Esturla; the parents orchestra committee with the relentlessly efficient organisation of Silke; Dominique at Cesame and the school parents association helping in key moments such as complementing the support for the musical assistant Agnieszka Zywert, her work so vital in such a big orchestra.

A school orchestra, transitional "per se", can easily end. Its permanence is granted by our school community. We are so grateful." **Emanuela Silvestri** (parent)



programme for concert at National Chamber music concert hall, Yerevan/ Armenia 2018

“I have seen miracles happen in the basement of the art building of the European School, Uccle. After the retirement of Mr. Adrian Knott, the highly appreciated music teacher and school orchestra conductor of the European school, Uccle, we faced a real challenge. How to continue his work and his legacy?”

The first moments were difficult, but the orchestra members and their parents did not give up. Little by little we managed to find a way forward. Luckily, we discovered Mr. Arman Simonyan, who started to take responsibility of the orchestra rehearsals by the years.

The challenge of the school orchestra is, that every year the oldest and most experienced musicians leave the school and the orchestra, and they have to be replaced by younger talents.

Every autumn the orchestra conductor has to start building up the team of musicians nearly from the scratch. The conductor needs to have plenty of faith, perseverance and good sense of humor in order to be successful.

The same qualities are needed also by the orchestra members. Every Friday afternoon, after a long school week, over 50 pupils of different ages and language sections have been gathering together to rehearse in the basement of the Art building. I used to observe every now and then these sessions with great interest and admiration.

The first attempts to play an ambitious piece of classical music together are normally rather catastrophic. Even though the individual orchestra members have practiced their partitions with their instrument teachers, it is another thing to play it synchronized with everybody else. I admit, that I have personally lost my faith several times. The challenge seemed to be over measured for the young musicians. And just here comes the miracle in the game. With hard work, persistence, by listening to each other's, and by following the instructions of the conductor – the noise starts to resemble music! When listening to the harmonious performance of the orchestra in the concert - one cannot even imagine what an amount of hard work there is behind every beautiful and touching piece of music!

*I would like to thank all the musicians, their parents, music teachers, and conductors for the wonderful work you have done for the orchestra during the past decades. The objective to give students an opportunity to make music of a high standard in a genuine orchestra setting have been met! “ **Kari Kivinen** (former headmaster of EEB1)*



Flash Mob at Marsaxlokk market place, Malta, 2017

“Being part of our school orchestra has no doubt been the highlight of my twelve years in this school, and I say this with absolute conviction. I can’t describe how much our orchestra means to me. It has not only made me a more rounded musician, but has built me as a person. Our orchestra truly has something special that other school orchestras don’t have. Apart from being the biggest and highest level European school orchestra in Europe (which I’m sorry is definitely a thing to boast about), we’re also a big family. Our youngest member this year is 9 years old, our oldest 18, yet the dynamic in our orchestra completely overcomes age boundaries as we’re all super, super close. I am totally distraught that this is my final year with these guys, with our amazing conductor (who’s very professional and a total dude) and I am going to miss our rehearsals and our trips like hell. Anyone thinking on joining next year should absolutely, you’ll be welcomed with open arms, you’ll be promised a fantastic repertoire as well as an unforgettable adventure!” **Eliza Meller** (student S7ENA 2018)



Concert at Flagey: 60 years European School of Brussels I, October 2017

“I would like to express my admiration for a very strong orchestral tradition in our school that has been built for 42 years by talented and charismatic conductors.

Thanks to their talent and determination it was possible to create in our school the wonderful space for young instrumentalists who are gifted with a passion for music.

The EEBI Secondary Choir has had pleasure to cooperate with the orchestra directed by its conductor Arman Simonian several times. We still have in our minds and hearts the wonderful experience which was the joint performance of music by C. Orff, J. S Bach, W.A. Mozart and L. van Beethoven.

The 60th anniversary of the school is a great opportunity to wish the great young orchestral musicians, their devoted conductor Arman Simonian and assisting him Agnieszka Zywert a continuous passion for music, many artistic challenges and a lot of satisfaction.”

(My name is **Joanna Musko**. I am a music teacher and the EEBI Secondary Choir conductor. I have been professionally associated with the European School Brussels I (Uccle) since September 2015)



News Year Reception of EU Presiden Jean-Claude Juncker at the Berlayment, 17.01.2018, chamber orchestra

Facts:

The Symphony Orchestra of the EEB1 meets for weekly rehearsals at the salle polyvalente at the Michelangelo building every Friday, from 16-18.30h. Auditions: June / September

They play at least 4 concerts per year (Christmas concert, March concert, Spring concert, End of the year concert, and at special occasions).

Two journeys per year: approx. 7 days during the Easter holidays, last week of summer holidays.

There are two spin – off chamber formations for strings and wind instruments.

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