Arvo Pärt’s creative output has played a significant role in the soundscapes of contemporary music since the 1960s. Especially with his unique compositional technique, tintinnabuli, which Pärt invented in 1976, he has deeply affected the course of music over several decades. His works have reached a vast number of listeners, not only via concerts and recordings but also through films and theatrical productions.

Arvo Pärt was born on 11 September 1935 in Paide, Estonia. After studies in Heino Eller’s composition class at the Tallinn State Conservatory, he worked as a sound engineer for Estonian Radio. Since the late 1960s, Pärt has been a freelance composer.

Both the avant-garde spirit of Pärt’s early works and the religious nature of the music he composed in the 1970s led to controversial reviews and confrontations with Soviet officials. In 1980, Arvo Pärt and his family were forced to emigrate, first to Vienna and then to Berlin, where they stayed for almost 30 years.

The early 1980s marked the beginning of his creative collaboration with the publisher Universal Edition, as well as with the distinguished CD label ECM Records and the producer Manfred Eicher; the first ECM recording of Tabula rasa was released in 1984. Since then, his music has been performed and recorded by the best orchestras and interpreters of our time.

Around the time of Estonia’s restoration of independence in 1991, Pärt reconnected with his homeland and its musical life. He has lived permanently in Estonia since 2010. That same year, the Arvo Pärt Centre, which holds Pärt’s personal archive, was established in Laulasmaa, near Tallinn, by the composer’s family.

As one of the most radical representatives of the Soviet avant-garde in the 1960s, Pärt’s work passed through a profound evolutionary process: from neo-classical piano music to his unique use of dodecaphony, sonorism, chance music and the collage technique. After his last and most dramatic collage piece, Credo (1968), Pärt withdrew for almost eight years.
In 1976, after an intensive study of Gregorian chant, and Medieval and Renaissance polyphony, he re-emerged with a new and highly original musical language, which he called *tintinnabuli* (*tintinnabulum* – Latin for ’little bell’) and which has defined his work ever since. The first *tintinnabuli* piece, *Für Alina* for piano, was followed by *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten* (1977), *Tabula rasa* (1977), *Fratres* (1977), *Spiegel im Spiegel* (1978) and many others.

Pärt’s oeuvre is rich and versatile, including many large-scale compositions for choir and orchestra, four symphonies and works for soloists and orchestra, as well as numerous choral pieces and chamber music. During his creative crisis in the early 1970s, Pärt joined the Orthodox Church and since then the majority of his works have been based on liturgical texts and prayers, including *Passio* (1982), *Te Deum* (1985), *Miserere* (1989/92), *Kanon pokajanen* (1997) and *Adam’s Lament* (2010), to name only a few.

Twice albums with Arvo Pärt’s music have won Grammy Awards for best choral performance: in 2007 for *Da Pacem* and in 2014 for *Adam’s Lament*. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by 13 universities in Europe and in the US and has received many prominent awards and decorations: the Léonie Sonning Music Prize (2008), the Praemium Imperiale (2014), the Ratzinger Prize from the Vatican (2017), the Frontiers of Knowledge Award, the BBVA Foundation Award (2020) and many others.

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