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**“An image of the world as it is.”**

**Press Text: Terrace Talk about the  
New Production of Peter Eötvös' Opera  
*Three Sisters***



Conductor Maxime Pascal (left) and director Evgeny Titov (right)

(SF, 26 July 2025) On 8 August, Evgeny Titov's new production of Peter Eötvös' *Three Sisters*, based on eponymous play by Anton Chekhov, premieres at the Felsenreitschule. Asked about the relation between the literary model and the opera, Titov, who already directed Maxim Gorky's *Summerfolk* in Salzburg in 2019, said: "I am well familiar with the original: Chekhov's play has a clear structure and a clear sequence of events. Eötvös' version, on the other hand, is based on the principles of human memory. It is a kaleidoscope of scenes which are chronologically jumbled – like shards of a broken mirror which have been dropped to form a mosaic, a surface that now reflects dreams, the past, the future and wishful thinking. And

then, Eötvös' music opens totally new spaces in addition." He reported that the rehearsal process was giving him a lot of pleasure, and a welcome opportunity to encounter wonderful fellow artists.

Since winning the Young Conductors Award at the 2014 Salzburg Festival, Maxime Pascal's career path has been on a steep upward trajectory: apart from leading his own orchestra, Le Balcon, he has also made a name for himself as an expert on 20<sup>th</sup>-century repertoire, conducting the Vienna Philharmonic in the award-winning production of Martinů's *The Greek Passion* at the Felsenreitschule in 2023, among other highlights. Personally, he knew the composer Peter Eötvös well, and recounted his first encounter with him: "I first met him in 2013 when I rehearsed his opera *Le Balcon* in Paris. At the time, I asked him whether I might visit him in Hungary, and together with our répétiteur Alphonse Cemin, I travelled to see him. I was a bit nervous before that meeting, because I was considering some changes to the sound, for example doubling several voices and casting a countertenor in a contralto role. In fact, it turned out he was very open to these ideas. To him, the factor of improvisation played an important role in the composition process." Asked about the casting of all roles with male voices, including four countertenors, in the new production in Salzburg, he said: "I think that's a great idea. This gives every voice a particularly individual profile, which in turn does justice to the very different characters. When Eötvös wrote the piece in 1997, it was still very difficult to find four countertenors at all for the production – back then, countertenors were still pioneers of their *fach*. This has changed fundamentally. Not least under this aspect, Eötvös created a total novelty at the time."

Evgeny Titov described the theme of the piece thus: "The main theme is the question of the difficulties of life, and how we deal with our painful experiences – at the same time, that's a question that can never be answered completely. The only thing that can help us are the hopes we generate over and over. The piece creates an image of the world as it is." He himself, he added, always tries to remain true to the music in his work, letting his productions be guided by the effect the piece has on him. The images come to him subconsciously – in this case, the associations began coming after only a very short while.



Conductor Maxime Pascal (left) and director Evgeny Titov (right)

Once special feature of the piece is its use of two separate orchestras, one located in the orchestra pit and one under the Felsenreitschule's roof. Pascal commented on this: "At first,

Eötvös started to write only for the smaller ensemble and the vocal parts. Only later did he add the larger orchestra. This collaboration synchronized by two conductors then became something akin to a film soundtrack with different acoustic levels, an atmospheric soundscape. For example, the second orchestra plays an important role in what Eötvös called the 'fire music'."

With regard to the present time, the world he created in this space of sonic perception is described by Titov as follows: "To me, current reality was a context I did not want to ignore. I try to show what human pain and brutal human behaviour mean today. In doing so, I consider life as a journey – a pondering of the escape routes the characters may have from their hopeless situation."

Maxime Pascal discussed concrete connections between the music and the characterization of the protagonists: "For the audience – but also for the musicians and singers – a kind of instrumental and psychological experience arises: every character has a corresponding instrument. In Olga's case, it's the flute, for example; in Irina's, the oboe. This kind of psychologizing composing is also the reason for the lasting success of the piece; with his very first opera, Eötvös managed to create something utterly new and unique." Pascal then described further works he is conducting at this year's Salzburg Festival as part of the focus *À Pierre* in relation to Eötvös' music: "Peter Eötvös knew Boulez and Stockhausen well, and worked with them personally. Despite their close connection, however, his style differs strongly from their music. Despite all the tragedy implicit in the tale of *Three Sisters*, his work always conveys his joy and the enthusiasm he had for the music. This is one of the things that makes his oeuvre so special." Another thing he described as very special, each and every time, is the Salzburg Festival: "The relaxed and intimate artistic atmosphere here is unique: there is a special feeling of connection and community between the audience and the artists. I am very grateful every time I am fortunate enough to work here."

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Photo link:

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