

## Appendix C

### Remembering Heino Eller<sup>1</sup>

ARVO PÄRT

It is with profound gratitude that I think of my composition teacher Heino Eller and of the time I spent studying with him. It is difficult to say just what impressed me more, his way of teaching or his charismatic personality. Over the decades, Heino Eller's generosity and nobility of spirit, as well as his work, have merged in my mind to create an overall picture that has continued to influence me up to the present day.

As a pedagogue he was always open to modern movements in art, allowing his students to go their own ways and respecting their personal decisions, even where they diverged substantially from his own ideals. He taught a sense of responsibility towards our own work and to always remain true to ourselves. Eller once said that his aim as a teacher was to help students develop their individual musical language and personality. The works of more than fifty of his students, ranging from Eduard Tubin to Lepo Sumera, offer the best possible proof of his success.

Through him, a personality from a different generation, we came into contact with the pre-revolutionary aristocracy and its cultural heritage. Soviet ideology was incapable of dimming his insight into human and cultural values. After his training in St. Petersburg, with its centuries-old musical tradition, he was able to establish totally new standards in small Estonia, and thereby build the basis for a professional music scene.

Heino Eller's oeuvre is typified by strict logic, a cultivated sense of style, subtle and masterly orchestration, and a significantly personal compositional voice. These qualities position him firmly alongside the great Nordic composers. Over the years, Heino Eller's *Homeland Song* has arguably gained similarly symbolic status for Estonia as Sibelius's famous composition *Finlandia* has for Finland.

Now that I am approximately the age my teacher was at the time, I have discovered a pronouncement I never personally heard from Eller in his lessons: "Finding a single suitable note is far more difficult than bringing a mass of notes to paper." Although he never conveyed this message to me in so many words, he appears nonetheless to have succeeded in rooting a similarly tormenting search for the "single suitable note" in my soul.