



Photo: Peter Adamik

Glass / Richter / Järvi

2020 TEACHERS RESOURCE

New Zealand
Festival **OF THE ARTS**

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[Download SchoolFest 101 here.](#) Your guide to make the most of the festival experience.

CAST AND CREATIVES

Conducted by **Kristjan Järvi** (Estonia) kristjanjarvi.com

With members of **Absolute Ensemble** facebook.com/absoluteensemble

Mat Fieldes, Bass (Aotearoa/New Zealand), **David Rozenblatt**, Percussion (Ukraine, United States), **Charlie Porter**, Trumpet (United States)

And the **New Zealand Symphony Orchestra** (Aotearoa / New Zealand) nzso.co.nz

Infra by **Max Richter** (United Kingdom) maxrichtermusic.com

Águas da Amazônia by **Philip Glass** (United States) philipglass.com

ABOUT THE SHOW

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, with conductor Kristjan Järvi and members of his Absolute Ensemble present a concert of works by two great contemporary composers.

The evening begins with Max Richter's *Infra*. This work is characteristic of Richter's musical voice, minimalism combined with sweeping melodies and harmonic complexity.

This continues with Philip Glass' love song to one of the world's mightiest rivers, *Águas da Amazônia*. Originally composed for a small ensemble, this new arrangement by Charles Coleman examines the potency and grandeur of a full symphony orchestra, augmented with members of Järvi's Absolute Ensemble, to convey Glass' exhilarating pursuit of adventure and awe.

Infra: Originally composed for the Royal Ballet's 2008 production, which was choreographed by Wayne McGregor, *Infra* is about travelling and was written as a reaction to the 7/7 bombings in London, a reflection on the city at the time and the tragedy of those events. The title *Infra* comes from 'vide infra', the Latin words for 'see below' referring to the work as a portrait of life beneath the surface of the city.

Águas da Amazônia: The ten movement work takes inspiration from the powerful Amazon river, beginning with *Tiquié River* and ending in *Metamorphosis*. Its first recording was performed by the Brazilian instrumental group Uakti, who utilise custom made instruments. In 2017 Charles Coleman released an orchestral arrangement with the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra and Absolute Ensemble conducted by Kristjan Järvi. The track listing dedicated each song to one of the rivers along the Amazon; *Tiquié River*, *Japurá River*, *Purus River*, *Negro River*, *Madeira River*, *Tapajós River*, *Paru River*, *Xingu River*, *Amazon River*.

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra have never performed Philip Glass and this will be the premier of *Águas da Amazônia* in New Zealand.

"One of the canniest, and most innovative, programmers on the classical scene"
REUTERS on Kristjan Järvi

"achingly gorgeous ... an enveloping and moving work" PITCHFORK on *Infra*

GENRE

Philip Glass was one of the pioneers of minimalist music, which originated on the West Coast of America in the 1960s along with composers such as Steve Reich and Terry Riley.

Minimalist music often features:

- layers of ostinati (rhythmic, melodic or harmonic patterns, which are repeated many times)
- constantly repeated patterns that gradually change
- layered textures
- interlocking repeated phrases and rhythms
- diatonic harmony (notes which belong to the key rather than chromatic notes, which are outside the key)

Find more at the BBC minimalism revision guide: [bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z99x6sg/revision](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z99x6sg/revision)

Max Richter's sound has been described as neo-classical, ambient, minimal or electro-acoustic chamber music. He has widely composed music for stage, opera, ballet and screen.

PRODUCTION AND TECHNIQUES

THE ARRANGEMENTS

Infra utilises melancholy strings, radio signals and Morse code blips and repetition to create the melancholy feeling. Techniques include long, held notes, a few repeating phrases locked together and use of electronic and found sound to create a 'real-life' soundscape.

The original instrumentation of *Águas da Amazônia* was for Uakti, a Brazilian new music ensemble who play on one-of-a-kind instruments, like the Pans (percussion instruments made out of PVC). The orchestral arrangement conducted by Jarvi sees the violins replace the harp like plucking, and the brass section take on Uakti's PVC pipe pan flutes. You can compare an [orchestral performance conducted by Jarvi](#) to the [Uakti performance](#) by following the highlighted links.

LIGHTING AND STAGING

Kristjan Järvi is interested in making classical music relevant and engaging for wide audiences. Utilising dramatic lighting to create mood and drama, this adds a visual element to a traditionally more aural experience.

THE ROLE OF THE CONDUCTOR

Although the conductor is the one person on stage making no noise at all, they play a pivotal role in shaping the sound of a performance. The conductor brings the score to life, communicating their own sense of the work by emphasising and controlling different elements of the orchestra. In this way conductors each have their own unique styles. You can read more about the role of the conductor here: [bbc.com/culture/story/20141029-what-do-conductors-actually-do](https://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20141029-what-do-conductors-actually-do)

CONTEXT

Both scores were originally composed for ballets, have been recorded for digital distribution and performed live by orchestras and string quartets. Through this process they have been through several iterations to make them appropriate for the different contexts.

FURTHER RESOURCES AND READINGS

INTERVIEWS

Read an interview with Kristjan Järvi: planethugill.com/2016/10/art-changes-world-kristjan-jarvi-on.html

"I'm very much a proponent of trying to make classical music as much part of popular culture as we can" Watch an interview with Kristjan Järvi: youtu.be/U-qJ6RhlaMo

WATCH

Watch Järvi & Absolute Ensemble perform on Youtube: youtube.com/channel/UCyr7hmnxBmyfVtll6wscxDw

Musician Charles Hazlewood explores American minimalist composers who rebooted classical music in the 20th century—Philip Glass and Steve Reich: bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05zf7xn

Philip Glass describes his approach to writing music as watching buildings slowly emerge from "a foggy field," and claims to have an ironically poor musical ear: youtu.be/4eZZOU9Cy7g

Take a look at Max Richter on YouTube and explore interviews, music videos and playlists for his work for stage and screen: youtube.com/user/maxrichtermusic/playlists

Watch a short video of the 2008 Royal Ballet production of *Infra*: youtu.be/bjERnGQiJfg

READ

Glass Notes—Águas da Amazônia—Genesis and Variation: Richard Guerin

About the process of developing the work into an orchestral piece.

philipglass.com/glassnotes/glass-notes-aguas-da-amazonia-genesis-and-variation/

A review of Max Richter's *Infra*: <https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/14452-infra/>

LISTEN

Listen to Max Richter, *Infra*: open.spotify.com/album/2GBqqwiygrc0q5ElbFgDgA

Listen to *Águas da Amazônia*: open.spotify.com/album/4DcdPm3T4xGbJmpiBP0KWO

GO FURTHER

Explore more 20th century 'minimal' musicians: Steve Rich, L Monte Young and Terry Riley: courses.lumenlearning.com/musicapp-medieval-modern/chapter/minimalist-music/

Experience the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra through the perspective of the conductor with the NZSO VR app: www.nzso.co.nz/the-nzso-experience/enhance-your-experience/the-nzso-vr-experience-app/

PROVOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

PRE-FESTIVAL

Think of a river, mountain or lake important to you. What does it sound like? What instruments and sounds represent its essence?

Think of a powerful moment in history. Does it have a soundtrack? What does it sound like?

Phillip Glass's compositions have been described as *minimal music*. What does this mean to you?

Max Richter is a famous composer whose works feature in many blockbuster movies. Do you recognise his name? What movies have you seen with his music?

AT THE FESTIVAL

What sense of energy do I feel in the space? What do I notice about the stage before the performance has even begun?

What or who captures my attention during the performance? Why?

What questions do I have about the music?

What emotions do I feel while listening to the music?

AFTER THE FESTIVAL

What was similar about the two works, what was different? How did the performance bring them together into a cohesive experience for the audience?

What is the role of the conductor in the performance? What made him stand out? Discuss what stage presence is, and how we achieve it.

Do you enjoy this style of music? Why?

Have you heard this kind of music before? Can you think of any other composers who write similar music?

How was lighting and stage design used to create an atmosphere that supported the music?

Did you see any instruments you haven't seen before? Which ones?

What are the differences going to a live concert rather than listening to it on your headphones or watching a video on YouTube?

How would you describe the concert to a friend?