

The Head of State, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, awarded this year's Young Cultural Figure Award of the Cultural Foundation of the President of the Republic to composer and conductor, Pärt Uusberg in Kadriorg today.

"It feels a bit peculiar to describe an artist who has written songs that have been listened to with bated breath by a capacity crowd of people at the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds as a young cultural figure. And when the song stopped, the ovations didn't," said President Ilves at the presentation of the award.

As a long-term lover of music, he can make a distinction between good, decent and real from artificial, stated the Head of State, as he addressed Pärt Uusberg: "Your creation meets one of the main goals of art – it elevates people's souls. These are songs to remember that will keep playing in our ears and stay with us; and this makes us better."

Pärt Uusberg helps maintain the traditions of original Estonian choir music; this is a phenomenon that makes up quite a large part of the nucleus of Estonian culture, emphasised the Head of State.

"I have always tried to put my soul into my creations and I am happy that the audience understands me and that people care about my work," said Pärt Uusberg.

The Head of State thanked businessman Indrek Neivelt, one of the members of the Council of the Cultural Foundation of the President of the Republic, for his support of the cultural award. The Head of State also extended his gratitude to one of the teachers of Pärt Uusberg, composer Tõnu Kõrvits, who received the same award in 2002.

Composer and conductor Pärt Uusberg is one of the most acknowledged and recognised young choir composers in the world. The bulk of his music consists of pieces for choirs, but he has also created pieces for music groups and bands, piano, orchestra and film music. He has been acknowledged as a composer both in Estonia and abroad; his choir music has also been included in programmes of Estonian song celebrations. In 2008, Pärt Uusberg established the

Head *Õöd, Vend* (Good Night, Brother) chamber choir. The choir has been active both in Estonia and abroad and received recognition in various domestic competitions. Uusberg has also worked with the Estonian Mixed Choir of School Students, the *Mitte-Riinimanda* youth choir, the *Voces Musicales* and *Collegium Musicale* chamber choirs, HUIK mixed choir and JÕUD male chamber choir.

A stipend by the Veljo Tormis Foundation was awarded to Pärt Uusberg at the Youth Song and Dance Celebration of 2011. In 2012, he won a special award in the category of a cappella choir songs for his song "Kuule mu palve häält" (Listen to the Sound of My Prayer) for male choir at the European Award for Choral Composers 2012 competition. In the very same year, the Estonian Choral Association and the Estonian Composers Association elected Pärt Uusberg Choir Composer of the Year for a fruitful creative year. In 2014, his CD, "Liiv, meri ning mõtted" (Sand, Sea and Thoughts) was named Choir Record of the Year. In 2014, Uusberg received a stipend from the Gustav Ernesaks Foundation for the promotion of choir music and, in 2015, the Young Musician Award of Marje of Kuldar Sink.

A cultural figure of Estonian descent aged 35 or younger whose accomplishments in the field of creative arts have won wide recognition or who has, in his or her works or activities in the field of creative arts, considerably contributed to making Estonia and Estonian culture known outside the country can apply for the award. The award money is 5,000 euros.

Previous laureates of the Young Cultural Figure Award include folk musician Jalmar Vabarna (2015), dramatist Eero Epner (2014), pianist Mihkel Poll (2013), jewel artist Tanel Veenre (2012), composer Risto Joost (2011); editor of the *Õöülikool* (Night University) series Jaan Tootsen (2010); actor, theatre director and translator Marius Peterson (2009); poet Kristiina Ehin (2008); ballerina Luana Georg (2007); composer Helena Tulve (2006); theatre director Jaanus Rohumaa (2005); conductor Anu Tali (2004); literary critic Jan Kaus (2003) and composer Tõnu Kõrvits and folk musician Krista Sildoja (2002). Several special awards have also been presented. In 2014, a special award went to gallerist Olga Temnikova. In 2002, a special award was presented to folk musician Krista Sildoja, and in 2011 a special award went to Igor Kotjuh, who is a poet, essayist, translator and individual who is shaping a society liberated from prejudice.

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