

Martti Rousi

Finland

Martti Rousi was born in 1960 into a musical family. He is internationally known both as a soloist and a teacher. After playing piano for 2 years, he began his cello studies inspired by the strong Finnish cello school. He studied at the Turku Conservatory under Timo Hanhinen and Seppo Kimanen. In 1979 he enrolled into the Sibelius Academy to continue his studies with Arto Noras. In 1982 he won the 1st prize at the Turku Cello Competition and was invited as a soloist by all major Finnish symphony orchestras. In 1985 he received a Fulbright scholarship to study with Janos Starker at the Indiana University, winning the annual cello competition there. Between 1977 and 1983 he regularly had master-classes with William Pleeth and Valter Dešpalj and took private lessons with Natalia Gutman.

In 1986 Rousi won the Silver Medal at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. Since then he has performed with leading orchestras such as the Helsinki, Stockholm and Oslo Radio Symphonies, the Copenhagen Philharmonic, the CBSO in Birmingham, the Mariinsky Orchestra, the Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz and the Shanghai and Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestras, working with conductors including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Valery Gergiev, Okko Kamu, Osmo Vänskä, Sakari Oramo, Olli Mustonen, Ari Rasilainen, Leif Segerstam, Emmanuel Krivine, Bernhard Klee, Joseph Swensen and Muhai Tang.

During the 1990s Rousi played in piano trio with violinist Leonidas Kavakos and pianist Peter Nagy. In recitals he appears with pianists such as Olli Mustonen, Kathryn Stott, Henri Sigfridsson, Laura Mikkola, Massimo Somenzi and Juhani Lagerspetz.

He is also frequently invited to numerous leading chamber music festivals all over the world. Between 1993 and 2009 Rousi was the Artistic Director of the Turku Music Festival, his tenure there seeing appearances by many legendary artists such as Sviatoslav Richter, Yehudi Menuhin, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Valery Gergiev and Lang Lang. In 2010 he became the Artistic Director of Sibafest in Helsinki, while in 2010–2011 he was Artistic Director of a Sibelius series at the Verkatehdas in Hämeenlinna. 2012 saw him appointed Artistic Director of the Suvisoitto Festival in Sysmä. He has served as a jury member at major competitions including the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow (2011, 2015), the Vittorio Gui Competition in Florence, the Solistpriset in Stockholm and the Paulo Cello Competition in Helsinki.

Since 1995 Rousi has been professor of cello at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. His cello class there is attracting talents from around the world. In 2016 he was invited to be a guest professor at the Shanghai conservatory of music. In 2010 he formed a cello ensemble Sibelius Academy Cello Virtuosi with his best students, which has performed in prominent concert halls, including the Mariinsky Theatre Concert Hall, Tampere Talo and Verkatehdas in Hämeenlinna. In 2017 the ensemble was invited to the Stars of the White Nights festival in St Petersburg.

He has been invited to conduct master-classes at leading music academies on every continent and he regularly teaches at St Petersburg Music House. His discography includes several solo and chamber recordings for the Ondine and Finlandia labels. He plays on cellos crafted by Carlo Giuseppe Testore from 1690 and Jean Le Febvre from 1760; his favourite bow is a François Tourte from 1810.