



Source: Herald, The (Glasgow) {Main}  
Edition:  
Country: UK  
Date: Wednesday 13, October 2010  
Page: 17  
Area: 463 sq. cm  
Circulation: ABC 53230 Daily  
BRAD info: page rate £11,500.00, scc rate £26.50  
Phone: 0141 302 7000  
Keyword: RSNO

> durrants

# Danish conductor with designs on sweet music

## Michael Tumelty has a chat with the RSNO's new recruit

WHEN the RSNO announced the appointment of 28-year-old Dane, Christian Kluxen, to the three-year post of assistant conductor, it looked as though they had struck gold and had found, for what is essentially a learning post, somebody who was pretty much fully formed.

Kluxen is already the music director of the Copenhagen Youth Symphony Orchestra, a post he has held for seven years, in which he conducts 10 concerts and one tour each season. He has extensive experience as an assistant in opera productions for the Royal Danish and Danish National opera companies, working on productions from *Madam Butterfly* and *Idomeneo to Nabucco* and *Rosenkavalier*. He conducted the rehearsals for Bryn Terfel's concert with the Copenhagen Philharmonic. He has conducted all the non-professional symphony orchestras in Copenhagen.

Since his professional debut two years ago, he has racked up engagements with eight of Denmark's professional orchestras, and conducted subscription concerts with the Odense and Aarhus Symphony Orchestras.

The man, who is in great demand in his native country, is clearly the full conducting Monty; and RSNO chief executive Simon Woods, who, with his selection team including music director Stephane Deneve, picked Kluxen out of 167 applicants from all over the globe, is cock-a-hoop over the appointment. "A number of the candidates in the finals had a lot of professional experience. Nobody matched up to the brief better than Christian. He is an enormously likeable individual with the determination and intellectual ability to succeed in a very tough business. At the same time he has the humility to benefit from the mentoring and learning environment we can offer. And he's a terrific conductor."

Yet Kluxen is not quite so confident and certain as his impressive background might suggest. He had known about the job for some time, and, through their recordings, felt he had come to know intimately the RSNO and its character through its sound.

"I actually met Jim Lowe (the first incumbent of the position) at a conducting course in Finland and he told me about the post. It was around 2005, I was very green and didn't even know there was such a position. Later, I met David Danzmayr, the second to hold the post, in Copenhagen, since when we have become very close friends. So, by total coincidence, Jim, David and I have become friends."

He confesses that later, when Danzmayr applied for the job, and Lowe had already had it, it fleetingly crossed

Kluxen's mind as a tantalising prospect. "I did think about it, but decided not to because I didn't have any experience with professional orchestras at that time."

All that changed in 2008 with his professional debut, since when has grown a huge demand for the young man in his native country. So with all these rapidly accruing experiences and opportunities, why on earth does he now want to take on what is essentially a learning job?

Though not from a musical family, Kluxen has been involved in music all his life. As a boy flautist he joined the Boys Guards concert band playing in the Tivoli Gardens. For his last two years he was appointed its conductor, and before he was 16 had conducted 180 concerts with the band.

"I never chose to be a conductor. I just did it; it just came from an interest in working with people."

He did formalise the learning process by going to the Academy in Copenhagen as a flautist, but by 26 (two years ago) found he was conducting "all kinds of stuff" with every amateur orchestra in the Copenhagen book. That provided him with bedrock experience: "I could practise, I could programme, I could learn and I could make mistakes."

Masterclasses followed with, among others, Kurt Masur, the Jarvis (Neeme and Paavo) the legendary Jorma Panula in Finland, and, critically, with Bernard Haitink, a personal hero for Kluxen and a major influence "because of his honesty and clarity".

But all the while, in two senses at least, Kluxen had his eye on Scotland. He knew about this job and felt he had come to know the RSNO "through all those recordings I had been listening to since I was little: those Shostakovich recordings with Neeme Jarvi, and all those Bruckner recordings with Georg Tintner".

He shakes his head in wonder and pinches himself as he reflects on this and the fact that he is speaking about it all in the RSNO centre, where the band rehearses.

"Through all those recordings, the sound seems so familiar to me that it feels like home; and I feel at home."

Getting "home" for Kluxen, however, was a bit of a bumpy ride, whatever the auditioning team in the RSNO made of him. Even applying was a major decision. "I hadn't really been invited for any competitions before. So I had not come through the competition system.

"I decided I would just work the way I normally do. I was extremely prepared, if you have to show a lot of things in such a short time, you have to go for the jugular."



Source: Herald, The (Glasgow) {Main}  
Edition:  
Country: UK  
Date: Wednesday 13, October 2010  
Page: 17  
Area: 463 sq. cm  
Circulation: ABC 53230 Daily  
BRAD info: page rate £11,500.00, scc rate £26.50  
Phone: 0141 302 7000  
Keyword: RSNO

> durrants

The audition involved both conducting right through and rehearsing. "I didn't feel that it went very well for me. With an orchestra, it's not just 'I'm in front and you follow'; you have to find a common way you are going together.

"Sometimes you have to insist, but sometimes you have to give space. And giving space is the most difficult thing, because suddenly it tips, and you are not in control. I feel I have a good balance between these things, but it took a while to find out where the balance was."

When the call came that they wanted him back for the second round, he was euphoric, and immediately prepared himself for failure. In the second round, things, he felt, went well between him and the orchestra. "I think they were really with me."

Then he was called for interview, where he decided on openness and honesty in his responses. It paid off. He was offered the job.

*Christian Kluxen conducts the RSNO in Children's Classic Concerts: October 30, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall; October 31, Usher Hall, Edinburgh.*



**JUST THE JOB:** Christian Kluxen says he feels at home in his new position with the RSNO. Picture: Colin Mearns