

Fences no obstacle for music's gentleman

Despite his long history as a prominent figure in jazz circles, most of **Kirmo Lintinen's** compositions have been in the Classical tradition. His music is full of imagination, free from stereotypical ideas and highly expressive.

There's a lot of talk these days about crossover and breaking down fences, but Kirmo Lintinen (b. 1967) – a man with a finger in many musical pies – skims across borders with such elegance that the thought of crossover barely occurs. For here is a composer who seamlessly adjusts the ambience and stylistic profile of his works, and in doing so creates hybrids with a balanced blend of contents and each with its own crisp, characterful identity.

His sources of inspiration are not difficult to spot. Many of them date from around the 1920s: **Maurice Ravel**, **Francis Poulenc** and the other members of Les Six. French Baroque and jazz. Historical forms from rondo to cavatina flow from his pen, as do Afro-American genres. Stravinskyan kleptomaniac goes hand in hand with ever gentlemanly musical decorum.

Lintinen graduated from the Sibelius Academy Jazz Department some two decades ago, but the bulk of his composition studies were with **Eero Hämeenniemi** in the classical sector. The UMO Jazz Orchestra has kept him busy for nearly thirty years, as pianist, as the conductor of countless concerts, and for a couple of terms as Artistic Director. Among the items in his lengthy CV are a jazz concert he arranged and conducted for soprano **Karita Mattila** and the artistic planning of several festivals.

Concertos for a variety of instruments

Kirmo Lintinen has an extensive catalogue ranging from opera to chamber music, film scores and songs for children. In recent years he has added concertos for a variety of instruments: 12 in all. *Piano Concerto No. 1* (2008) is a splendid example of his elegant blend of styles. The flowing opening melody continues in a piano texture reminiscent of Scriabin. The skilful orchestration includes such novel combinations as a tuba, glockenspiel and piano all playing in unison. The abundant use of ornaments could be a relic of the French Baroque, while the endless one-finger melody of the *Notturno* movement pays homage to both **Bill Evans** and Ravel. The quirky, chipper *Scherzo urbano* could be described as musical parkour, halting and leaping onto platforms, fences and walls. Whether the music is soft or loud, slow or fast, there is always room for a neatly immersed beat in the orchestra or solo piano.

There is also a tailored, chic elegance in the *Clarinet Concerto* (2013) that slips on as smoothly as a chamois-leather glove. Joining the velvety solo clarinet, each in turn, are a plodding bass in the nature of a passacaglia, lush fifths on the cellos, unusually rich melodic support from the timpani, a French horn and violin canon, and woodwind arabesques. Sensual, civilised and conscious of tradition. Even the slow passages proceed with assurance, while the fast ones positively binge on rhythm. The wildly zig-zagging clarinet plays a game of tag with itself in the leaps of its cadenza.

In the one-movement *Tuba Concerto* (2014), the soft-lined solo is borne along by an orchestra of varying timbre and texture that, as it waxes and wanes, adds to the continuous melodic weave. The music is seasoned all



Photo: Maanti (yhtäharju) (Music Finland)

along the way by a rich battery of percussion instruments. *The Accordion Concerto* (2015) cannot be labelled as jazz, but as an arch endlessly churning out ideas, it calls to mind a great Keith Jarrett solo.

Humour and hybrids in chamber music

The close on 50 chamber works by Lintinen are for their part proof of his diverse mastery and musicianly approach. *Quattro capricci* (2004) for saxophone quartet ends with a movement titled *Keaton*. Humour, games and play masked as serious are true Lintinen, as they are in the preceding *Canon* movement, where two pairs of saxophones acting as mirror images chase each other, one a quarter of a bar behind the other.

The quintet *Marcheairrag* (2005), a march, aria and ragtime hybrid, is both frugal yet extravagant. Parody, empathy, nostalgia and joy are here inseparable.

Canonische Begegnungen (2006) for oboe, clarinet and piano takes strict part writing of German type as its starting point, but from the piano's opening signal onwards the canons keep straying onto wayward paths. Here, as in his other works, Lintinen writes music of detailed precision, full of imagination, free from stereotypical ideas and highly expressive; and never more so than in the works for his own instrument, the piano.

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