

No. 18

Highlights

AUTUMN 2005

Newsletter from Gehrmans Musikförlag & Fennica Gehrman



Bach to the future
Queen of the woodwinds & the underdog
Kortekangas opera reviews

Is one performance enough?

Many of us believe in the power and value of what is usually called art music. A form of art that has many points in common with our personal quality of life. Music is always developing. The music written today sounds different from what was written 100 or 200 years ago. Moreover, interpretations of the music already in existence are continually evolving. This is all self-evident.

In the field of serious music there are record collectors who excel in comparing, say, different interpretations of Beethoven's seventh symphony. Not all concertgoers devote themselves to such sophisticated comparisons, but the desire to chat with friends at a concert during the intermission about "the last time I heard..." is obviously a part of the value of listening. It is natural to want to have a perspective on the past and at the same time find the beauty in a new interpretation. On different levels of knowledge we are familiar with the music, at the same time as we take in something new. It's the same thing with an emotional experience.

That new performances develop earlier ones is not everywhere a matter of course. When it comes to the genre of the musical, for instance, it is if anything a rule that a new production should be as identical as possible to the original production. It is thus here a matter of avoiding development – especially if the original was a success.

Beethoven's seventh symphony is worth listening to many times, but just as I don't want to stop at one interpretation, neither do I want to get entirely stuck in the music of earlier epochs. Contemporary music can be tremendously exciting, as we don't know what is going to happen in the next couple of seconds! Part of the vitality of listening lies in what is new, but to be able to appreciate the values of

music of a high artistic quality, we must have something to compare it with. Something of a similar character, or something with sufficient elements in common with what we remember. To keep our interest keen and alive, we need to attend more performances of high-quality art music even from the last 50 years. There is nothing wrong with Beethoven or Shostakovich, but we need above all more contacts (not just premiere performances!) with music by Ingvar Lidholm, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Daniel Börtz, Kalevi Aho and others. The broadening of the repertoire then offered would enhance our musical experiences. And, of course, here lies the key to future, actively-listening concert audiences.

Over a number of decades much of art music was radicalized so quickly that many listeners did not feel at home in modern music. But times have changed since then. Today there is contemporary art music with a viable content that to a great extent attracts concert audiences – both as a challenge and as an aesthetic experience.

Much of the popular music business has for a long time now recognized the value of confronting listeners many times with the same thing. In art music, which is more complex, it is certainly even more important to be able to return to a work both a year later and the next year after that.

Those who plan concert programmes! Don't let contemporary music end with a premiere performance, let it be as natural a part of the repertoire as nineteenth-century music. Give listeners the opportunity for personal and repeated experiences of music written by the living generation of composers in our own cultural area!

Kjetil Skarby

Bach to the future Sven-David Sandström

Religious and vocal music and Bach's music in particular has become a major source of inspiration for one of Sweden's most innovative and productive composers.

When Sven-David Sandström composes highly complex and virtuosic works for choir, he is building on two distinct but very strong living Swedish traditions: the post-World War II Swedish Choral Miracle (a term borrowed from American musicologist and choral conductor **Richard Sparks's** book *The Swedish Choral Miracle: Swedish A Cappella Music since 1945*) and the performance of choral works by **J.S. Bach**.

Through the immensely important work of choral conductor **Eric Ericson**, Sweden developed a significant choral tradition. From the very beginning of his career Ericson emphasized the a cappella repertoire from the Renaissance onwards as the fundament for what he referred to as the "choral instrument." He considered the choir to be one sounding body, rather than a cluster of individual voices, creating a uniform sound. Ericson made sure to keep a close relationship with composers and constantly commissioned and performed recently written works. This tradition of embracing the new spread through the system through the large number of choral-conducting students that Ericson trained.

In Sweden today it is quite common even for amateur choirs to perform newly composed works. Conversely, virtually every Swedish composer has choral works among his or her oeuvre, creating a circle of constant innovation and renewal of the repertoire. Undoubtedly, Sven-David Sandström benefited immensely from Ericson's work. He had access to fabulous choirs, although his major works were composed for professional ensembles, and his intense work with choral repertoire has expanded the repertoire of ordinary choirs. His output for choir is large: thus far, he has composed some forty works for choir a cappella and some twenty-five for choir and instruments.

SITTING NEXT TO BACH

The Bach tradition germinated in Sandström's mind over many years. He learned the choral instrument from the inside. For some twenty-five years, beginning in 1965, he was a member

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Cover: Päivi Nisula and Hannu Niemelä in
Messenius and Lucia (Photo: Kai Tirkkonen)

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ISSN 1239-6850

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the future: Sandström and the great choral tradition

of the Hägersten Motet Choir, an elite amateur choir in Stockholm under its legendary founder and conductor **Ingemar Månsson**. Recurring in the choir's repertoire were the major vocal works by J.S. Bach, including the *Passions*, the *Christmas Oratorio*, the *B-Minor Mass*, *Magnificat*, and the six motets. This intense exposure to Bach left a life-long impact on Sandström, although it was not immediately noticeable in his own compositions. During the 1960s and especially the 70s, he was to become the foremost modernist composer in Sweden with an immense production of exceedingly complex, mostly instrumental works. Around 1980, his style began to change in a more neo-romantic direction, where he developed a personal harmonic language. Although he composed many sacred works during the 1970s and 80s, it was not until the 1990s that religious and vocal music and Bach in particular became a major source of inspiration.

Why Bach? Sandström explained that he wanted to connect to the pinnacle of sacred repertoire. He also felt that there was a strong living Bach tradition with which he could associate. His fascination had another rationale: the large-scale forms of Bach were inspiring in that the church was the ideal locale for monumental works.

The first work that seriously alluded to Bach was the massive two-hour long *High Mass* (1994) for chorus, five soloists, and a large orchestra. Originally, the Swedish Broadcasting

Corporation had commissioned a symphony, but Sandström felt a strong urge to compose a sacred work and the commission was renegotiated. Although this music does not sound like Bach, Sandström found it inspiring to use the same texts. Bach's setting of the *Mass Ordinary* was ringing in his head during the compositional process. In an interview before the German premiere of the work with the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig, Sandström explained: "*After I had received the commission for the Mass, I told myself: I want to make it so that I follow the same division of the text as Bach did in his B-Minor Mass. I found it inspiring to sit next to him, so to speak. When I was composing High Mass, I heard Bach's Mass the whole time. But my music does not sound like his. Although despite all the differences there are some very special affinities. A text forces one in certain compositional directions.*"

High Mass has been performed several times and there are two commercial recordings available. Its immense public success was encouraging for Sandström and opened the gates to several Bach-inspired works. He felt he had found his strength and a niche as a composer. Stylistically this rediscovery of the repertoire he knew so well was liberating. Sandström had composed sacred music before (virtually every choral piece of his is sacred), but he now felt that the combination of his new musical language and choice of text had become a great compositional asset. He was able to write beautiful, powerful and rhythmi-

cally challenging music with a strong message, as well as more emotionally conceived music that could be appreciated by a general audience. *High Mass* was an important work in that he realized that it was necessary to compose for the general concertgoer, rather than just for the contemporary music cognoscenti.

THE MOTETS

In the spring of 2003 Ingemar Månsson commissioned a work by Sandström for his new choir, the Lund Vocal Ensemble. Månsson proposed using the Bach motet "Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied" as a model, an idea that appealed to Sandström. Like Bach's, Sandström's motet is written for a double chorus in three movements, although he uses an a cappella choir, rather than the continuo support common in Bach's motets. It is also highly virtuosic, utilizing rapid melismas and drawing on the interlocking room-acoustic effects possible when using the two choirs. Sandström expects the work to be performed with a Baroque feel. The often fast tempo and numerous melismas in the outer movements do not necessarily make the work harder. Singers have found that the fast tempi make the melismas easier to sing using glottal articulation and a lighter voice. The second movement is a romantic chorale juxtaposed with contrapuntal sections, somewhat similar to Bach's motet. The chorale itself is brilliant in its simplicity. It



Sven-David Sandström (Photo: Per Broman)



Rehearsal of Magnificat in Stuttgart (Photo: Mats Åberg)

The image shows a musical score for 'Singet dem Herrn' by Sandström. It features two systems of staves. The top system includes vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The bottom system continues the vocal and piano parts. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves.

Example 1

sounds like a tonal chorale that we have heard many times before, but it is a completely original composition by Sandström (See example 1). *Singet dem Herrn* was premiered on 2 October 2005 by Månsson and his choir and performed again just a few days later by the Swedish Radio Choir under Erik Westberg.

In 2003 Sandström completed yet another motet for double choir: *Lobet den Herrn*, a work composed for and premiered by the Swedish Radio Choir under Stefan Parkman. Several other choirs have since adapted it and it is a frequently performed work. In contrast to the Bach version Sandström again set this motet for double choir. Bach – or perhaps another composer, as this work’s authenticity has been questioned – used a four-part chorus. Like *Singet dem Herrn* it is a highly complex and virtuosic piece, filled with interlocking rhythmic figures between the choruses. It again has three sections, the middle one being a slow arch-shaped movement, departing from diatonic chords in the late-romantic fashion so typical of Sandström. The first movement departs from a major scale that has been segmented in different voices. Like Bach’s motet, the last movement is a lively, short Baroque-like fugato, something very unusual in Sandström’s oeuvre.

The exhilarating rhythmic structures, as at the beginning of “Lobet”, are the most important stylistic mark of Sandström’s later music. His change of harmonic language in the 1980s was followed by a change in rhythmic texture a few years later; a key work is his brass quintet *Heavy Metal*, which heavily elaborates on his new rhythmic mode of composition: Sandström developed a system that let him create extensive sections with unpredictable patterns. Stylistically the motets lie far from the works from the 1970s, but they are similar insofar as they are highly structured: his system departs from a table organizing 2 and 3 rhythmical units (the table reads 2, 3, 3, 2; 2, 3, 3; 2, 3; 2), which could then be repeated and juxtaposed in different

voices. The table is simple, but somewhat irregular sounding, particularly when applied on different metric levels simultaneously. The result is something resembling minimalism and explains, for example, the capricious feeling of the choir section at the beginning of the *Magnificat* and *Lobet den Herrn* (the rhythm of the table is very clear in chorus II, see example 2). In “Lobet”, for example, Sandström creates interplay between the two choruses where the voices are constantly going in and out of phase with each other in an exhilarating performance. Singers also point out that Sandström’s later choral works are idiomatic for the choral instrument: the style is brilliant, but the pitch material is often limited, making the sounding result quite striking.

MAGNIFICAT AND CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

In the later works of Sandström, vocal music has a deeper significance than simply conveying a religious message: it has become a nucleus of his aesthetic thinking. Since he started to compose vocal and dramatic works, his way of composing instrumental music has changed. Working with these historical texts interjected emotion into the compositional process, which was quite different from his earlier serialist mode of composition, turning these works into music dramas. Everything he writes now is dramatic – his chamber as well as his orchestral works. The form itself is dramatic, and he lets different instrumental groups act as characters playing off one another. More and more he has come to realize that having a vocal approach to composition is essential in other respects as well: it constitutes the entire foundation of composition, including the articulation, phrasing, and breathing, aspects he paid scant heed to earlier in his career. This approach to instrumental writing is fully apparent in his most recent works, the large-scale *Magnificat* (2005) and *Christmas Oratorio* (2004), taking two different positions with respect to the

The image shows a musical score for 'Lobet den Herrn' by Sandström. It features two systems of staves. The top system includes vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The bottom system continues the vocal and piano parts. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves.

Example 2

Bach tradition. Although the orchestral texture of both is often sparse, the effect is striking in the way Sandström pays attention to detail in the score.

Magnificat is the composition of Sandström’s that most corresponds to the Bach original. The orchestra is virtually the same: trumpets, oboes, timpani, organ/harpsichord, vocal soloists, choir, and strings. The only difference is that Bach included two flutes and five soloists instead of four, and a five-part chorus instead of six (occasionally even twelve). The choice of ensemble reflects the occasion for the premiere: it was a commission from the Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart and programmed with the two Bach cantatas “Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir” (BWV 29) and “Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille” (BWV 120), performed on historical instruments by the Drottningholm Baroque Orchestra together with the Uppsala Academic Chamber Choir under Stefan Parkman on 27 August 2005.

Sandström also keeps the same twelve-movement partition of the text and divides the movements into chorus and solo sections in a similar way to Bach. The movements are short, which is another recent development in Sandström’s aesthetic thinking. He wants the music to be direct and concise. There are no intense polyphonic sections in the chorus, and hardly any extensive melismas, except for the last “Gloria Patri” movement. Instead, many movements are short and lightly orchestrated.

The work begins in a true Baroque fashion for this kind of triumphant composition: with timpani and trumpets. Sandström utilizes Baroque rhythms, as in the Siciliano “Et exsultavit spiritus meus”, where the harpsichord is introduced, creating an anachronistic and joyous feeling. Articulation and subtle changes in the instrumentation create fine shifts of nuances as in the strings of “Quia respexit humilitatem”. Throughout the work, the tonal language is mostly diatonic and triadic, as in the intense

“Omnes generations” and forceful “Fecit potentiam”. Sandström also found inspiration in earlier church music. The “Esurientes implevit bonis” duet between the soprano and alto has a clear origin in Gregorian Chant and imitative counterpoint of the Renaissance, and provides a fine contrast to the surrounding more intense movements.

In his *Christmas Oratorio*, to be premiered by Lund’s Vocal Ensemble and the Malmö Symphony Orchestra in December 2005, Sandström takes a more contemporary approach to orchestration, featuring a small orchestra with an extensive percussion section, including Javanese gongs, vibraphone, bells, marimba, and timpani. The choice of percussion instruments hints at the intended atmosphere. It is a timbrally delightful work with a light, uncomplicated texture. Rather than Bach’s Christmas Oratorio, there are more connections with Swedish composer **Hilding Rosenberg’s** (1892–1985) Christmas Oratory, *The Holy Night* (1936); a half-hour work with a memorable melodic approach setting poems by **Hjalmar Gullberg**.

Like Rosenberg, Sandström uses a Swedish libretto, but in contrast to both Bach and Rosenberg, he strictly follows Luke 2:1–20, “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus,” without any alterations or additions. This selection corresponds to the first three cantatas of Bach’s oratorio. Sandström’s work begins in a mysterious way. His sophisticated orchestration technique, developed in his modernist compositions during the 1970s and 80s, works out very well in his quasi-tonal and often romantic style. There is no designated evangelist. Both the choir and the soprano and baritone soloists narrate the story. This is an uncomplicated work where pretty and somewhat naive melodies are juxtaposed with dramatic outbursts and sections with a somewhat modernist harmonic language. Like Rosenberg, Sandström keeps the work thematically homogenous, with a number of straightforward, recognizable motifs that hold the work together. Rosenberg’s work became a timeless classic, regularly performed by professional and amateur choirs alike, and Sandström’s work might well follow the same path.

What is next for Sandström? His Passion *The Word*, departing from St. John’s Passion with added sections by Swedish poet **Katarina Frostenson** will be premiered in 2006, another Bach-inspired motet, “Komm Jesu komm”, is in progress (and he will probably set the other three Bach-motet texts), and in 2008 the opera *Batseba* after **Torgny Lindgren’s** novel will be premiered in Stockholm. There are no signs that one of Sweden’s most innovative and productive composers will cut back on his artistic undertakings.



Queen of the woodwinds in fine fettle

A lot of solo music for the clarinet is being composed right now in Finland and increasingly heard abroad. This article presents some highlights of recent Finnish clarinet music.

Works with an instrumental soloist are often inspired by a particular player. This applies especially to such less common solo instruments as the clarinet. Finnish clarinet wizard **Kari Kriikku** has won fame worldwide for his virtuosic performance of such works as the *Clarinet Concerto* by **Kimmo Hakola**. **Richard Stoltzman**, one of the best-known American soloists, has performed the *Clarinet Concerto* he commissioned from **Einojuhani Rautavaara** dozens of times already, and music by many other composers has found its way into the repertoire of clarinetists frequently heard on the concert platform. And there is more in the pipeline: the most eagerly-awaited work in this category is probably the concerto by **Kalevi Aho** to be premiered in April 2006 by star Swedish clarinetist **Martin Fröst**. (Incidentally, the clarinetist in the premiere of the *Clarinet Quintet* (1998) by Aho was an artist better known as a conductor, **Osmo Vänskäl**.)

Bernhard Henrik Crusell (1770–1838), a Finnish clarinetist and composer who played in the Hofkapelle in Stockholm, was naturally the best interpreter of his own works. Along with items by Weber and Spohr, the concertos, quartets and smaller-scale pieces by Crusell (such as the *Air suédois varié for clarinet and piano/orchestra*) are among the basic early Romantic clarinet repertoire. After Crusell, a century passed before any Finnish composer singled out the clarinet as a soloist. Then in 1924 **Aarre Merikanto** composed his Concerto for Violin, Clarinet, French Horn and String Sextet that shared the first prize in a competition held by Schott and hence came to be known as the *Schott Concerto*. Dating from 1954 are the *Three Fantasies* for clarinet and piano by **Erik Bergman**. This starkly expressive piece is the first known attempt at dodecaphony in the history of Finnish music. The Merikanto and the Berg-

man works were both premiered abroad; at that time, the few professional clarinetists in Finland were still concentrating on orchestral playing and more traditional repertoire.

At his debut concert in 1970, clarinetist **Martin Fagerlund** premiered the *Sonetto* for clarinet and piano by Einojuhani Rautavaara and the expansive *Discantus II* for solo clarinet by **Paavo Heininen**. The series of *Discantus* works by Heininen explores, like certain other works of the 1960s, the polyphonic potential of woodwind instruments. *Discantus I* (1965), for alto flute, was in fact composed for the pioneer of modern wind playing, the Italian **Severino Gazzelloni**. The challenges of *Discantus II* include not only virtuosity in the traditional sense but also such novel clarinet techniques as multiphonic sounds. The result is not, however, an aggressive experiment in timbre in the manner of the Darmstadt school but a work that sings almost throughout. The multiphonics, at times aggressive and at others gentle, temper the melodic growth.

NEW GENERATION OF PLAYERS

The career of Martin Fagerlund was unfortunately cut short, but the 1970s saw the emergence of a generation of Finnish clarinetists prepared to accept the challenge of contemporary music. Leading this band of pioneers was possibly **Kullervo Kojo**, whose playing has been the source of inspiration for many a new Finnish clarinet work for some thirty years already. In 1978 he premiered two works now favourites with many clarinetists: **Esa-Pekka Salonen’s** *Nachtlieder* for clarinet and piano somewhat in the manner of Alban Berg, and **Herman Reichberger’s** *KV622 II bis* for clarinet and tape. The latter is named after the Köchel number of Mozart’s *Clarinet Concerto* and its program-

matic content is the dream of a clarinetist who has been desperately practising the Mozart work all day. The tape has futuristic computer timbres and Mozart allusions and the clarinet part presents a wide selection of new performing techniques: multiphonics creating a dream-like, distorted mood, frullato, rattling of the finger-plates and playing with the mouthpiece only.

Doing most to promote Finnish clarinet music has been Kari Kriikku. Since his debut concert in 1984, at which he premiered the *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* by **Eero Hämeenniemi**, his career has risen steadily, making him one of the most illustrious clarinetists in repertoire both traditional and contemporary. Over the past couple of decades Finnish clarinet playing has in other respects, too, risen to international standard. Players are no longer afraid of contemporary works, and premieres have ceased to be the exclusive domain of a couple of pioneers. Finnish composers have established partnerships with numerous first-rate clarinetists with an interest in the music of today.

VARIED SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

One of the most fruitful of these composer-clarinetist partnerships has been that between Kimmo Hakola and Kari Kriikku. Kriikku has premiered Hakola's *Capriole* (1993) for bass clarinet and cello, the solo works *loco* (1995) and *Diamond Street* (1999), the *Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet* (1997) and the *Clarinet Concerto* (2001). The most characteristic feature of Hakola's clarinet works is the combination of modern concert music with elements borrowed from Eastern Europe. Klezmer and Balkan folk music are the first such elements to spring to mind. The listener will, however, search in vain for traces of authentic ethnic music, since all the motifs are drawn from the composer's own imagination and associations: "I threw myself into the stream and sought my own Horas and Sirbas," says Hakola. Another inherent feature is the notation. For most contemporary composers, the score with its precise instructions is a document saying how the composer wants the piece to be played. Hakola, by contrast, seems partly to have reverted to the pre-Romantic practice of indicating what is to be played but not how. In the score of *Diamond Street* for solo clarinet, for example, he has marked only the pitches and rhythms, relying on the player's ability to decide the right tempos, dynamics, phrasing and articulation. The music of Hakola is, for the clarinetist, also an excellent opportunity to improvise with glissandos, frullato, singing into the instrument and other means of colouring the sound in ways seldom heard in classical clarinet playing.

Herman Rechberger also mixes Modernism with ethnic sounds in his clarinet concerto



Herman Rechberger



Mikko Heiniö



Kai Nieminen



Paavo Heininen

Alovlar (2001), but his underlying principles are quite different from Hakola's. A man who has travelled the world, Rechberger has first-hand experience of the music of Azerbaijan. *Alovlar* uses the scales of traditional Azerbaijan music and other authentic stylistic features. The ensemble consists of a clarinet and string orchestra, plus a concertante string quartet and a frame drum. Although the clarinet is the leading solo instrument, the other soloists still have plenty to say. The second of the three movements is dominated by a viola solo that imitates a kemancha spike-fiddle. The dominant rhythmic motif of the third movement is assigned to a frame drum. In the clarinet part the composer wants the soloist to use Oriental techniques, some of which are marked precisely in the score. The solo cadenza is left for the soloist to improvise. The Oriental touch sounds very authentic, once again demonstrating Rechberger's versatility and adaptability.

Another composer with a considerable output for the clarinet is **Kai Nieminen**. His earliest works for the instrument date from the first half of the 1980s; *Autumn Sonnet* for clarinet and piano, and *Winter Sonnet* for clarinet and cello examine the relationship between sound and silence, and quiet multiphonic notes. Many of his works have a literary reference. The clarinet concerto *Through Shadows I Can Hear Ancient Voices* (2002) was inspired by the novel *Notturmo Indiano* by **Antonio Tabucchi**, and each movement is equipped with a literary, nocturnal motto. Himself a guitarist, Nieminen shuns aggressive gestures and thick instrumentation; the mood of the concerto is, even at its most virtuosic, airy and intimate. One of the main elements of the work is the tear motif, a sequence of four falling chords inherited from the Baroque. This is also heard on the clarinet – with polyphonic multiphonics! Nieminen's concerto has three movements proper and two cadenzas, the first

improvised by the soloist and the second a written-out dialogue between the percussionists and the clarinetists.

One of the finest Finnish chamber works of recent years involving a clarinet is **Mikko Heiniö's** *Treno della notte* for clarinet, cello and piano (2000). The composer says of his work: "I wanted to write a long, fairly fast-moving composition proceeding without a break in which the moods are dream-like, nocturnal. May 'Treno della notte', the term for a night train in Italian, be a tribute to my much-admired **Federico Fellini** and **Marcello Mastroianni**, who in the film *Città della donne* (City of Women) falls asleep on a train and is led by a representative of the stronger sex along the most fantastic paths. During a journey lasting a good 17 minutes the listener has time to proceed through 12 connected carriages: the composition has five calm, melodic sequences and four rhythmically dashing dances. It begins with an *Introduzione*, has a *Transito* in the middle and ends with a *Coda*."

In addition to its nocturnal shades, the Heiniö work is of sizzling virtuosity, hot Latin rhythms and glowing, sustained melody. The clarinetist plays both a normal B flat instrument and a bass clarinet, thus enriching the timbral scale even further. Heiniö does not expect the clarinetist to improvise or to master novel techniques, but otherwise the clarinet part is as challenging as many a concerto. Maybe he, too, will one day compose a concerto for the instrument he calls the "Queen of the woodwinds"? Let us hope so.

The works described here are but a small selection from the broad range of Finnish clarinet music. Many other composers have also produced notable music for the instrument. **Jukka Tiensuu's** clarinet concerto *Puro* is already a contemporary classic. **Magnus Lindberg** has likewise composed widely for the clarinet – and for Kari Kriikku, of course. The refined clarinet works of Modernist **Hannu Pohjannoro** are also frequently performed both in Finland and abroad. Finnish clarinet music is not only characterised by quality and quantity but by a diversity of style as well. In addition to ethnic influences there is the playful neoclassicism of **Pekka Kostianen** (*Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, 1978), and the robust Modernism of **Veli-Matti Puumala** (*Basfortel* for bass clarinet, piano and electronics, 1993). Finnish clarinet music has never had it so good!

MIKKO RAASAKKA

The writer is himself a clarinetist. His book on Finnish clarinet music was published in September by Fennica Gehrman (see: New publications).



Contrabassoon into the solo spotlight

Lewis Lipnick from the National Symphony of Washington describes how Kalevi Aho's new Contrabassoon Concerto provides the underdog contrabassoon with an opportunity to finally spread its wings and take flight into the solo spotlight.

Ever since I had the privilege of performing the world premiere of **Gunther Schuller's** *Concerto for Contrabassoon and Orchestra* with **Mstislav Rostropovich** and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC in 1979, I had been searching for another composer who could write an even more ambitious work for solo contrabassoon and orchestra. The idea of a concerto for the contrabassoon was quite controversial back in 1979, as it was the first work of its kind ever to be composed. Since then, as the contrabassoonist of the National Symphony, I have had the opportunity to perform many contemporary works by living composers. Although the majority of these works had contrabassoon parts, very few displayed any innovative or challenging use of the "contra". In fact, when I spoke to many of these composers about a contrabassoon concerto, they either thought the idea to be crazy or professed ignorance of the instrument's capabilities.

It was not until a few years ago, when we in the National Symphony performed **Kalevi Aho's** *Symphony No. 9 for Trombone and Orchestra* with **Christian Lindberg** as soloist and **Osmo Vänskä** guest conducting, that I discovered a composer who I felt would be able to write another major work for solo contrabassoon and orchestra. From the first rehearsal with the soloist, I realized that Aho was not afraid to take the trombone, another misunderstood instrument, far, far beyond its previously established limits. In fact, the solo part of that work challenges both the trombone and the performer to do things that most other musicians would believe impossible. However, in the hands of a great virtuoso like Lindberg, and a masterful conductor like Vänskä, the work was a huge success with both audience and orchestra, and showed that the trombone is just as capable a solo instrument as any other. I immediately contacted Mr. Aho, and asked him if he would be interested in composing a concerto for contrabassoon that pushed the contrabassoon past its established limits, as he had done with

his work for trombone and orchestra. He was most receptive to this idea, and so I decided to personally commission his *Concerto for Contrabassoon and Orchestra* that I will premiere with **Andrew Litton** conducting the Bergen Philharmonic in February, 2006.

But as the old adage says "be careful what you wish for", I was not completely prepared for what Aho had in mind for my instrument. Although we were in contact via email during the time that he was working on the piece, the impact of my first seeing the solo part was heart stopping. Yes, I had asked Kalevi to push the limits of the instrument, but did that mean taking the contrabassoon a full octave over its range? In fact, there is one passage in the last movement that pushes the contra up to the sounding high "C" of the solo bassoon at the very beginning of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. This note is considered a stretch even

for the regular bassoon (which is based an octave higher than the contra). To my knowledge, this note has never before been played on any contrabassoon. But whether through luck or destiny, the American bassoon manufacturer Fox Products, in cooperation with **Arlen Fast**, contrabassoonist of the New York Philharmonic is now offering a newly redesigned instrument, named the Fox/Fast system contrabassoon. Mr. Fast, like most other contrabassoonists, felt that the contra was acoustically deficient, and spent several years of research and experiments in an attempt to "fix" these problems. So with **Chip Owen** at Fox, they began building these unique instruments. Along with fixing most of the previous "bad notes", they discovered that they had essentially expanded the contra's high range by at least an additional octave. This was not the original intention of the Fast System, but it has turned out, at least in my case, to be a lifesaver. Now, with my new Fox/Fast contrabassoon, I can play all of the extreme high passages Aho has written that would have been impossible to perform on any other contrabassoon. At the time of writing (late May 2005), there are only six of these special instruments in existence, with a seventh soon to be manufactured (out of several thousand contrabassoons around the world). By pushing the limits of the contrabassoon, it is hoped that the Aho concerto will lead to other manufacturers designing and building instruments that will also rise to the challenges presented by this new work.

In spite of these difficulties presented to the soloist, the Aho Contrabassoon Concerto is an absolutely beautiful piece of music. From the opening mournful pianissimo monologue for the solo contra in its lowest register (accompanied by only a very soft bass drum roll) that soon moves up into the extreme highest range, the first movement makes it perfectly clear to the listener that the contrabassoon can sing as well as rumble. Then through the mercurial second movement scherzo with its dazzling technical passages and into the slower third movement that recalls all of the previous musical material, ending with a beautiful soft passage for the contra. The Aho Contrabassoon Concerto is a musical journey that takes both performers and listeners from our darkest hours through a wild ride and vivid dances, finally coming to rest on a note of resignation and hope. Like the other magnificent works of Kalevi Aho, this is more than just a beautifully written piece of music. It provides the underdog contrabassoon with an opportunity to finally spread its wings and take flight into the solo spotlight.



Lewis Lipnick (Photo: Claire Newman-Williams)



Hymns to the Night

– a nocturnal dialogue by Tommie Haglund

ERIK WALLRUP

Elizabeth Pitcairn calls “Hymns to the Night” a hypnotizing piece. “In order to play it, one must be able to express the intensity of pain and anguish combined with great inner calm. It is unique in the fact that the work begins with a mesmerizing cadenza for violin alone, and this continues throughout. The piece draws one in, as if nothing else exists.”

The German poet Novalis, whose real name was Friedrich von Hardenberg, got his lengthy cycle of poems *Hymnen an die Nacht* published in what was the most important organ of German romanticism, the periodical *Athenäum*. It was the year 1800. The poetical lines of the manuscript were discarded by the editor, Schlegel, and instead the works had to be read as prose poems, which at that time was very unusual. One of the purest of romantic works had reached its readers, understood as a piece of lyricism with a yearning for death.

One cannot ignore Novalis’ poems when it comes to Haglund’s *Hymns to the Night*, a symphonic poem for violin and orchestra. But one cannot, however, see in the work a musical interpretation of the poems – not only does the fact that music is music and poetry is poetry speak against this, but also that the separate works establish different relationships to the night.

Much of Haglund’s music is night music. He composes slow works in a radical way. In all of his works there is a slow basic tempo. For the most part they are cast in one movement; they exist as time in flux, often as time when it flows by during a sleepless night. In this second work of his for a solo instrument and symphony orchestra (his cello concerto *Flaminis aura* was finished in 2001), he sings of the night in a direct manner. What night is this?

If we are to put it into words our first thought is to go to Novalis. He wrote his texts after his young, beloved Sophie had died, only 15 years old. In his poems the poet addresses the night, but not as an image for dying out; on the contrary, he addresses another world in which his Sophie is to be found. The night becomes another world, a higher existence where his ego is merged in the unity from which everything comes and to which everything returns. The ego of the poem speaks of the night, but also addresses it. The ego strives toward the night where his beloved is.

A NOCTURNAL DIALOGUE

Even though Haglund has determined the genre of the work in calling it a symphonic poem, he does not try to recreate the relation to the night in what would perhaps be the given form: the instrument as the ego of the poem addressing the all-embracing orchestra of the night. Instead

one could consider it a dialogue introduced by a long, vibrating, shimmering monologue on the part of the solo instrument. It is the first in a series of cadenzas that puts the violin in the centre of the tradition of the great violin concertos. We have here a virtuosity that is akin to what one finds in Sibelius’s *Violin Concerto*: to be sure, there are idiomatically written figurations such as left-hand pizzicato, advanced double-stopping and dazzling runs, but they serve the whole time a musical function.

The violins in the orchestra often reply, as it were, to the lines of the solo violin, though not by means of imitation, but by answering with rejoinders from another sphere. In the rejoinders the perspective quickly changes. The intensive, searching solo part is answered by an orchestra that creates a world, which later can suddenly be transformed into an entirely different world, with completely new horizons. Here there is no – perhaps anticipated – quality of uniform night; rather, the orchestra follows a dream logic similar to the logic that Strindberg followed in his *Dream Play*.

Thus, in the orchestra changeability dominates. It can have to do with a peaceful basic level over which the violin part hovers, a kind of image for the unfathomableness of the night. It can also be changed into chorale-like sections that reflect another relationship to the hymnic, viz. choric songs to the night. But unlike the serenity that Novalis conjures up, there are in Haglund’s night also horror scenes and violent feelings of pain that defy all description. In a manner so typical of Haglund the music can suddenly start to speak a physical language, it tells of the physiology of pain and the jarring rhythms of its attacks.

BEYOND THE LIMITATIONS OF TIME

With *Hymns to the Night* Haglund wanders on down a road where he has no followers. Rather, he has predecessors who have staked out a similar course, a Delius, who burst the bounds of motif development, harmony and the structure of movements, a Szymanowski, who created sound worlds apart from the twelve-tone music and neoclassicism current at the time. This is music composed after the twentieth century, without the need to take a stand in the central conflict between Schönberg and Stravinsky that was valid at the time, instead with full conscious-

ness of those solitary souls who chose to go their own way.

Otherwise, he also displays an awareness of tradition that goes further than what is commonly played out between modernism and classicism, or for that matter between modernism and romanticism. Towards the end of the work references appear to John Dowland, one of Haglund’s companions through the years, with its tingle of Renaissance and Baroque giving colour to the musical texture. There is a feeling of spiritual affinity, a congeniality of temperament. Dowland’s music has a passionate melancholy that is also Haglund’s. And Dowland’s presence has less to do with direct quotation than a use of sounds that resolves the conflicts that have created direction in Haglund’s work.

There is also here a gesture, as it were, addressed to Alban Berg. In his *Violin Concerto* the music, as is well known, concludes with the use of a Bach chorale. As for Berg, his creativity was unleashed by the sudden death of 18-year-old Manon Gropius, a close friend of his and his wife’s. And suddenly an unexpected circle can be completed: just as Novalis once wrote his hymns to the night in sorrow over a young woman’s death, Berg composed his *Violin Concerto* to the untimely passing of a girl. In this way Tommie Haglund’s work is enacted in a context that treads far beyond the limitations of time, and for that matter, genre. References can just as well be made to the twentieth as to the nineteenth century, to the great works in the violin repertoire as to other forms of art. This is entirely in keeping with Haglund’s vision.

When the *Hymns to the Night* were premiered in September 2005 by Elizabeth Pitcairn and the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Mats Rondin, the reaction of audiences was overwhelming. Everything seems to indicate

that this is a concerto that will not only establish itself in the Swedish concert halls, but will also be a work that slowly conquers a far wider audience. Such is Haglund’s music. It gives the listener an immediate experience that only music can give. In a remarkable way it becomes hymns to the night, the night that words can only describe and only indirectly let us come in contact with. Through music there is communion.



Elizabeth Pitcairn
(Photo: Christian Steiner)

COLOURSTRINGS

continues to inspire

The world-famous method is the outcome of a passion for teaching.

Music matters. It develops the child all-embracingly. Children who make music will learn almost everything else more easily. But should they have to give up childhood, the shortest yet most precious and decisive stage in their personal development in order to enter the land of music? The Colourstrings approach based on the Kodály philosophy aims to solve this conflict by creating an environment in which singing, playing games and instruments live side by side, for the happiness of the child. A music land such as this, which is an integral part of the child's world of play, should be available to all.

HOW IT BEGAN

The Hungarian inventors of the method, Géza and his brother Csaba Szilvay, began teaching in Finland in 1971. Their approach was developed little by little. After years in use, various illustrations, visual explanations, musical pieces, chamber music arrange-



Géza Szilvay

ments and exercises in technique came to constitute a method – and the 'Colourstrings School' was born. The first-generation Colourstrings children were raised at the East Helsinki Music Institute. They began by giving concerts at their own music school, but gradually made appearances on other concert podiums and eventually started to draw attention to themselves. Then a series of 56 programmes ("Mini-fiddlers in Musicland") shown on Finnish television revolutionised music education in Finland. Thousands of families were introduced to music in their homes, and shops all over Finland soon ran out of instruments. The strings boom had begun.

The Helsinki Junior Strings were formed 30 years ago from the Colourstrings pupils at the East Helsinki Music Institute. Still conducted by Géza Szilvay, the orchestra has performed regularly abroad, made a number of records and more than 70 TV appearances.

INSTRUMENTAL TUTORS

Seeing and hearing go hand in hand in Colourstrings teaching. In the Violin ABC the four strings are identified by different colours and characters. Initially reading music means

matching colours and following the melodic line of pictures. In this way 'reading' is not a burden to the child. The colourful pictures and notes gradually give way to conventional notation. At the beginning Colourstrings uses relative solmisation (a movable Do) and the child is later introduced step by step to the absolute letter names and pitch.

The instrumental tutors are not limited to teaching manual dexterity, since they also tend to present the child with the music as a whole, as a 'package' in which instrumental technique, musical listening, understanding and emotions are at all times balanced.

Individual tuition is complemented by group teaching which introduces the child to chamber music at an early age. The instrumental tutors are therefore accompanied by chamber music series, such as the *Violin Duos* arranged by **László Rossa**.

Colourstrings is a child-oriented mode of teaching music. The philosophy and method do not form or mould the child to suit the instrument; rather, they 'tame' the instrument and the teaching to meet the needs of the child.

The Colourstrings method has been used by 40,000 string players around the world. In Finland every second Colourstrings-trained child has, on estimate, become a professional, and quite a few have even won international recognition. Musicians such as **Pekka** and **Jaakko Kuusisto**, **Réka Szilvay**, **Jan Söderblom**, **Linda Lampenius** and **Marko Ylönen** now on the international circuit started with this method. Looking back over 30 years, Géza Szilvay can spot some salient features of children trained by the method:

- Fine intonation
- Equally advanced technique in both hands
- A developed musical intellect
- Good ability to read music
- An artistic aptitude for musical timbre, nuance, detail and phrasing



- Rich creativity developed through transposing, transforming, improvising and composing
- Solo playing developed alongside chamber and orchestral musicianship (solo/soli/tutti).

Teachers who have attended Szilvay's courses often say that the method contributes to the child's social education as well. Many children from difficult backgrounds have, through music, become more motivated and cheerful.



ESSENTIAL TEACHER TRAINING

Teacher training is an important part of the method. Géza and Csaba Szilvay have lectured at close to 130 congresses, courses and symposia around the world since 1977. Colourstrings International was established in London in 1990 and soon grew to take in national and international teacher-training courses. Nowadays CI arranges courses for kindergarten, violin, cello, piano, guitar, viola and double-bass players and teachers. The UK has a network of Colourstrings kindergartens, and several thousand children are being brought up through these musical play-schools.

Colourstrings is gaining popularity throughout the English-speaking world. It has been fostered by such international organisations as ESTA (European String Teachers' Association), ASTA (American String Teachers' Association), AUSTA (Australian String Teachers' Association), ISME (International Society for Music Education), NMPU (Nordic Music Pedagogical Union) and IKS (International Kodály Society). The numbers of academies and conservatories that teach it and of master's and doctoral theses on it is growing steadily.

According to Géza Szilvay, the Colourstrings method can make a violinist of almost anyone with five fingers. The key to maintaining musical culture nevertheless lies with the teachers. Given a teacher such as Szilvay fired with a passionate desire to train future generations, the classical musical heritage has nothing to fear.

HENNA SALMELA

This article is based on interviews and texts by Géza Szilvay.

Aulis Sallinen (Photo: Maarit Kytöharju)



BUSY LANDMARK YEAR FOR SALLINEN

Aulis Sallinen reached the age of 75 in April 2005, and music by him has been widely performed in honour of this milestone. The year began in Lappeenranta with a performance in January by **Soile Isokoski** and **Marita Viitasalo** of his *Four Dream Songs*. In February **Päivi Nisula** and the Finnish National Opera Orchestra performed the same songs in an orchestral version in Helsinki, and in July **Matti Salminen** sang one of them at Savonlinna.

One of the most popular orchestral works by Sallinen is *Some Aspects of Peltoniemi Hintrik's Funeral March* for string orchestra. This is an adaptation by Sallinen from his popular third string quartet and a variation on a folk tune well known in Finland. It has been performed this year at, among other places, Kokkola, Helsinki, Kuhmo, Lappeenranta and Jyväskylä in Finland, Cornell University in the USA and under **Ralf Gothóni** in Sweden. It can also be heard on a new CD by Alba Records.

RASPUTIN IN LÜBECK

On Saturday 11 February 2006 the Lübeck Theatre is to give the German premiere of the opera *Rasputin* by **Einojuhani Rautavaara**. Singing the title role will be bass-baritone **Vincent Le Texier**, for whom Rautavaara has raised the original bass part in places. Their Imperial Majesties will be sung by **Veronika Waldner** and **Gerard Quinn**, the orchestra will be conducted by **Roman Brogli-Sacher** and the stage director is **Marc Adam**. There will be seven performances in all.

A DVD has been released of the Finnish National Opera production of the opera premiered in Helsinki in autumn 2003.

FENNICA GEHRMAN COMMISSION GRANT

Fennica Gehrman Oy has donated a commission grant worth € 10,000 to the Society of Finnish Composers to mark the Society's 60th anniversary. It is to be used to commission one or two new compositions, or to promote composition in some other way at a later date. In awarding this grant Fennica Gehrman wishes to provide opportunities for Finnish composers and to generate new and interesting repertoire.

KYLLÖNEN AT 50

Timo-Juhani Kyllönen celebrates his 50th birthday on 1 December 2005 and a jubilee concert of works composed by him between 1984 and 2004 was given at the Sibelius Academy on 16 November. Kyllönen is very much an all-rounder on the Finnish musical scene. Possibly best known for his choral works, he is a man of many talents: composer, performing artist, teacher, conductor and choir leader. A composer of audience-friendly music, he has a firm following all over the world.

NEW CHORAL DISC BY KORTEKANGAS

Alba Records has released a new disc of major works for mixed choir by **Olli Kortekangas**. They are sung by his partner of many years, the Candomino choir, conducted by **Tauno Satomaa**. Titled *O Mare Mio*, it spans a period of thirty years, taking in works very different in style and reflecting the composer's passion for lyric poetry. Among the items on the disc are *The Green Madonna* (1975), *Three Romances* (settings of poems by D.H. Lawrence, 1995) and *Mediterranean Sea* (2002) (see new CDs).



SEVEN AHO CONCERTOS IN SEVEN MONTHS

Concertos by Kalevi Aho are all the rage at the moment and have received a record number of performances in autumn 2005. **Sharon Bezaly** performed the sensual *Flute Concerto* (which has recently been recorded) in Iceland in September, and the Tapiola Sinfonietta featured the *Piano Concerto No. 2* and the *Chamber Symphony No. 3* assigning a solo role to the alto saxophone in September-October. **Bence Boganyi** premiered Aho's new *Bassoon Concerto* with the Helsinki Philharmonic in October, and in December it

will be the turn of the *Double Bass Concerto* with **Eero Munter** in Lahti. Following the premieres next spring, seven concerts including a work by him for a solo instrument and orchestra will have been given in the space of about seven months.

TUOMELA'S NEW SYMPHONY

Tapio Tuomela's Symphony No. 2 was premiered in Helsinki on 2 November 2005. The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra was conducted by **Eivind Aadland** and the work was commissioned by the Finnish Broadcasting Company. The new symphony is Tuomela's largest orchestral work to date.

HEINIÖ PREMIERE IN FEBRUARY

Mikko Heiniö's *Sonata da chiesa* (Four Snake Scenes from the Old Testament) is to be given its first performance at the Katedraali soi! church music festival in Turku on 10 February 2006. Scored for brass, celesta and percussion, it lasts about 15 minutes and will be played by an ensemble from the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra. The festival is to be held for the ninth time in Turku Cathedral.

CONCERT OF WORKS BY KÄRKKÄINEN BREAKS WITH TRADITION

ALCHEMY 2006, a concert of music by **Tommi Kärkkäinen**, is scheduled for 7 March in conjunction with the Musica nova Helsinki festival of contemporary music. The works will be performed by **Rebekka Angervo** (piano), **Janne Malinen** (guitar), **Roi Ruottinen** (cello) and the Kamus string quartet, supplemented by tape music. ALCHEMY 2006 will not, however, be a conventional new music concert but instead will offer elements of surprise. The event will be engineered by a team of nearly 20 top Finnish experts in their fields and the concert is supported by SONY, Toast Post Productions Oy Ltd, Avid Finland, Craneworks Oy Ltd., LUSES, Fennica Gehrman, Aof-sound Porvoo and Motion Blur Oy.

Tommi Kärkkäinen



SISASK'S GLORIA PATRI

The S:t Jacobs Vokalensemble, consisting of 8 singers, performed **Urmis Sisask's Gloria Patri** in Stockholm on 29 October. This work by the Estonian composer Sisask (born 1960) consists of 24 a cappella hymns on Latin texts for mixed chorus and lasts almost an hour and a half in performance. The hymns have been performed eagerly around the world, and they appeal to audiences with their direct beauty. For singers they offer interesting contrapuntal exercises and forms of vocal music (fugue, passacaglia, canon, etc.).

IT REALLY SWINGS!

Andrea Quinn took over as principal conductor of the Norrland Opera Symphony Orchestra in November. The inaugural concert on 3 November offered an exciting premiere by **Fredrik Högberg**, a trumpet concerto called *The Poem* composed for **Ole Edvard Antonsen**. Ever since Antonsen participated in Högberg's film *Brassbones* the two have discussed a collaboration, which now was realized. According to Högberg his concerto is exotic for its genre and has features of both romanticism and jazz. Ole Edvard Antonsen's presence on stage is taken full advantage of in Högberg's unpredictable theatrical pranks. It really swings!

ELIASSON PREMIERES

Hans Pålsson premiered a brand-new piano piece *Disegno 3 (Carosello)* by **Anders Eliasson** on 4 October in Malmö. The new piece was commissioned by Concerts Sweden. Eliasson's *Concerto for Violin, Piano and Orchestra* will receive its first performance on 19 April 2006 in Helsinki by **Ulf Wallin** (violin), **Roland Pöntinen** (piano) and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by **Pietari Inkinen**. The concert will be broadcast live on the Finnish Radio. The double concerto will be given a second performance by the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in May.

Eliasson has been chosen "The Composer of Spring 2006" by the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation. During the spring there will be a presentation of his works, and besides the double concerto audiences will hear **Manfred Honeck** conducting *Ein Schneller Blick... ein kurzes Aufscheinen* and **Susanna Mälkki** conducting the *Symphony No. 1*. The spring with Eliasson and the Swedish RSO will also include a world premiere of a new major work for choir and orchestra, *Quo vadis*, on 19 February during the Stockholm New Music Festival.

UNUSUAL TUBA CONCERTO

Something as unusual as a *Concerto for Tuba, Live Electronics and Orchestra* was premiered on 7 September in Malmö. **Benjamin Staern** calls his concerto *Sacrificio* (Sacrifice). According to **Rolf Martinsson's** programme note, "the solo tuba itself is the sacrifice that executes a rite going from noise to tone, while the orchestra moves in the opposite direction...".

Staern wrote the work in close collaboration with the soloist **Kjetil Myklebust**, with sights set on their joint diploma recital (Staern finished his conservatory studies in composition with, among others, Professor **Luca Francesconi** last spring). It explores the tuba's technical, sound and expressive possibilities, everything from the traditional manner of playing to sound and noise effects. *Sacrificio* is dedicated to Myklebust and it was performed by the Malmö Symphony Orchestra under **Tuomas Ollila**.



Liine Carlsson in Börtz's opera Svall (Photo: Alexander Kenney)

TOPICAL OPERA BY BÖRTZ

Few crimes arouse our indignation as much as honour killings – love versus blood feud. Composer **Daniel Börtz** and librettist **Claes Fellbom** take up this sensitive and topical subject in their new opera *Svall (Surge)*. The work was commissioned by the Royal Opera in Stockholm and will be staged in collaboration with the Norrland Opera under the baton of **Jan Söderblom**. The director is **Elisabet Ljungar** and in the roles we will hear **Liine Carlsson**, **Katarina Giotas**, **Ingela Berglund**, **John Sax**, **Jon Nilsson**, **Per-Arne Wahlgren**, **Karl Rombo** and **John Erik Eleby**. The world premiere will take place at the Culture House in Stockholm on 2 March 2006. After another performance two days later the production will go on tour in Sweden in cooperation with the National Touring Theatre.

CHORAL AUTUMN FOR SANDSTRÖM

During this autumn no fewer than three major a cappella works by **Sven-David Sandström** have been premiered. *Singet dem Herrn*, for double choir composed with Bach's motet as its model (see article on page 2), was performed in October by the Lund Vocal Ensemble conducted by **Ingemar Månsson**. *Haikudikter IX*, commissioned by the Stockholm Academic Male Choir is a setting for male choir of a poem by the Swedish poet **Tomas Tranströmer**. The first performance took place in October in connection with the choir's 100th anniversary at the Stockholm Concert Hall. The beautiful and expressive *Psalm 139 (Oh Lord, You Have Searched Me)* for mixed choir was premiered on 13 November by Hässelby Motettkör under **Mona Ehnertorp**.

NEW COMPOSER – KJELL PERDER

Kjell Perder (born in 1954) studied composition during the 80s with **Arne Mellnäs**, **Sven-David Sandström**, **Brian Ferneyhough** and **John Lambert** among others. He made his debut as a composer in 1980 at the Festival for Young Nordic Music (UNM) in Helsinki and has since then composed a great number of works, including chamber music, orchestral music, choral works and operas that have been performed in many different countries. Perder has also taught composition, music theory and music history but since 1996 he has been working full time as a composer.

Gehrmans Musikförlag has signed agreements on two works by Kjell Perder. *Långt bortom... (Far Beyond...)* for mixed choir and trombone or cello solo won the first prize in the Skinnkatteberg Choir Rally Composition Contest in 1993. *Reclaim the Rhythm* is a new work for symphony orchestra to be premiered on 12 April 2006 by the Stockholm Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor **Petter Sundkvist**. For more information on Perder visit his website (www.perder.se).



Kjell Perder (Photo: Sforzando)

REQUIEM AGAIN IN GERMANY

Once again Nils Lindberg's *Requiem* will be heard in Germany. This time the Hanover Oratory Choir, a choir from the University of Music in Berlin and the Hanover Big Band will perform the work under Michael Betzner and Lothar Krist. The performances will take place on 18 November in Braunschweig, 19 November in Berlin and 20 November in Hanover.

LIDHOLM ON CD

BIS Records has released a two-disc set of Ingvar Lidholm's music for choir a cappella, "Khoros" (BIS CD 1549/50). Containing most of Lidholm's works in this genre, this release is also a documentation of the unique collaboration between the composer and the renowned choral conductor Eric Ericson. Most of these works, starting with *Laudi* from 1947, were actually written for the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, an ensemble which has been described as 'the Mercedes of the choral world'. With this instrument, Lidholm has created a choral style which is both virtuosic and expressive. These recordings might be considered the climax of almost 60 years of collaboration between these two great makers of music.

DAG WIRÉN CENTENARY

Dag Wirén's 100th birthday was celebrated in October. A new book by Martin Tegen was presented and a new CD "Vintage Wirén" was released on the Caprice label. An exhibition about the composer was opened in the Swedish town of Fjugesta where Wirén grew up. In two chamber music concerts arranged in Stockholm at Nybrokajen 11 the Lysell Quartet, Roland Pöntinen and Trio Zilliacus performed his *String Quartet No. 4*, the *Piano Trio* and *Ironical Little Pieces* for piano. The Swedish Radio P2 celebrated Wirén by dedicating a whole week to his music.

During the centenary year Wirén's orchestral works have been performed frequently, among them the *Symphonies No. 4* and *No. 5*, the *Romantic Suite* from "The Merchant of Venice", the *Little Suite* and his popular *Serenade Op. 11* for strings which is one of the most frequently performed Swedish works internationally. Furthermore there have been several performances of his string quartets and the Daphne label released a new CD this spring with the quartets Nos. 2 – 5 played by the Lysell Quartet.



TUBIN FESTIVAL A SUCCESS

The Eduard Tubin Festival in Estonia in June proved to be a great success with audiences streaming in from the four corners of the globe. The centenary celebrations have continued during the summer and autumn. In Stockholm the *sixth symphony* was heard during the Baltic Sea Festival in August and in October a whole evening was devoted to Tubin's chamber music at the Allhelgona Church; one concert with Vardo Rumessen performing Tubin's piano music and a second concert with the Trio Zilliacus and pianist Roland Forsberg performing chamber works for strings. The Swedish Radio recorded and broadcast the concerts.

Tubin's music was heard in Berlin as well. The *fifth symphony* was performed at the Concert Hall at Gendarmenmarkt during the "Young Euro Classic Festival" and his *Concerto for Double Bass* was heard at the Komische Oper under the baton of Arvo Volmer. On 2 November the Estonian Embassy organized a chamber music festival in cooperation with the Hochschule für Musik "Hanns Eisler" where several string works by Tubin were heard as well as songs from his operas *Barbara von Tisenhusen* and *The Priest in Reigi*.



(Photo: Tina Sjogren)

PETTERSSON'S MUSIC IN BERLIN

Violinist Isabelle Faust was the soloist in Allan Pettersson's *Concerto for Violin and String Quartet* performed in the chamber music hall of the Berlin Philharmonic on 15 September. The concerto was performed this time in an arrangement for violin and string orchestra together with Ensemble Oriol. A new recording of the work will be issued shortly on the German label MDG, with Yamei Yu and the Leipzig Quartet.

It being the 25th anniversary this year of Allan Pettersson's death, Axel Bruch and Andreas Peer Kähler will present a portrait of the composer, "Der Barfüssige", on 3 December at the Nordic Embassies in Berlin. Besides a lecture on Pettersson's life and works there will be a performance of a selection of his *Barefoot Songs* by mezzo-soprano Ann-Clara Carlstedt. On 5 January Andreas Peer Kähler will conduct the German-Scandinavian Youth Philharmonic in Pettersson's *Symphony No. 11*, a very expressive work that, in Kähler's opinion, is all too seldom heard on the concert stage.

A HOMAGE TO THE GENIUS

Dag Wirén's *Serenade for Strings* is Sweden's most frequently performed work internationally, and that this genius really mastered the strings is demonstrated by a new CD from the Swedish quality record company Daphne... The four quartets were written between 1935 and 1970 and exhibit vigorous, rhythmical neoclassicism, ardent shimmer and introspective earnestness. The Lysell Quartet plays with admirable clarity and self-confidence, at the same time as they pay homage to the spontaneous and the outgoing. It is quite appropriate that the record is being released this year, as Wirén would have celebrated his one-hundredth birthday. It is hard to imagine a better homage than this.

Östgötakorrespondenten 27 May 2005 / Stig Jacobsson

Dag Wirén: String Quartets Nos. 2-5;
The Lysell Quartet (Daphne 1021)

EXCEPTIONAL LIDHOLM CD

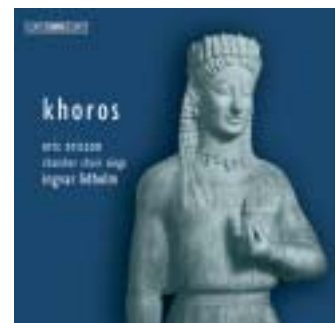
The new double CD where Eric Ericson's Chamber Choir sings music by Ingvar Lidholm is nothing less than a milestone in Swedish choral history. It doesn't get any better than this (in this life).

Mitt i Musiken 27 September 2005

Already in the harsh, slightly angular *Laudi* from 1947 we can observe Lidholm's unerring feeling for sonority and effects of contrast. At its very best this is perhaps manifested in the more rounded expressionism in later works such as *Canto LXXI*, with its refrain-like obsession with the repeated words "pull down thy vanity" from Ezra Pound's poem, the desperate, crying *Libera me* and the murmuring ... *a riverder le stelle* that in the manner of Haydn (read: the introduction to "The Creation") is resolved in a jubilant C-major chord. Eric Ericson's Chamber Choir shimmers with beauty but also produces a splitting, forced sound when necessary in a recording that surely will come to be a standard for measuring future interpretations.

Dagens Nyheter 5 October 2005 / Sara Norling

Ingvar Lidholm: Khoros; Eric Ericson Chamber Choir (BIS-CD-1549/50)



SUSPENSE AND SURPRISES IN SANDSTRÖM'S MUSIC

Sandström's *Heavy Metal* for brass quintet was an entertaining piece; one seemed to hear a canon, a chorale and a scherzo, and God help me if there wasn't a reverence for Bix Beiderbecke...

Corren 15 August 2005 / Per Olov Backman

The climax of the concert, however, was the premiere performance of Sandström's solo work for clarinet entitled *...there is a bluer sky, a wall with roses*. The soloist was Staffan Mårtensson, who carefully conveyed the quiet music in discreet, soft registers – a deep meditation in tones...

Norrköpings Tidningar 15 August 2005 / Reidar Sunnerstam

Love Dervinger played *Fantasia I* for solo piano, a large-scale composition with considerable sound exposure and virtuoso features. Eruptive images were succeeded by mood pictures and light tonal décor... In *Close to there* is a more selective, discriminating use of the means of expression. Arabesques of tones between the instruments come close to one another, but never meet. One factor that prevents them from coming together entirely is that the clarinet is tuned a quarter tone lower than the normal tone of the piano. This creates interesting suspense and surprises...

Norrköpings Tidningar 19 August / Reidar Sunnerstam

Sven-David Sandström was Composer of the Year at the Linköping Chamber Music Festival on 13–21 August 2005.

TOP-NOTCH HAGLUND PERFORMANCE

A nocturnal conversation between a couple: A more romantic and dynamic voice in the orchestra, the violin more reserved and resolutely unobtrusive. They seldom interrupt one another. ...Elizabeth Pitcairn was given the opportunity to run the whole gamut of her register and her Stradivarius sounded firm and convincing... The lush orchestration of the "night music" was splendidly taken advantage of by Mats Rondin and the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra... The top-notch performance of Tommie Haglund's Violin Concerto made one want to hear more, and that it is now being issued on CD with just Elizabeth Pitcairn and the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra is surely an asset.

Helsingborgs Dagblad 9 September 2005 / Tommie Ling

Tommie Haglund: Hymner till natten (Hymns to the Night), premiere: 8 September 2005, Helsingborg; Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, cond. Mats Rondin, sol. Elizabeth Pitcairn



Photo: Kai Tirkkonen

Messenius and Lucia by Kortekangas

The Finnish operatic highlight of the autumn season took place this year outside the Helsinki region in the northerly city of Oulu, which hosted the premiere of the new opera, *Messenius and Lucia*, by **Olli Kortekangas** on 6 September 2005. The opera was commissioned for the city's 400th anniversary and was performed eight times to a packed auditorium. The orchestra was the Oulu Symphony with conductor Arvo Volmer. The libretto is by Juha Seppälä, the stage director was Pertti Sveholm, and the leading roles were sung by Hannu Niemelä, Päivi Nisula and Essi Luttinen.

Inspiring opera premiere

Contemporary balm for the Finnish musical soul was to be had in Oulu... Singable melodies, catchy ostinatos evocative of Gregorian chant and gripping choral scenes served the folk opera tradition in the best sense of the word. And they made the concise libretto by Juha Seppälä telling the life story of historian Johannes Messenius into a local drama with never a dull moment.

Die Presse 22 September 2005

Works at all levels

The opera works at all levels. *Messenius and Lucia* contains enough fact to be credible and enough fiction to function on the stage. The music is typical Kortekangas, colourful, contemporary in idiom, and for the most part readily accessible. Its strength lies in its dramatic tension, with its transitions, tranquil episodes and events.

Kotimaa 23 September 2005 / Annmari Salmela

Further momentum for Kortekangas operas

Kortekangas's renown as an opera composer has been given further momentum by his new opera *Messenius and Lucia*. The best things about the opera are the nuanced and at times no less than masterly use of the orchestra and the close familiarity with the human voice of an experienced vocal composer. The scenes were, especially in the first Act, a magnificent treat for the eye.

Kaleva 18 September 2005 / Esko Aho

Magnificent music

The magnificent, portentous music of Olli Kortekangas thunders along in a foaming torrent, flows in a rapid stream and abates into stagnant water in the 400th anniversary opera of the city of Oulu.

Oulu-lehti 22 September 2005 / Satu Koho

THE WAR IN MUSIC

This is music that with dramatic stylistic means lets the threats of war get in under your skin... Drastic contrasts come one after the other, violent nose dives, shimmering upward passages, blaring trumpet signals, whining and string glissandi that produce the sound of falling bombs. A melodic, frail, budding plant of hope is buried under forceful wind instrument and percussion waves that break loose. An apocalyptic, but very skillfully composed, chaos that was given a disciplined performance with a high degree of concentration by the Rheinische Philharmonie under Solyom's very self-assured and transparent leadership.

Rhein-Zeitung 26 April 2005 / Lieselotte Sauer-Kaulbach

Benjamin Staern: The Threat of War; concert on 24 April 2005, Görreshaus/Koblenz, Germany; Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie, cond. Stefan Solyom

The surprise of the evening was without a doubt the young Swedish composer Benjamin Staern. Not since the mature Karl-Birger Blomdahl has a Swedish composer had such control over the craft of musical composition and such a thorough knowledge of the instruments.

Västerbottenskuriren June 2005 / Carl Rehnberg

Concert on 10 June 2005, Umeå; The Norrland Opera Symphony Orchestra, cond. Daniel Raiskin

DIABOLICAL CRESCENDOS AND SOFT BREATHINGS

As the title of the piece suggests, the music was meticulously planned. (Sacrificio means "sacrifice" in Italian.) Staern is a musical narrator who moves us with the aid of large-scale effects. Aggressive figurations and diabolical crescendos in the orchestra alternated with sections where Myklebust's tuba, alone in a large auditorium filled with electronic noise, emitted soft breathings and heart-beat sounds. The rare normal-tuba tones had in this context a heart-rending effect. ...Myklebust is a musician who does not allow himself to be restricted by traditional manners of playing and Staern a composer who is not afraid of world-shaking subjects and feelings. That is exciting.

Sydsvenska Dagbladet 10 September 2005 / Tobias Lund

Benjamin Staern: Sacrificio (Tuba Concerto), premiere: 7 September 2005, Malmö Symphony Orchestra, cond. Tuomas Ollila, sol. Kjetil Myklebust

GRANDIOSE PAINTER OF NORTHERN LIGHTS

It is a Shangri-la, a palace of sounds that is depicted in one of Eduard Tubin's most ambitious musical structures – *Piano Sonata No. 2*, also called *Northern Lights* after the composer experienced them in 1949 – performed by Vardo Rumessen with such force that it rocks the floor. Tubin the symphonist comes forth in a work with Scriabin's beauty of colour, Rachmaninov's parallel-chord sequences and a virtuosity close to that of Liszt, but with everything permeated by his own lyrical voice.

The *Viola Sonata* (1965) lays bare an immense sorrow that comes oozing out of the first movement's ominous theme, the middle movement's flitting anxiety and the tearful sobbing of the finale in Johanna Persson's intense performance on the viola. Here Tubin stands out as the spiritual brother of Shostakovich, and the music reveals a disillusioned life experience light years away from the positive outlook and fashionable French sonority in the *Piano Quartet* from the year of liberation in Tartu (1930), masterly played by the Trio Zilliacus and pianist Roland Forsberg.

Svenska Dagbladet 10 October 2005 / Sofia Nyblom

Eduard Tubin 100th Anniversary Concert: 7 October 2005, Stockholm; Trio Zilliacus, Roland Forsberg, Vardo Rumessen

DALECARLIAN TALES

The features of jazz were also obvious, but soprano saxophonist Anders Paulsson was given the task of bringing out airy and pleasing qualities. ...Lindberg ties the work together with an exquisite, beautifully orchestrated ballad from Mockfjärd, written down by Anders Frisell. It is a long prologue, and Paulsson showed perhaps especially here what a refined musician he is.

Borlänge tidning 23 September 2005 / Jens Runnberg

Nils Lindberg: Mytologiska bilder / Dalecarlian Tales, premiere: 22 September 2005, Gagnef Church; *The Dala Sinfonietta / Östgötamusiken*, cond. Bjarte Engeset, sol. Anders Paulsson

KIMMO HAKOLA BOOM



Major works by Kimmo Hakola have been performed this autumn both in Finland and abroad. Helen Jahren premiered his *Oboe Concerto* at the Ultima festival in Oslo on 14 October and Nicolas Hodges performed his monumental *Piano Concerto* at a concert by the Helsinki Philharmonic in September.

The list of premieres also includes those of two new versions. The London Sinfonietta gave a concert performance in German of his cartoon opera *The Mastersingers of Mars* at St. Pölten in Austria on 21 October in an enlarged version with a chamber orchestra instead of an ensemble. Anu and Pia Komi were among the soloists. The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra premiered a new version for orchestra, soloists and computer music of his great *Le Sacrifice* at a concert conducted by Sakari Oramo during the Helsinki Festival on 19 August 2005. The following reviews say much about the irresistible appeal of Hakola's music.

He who dares has much to win

Le Sacrifice is a world-embracing work. It is a monumental achievement. There is something crazy in the positive sense about a contemporary composer with the courage to be inspired by a generic concept of the Late Romantic era. ... Hakola's music is virtuosic in a way that stimulates the mind, above and beyond all 'isms'. It communicates a respect for the history of music. *Le Sacrifice* has musical situations with faith in the power of simplification and complex stratification, and a richness of detail partly inspired by Tarkovsky's visual narrative. Meditation and action clasp hands in splendid fashion in the music. ...He who dares has much to win. Kimmo Hakola is a rare visionary and actor in Finnish music, and one who continues to generate faith in the importance of the composer's message.

Helsingin Sanomat 21 August 2005 / Veijo Murtomäki

Soloist drives to ecstasy

Reflected in the *Piano Concerto* was a profuse, world-embracing, Mahlerian pluralism. ...The soloist drives the orchestra to ecstasy, but also away from ecstasy to a parody operating at many levels. ...The music of Hakola reflects a potent vision, and one to be taken seriously. It thrives in the *Piano Concerto*, and also akin to it is the oratorio *Le Sacrifice*.

Helsingin Sanomat 24 September 2005 / Samuli Tiikkaja

Refreshingly unconventional

A brilliant start to the series of concerts at the St. Pölten Festspielhaus... In his cartoon opera *The Mastersingers of Mars* Hakola has it in mind to bring the comic opera back to life. ...The profuse and pliant music suits the events astonishingly well: beaten-up classical balance and cheerful, obliging humility (Mozart), grandiloquent love à la Puccini and Bachian discipline of expression... Yet this is no botched jumble of quotations: it all hangs wonderfully together, avoiding all the familiar pitfalls. ...Audience full of enthusiasm.

Die Presse 25 October 2005 / Walter Weidinger

ENCHANTING FLUTE CONCERTO BY AHO

Aho's concerto already enchanted at its premiere with its suggestions of the land of the rising sun. ...The melancholy mood of the concerto calls to mind the achingly beautiful Farewell of Mahler's Das Lied der Erde. In both there is the same smile through tears. ...Vänskä and the orchestra lend the soloist excellent support, admirably capture the music's mysterious moods and shimmering sounds and lift the climaxes to earth-shaking effect.

Uutispäivä Demari 20 September 2005 / Arto Sakari

Kalevi Aho: Flute Concerto; Sinfonia Lahti, cond. Osmo Vänskä, sol. Sharon Bezaly
BIS CD-1499 (Nordic Spell)

SPLENDID SETTING BY HEINIÖ

The programme concludes with one of the strongest items: *Mind of Dust* (Tomumieli), Mikko Heiniö's splendid setting of Lasse Nummi's evocation of the terracotta warriors at Xian for male choir and two West African Drums.

Nordic Sounds No. 2/ 2005 / Guy Rickards

Mikko Heiniö: Mind of Dust; YL Male Voice Choir, cond. Matti Hyökki (Ondine CD 1045-2: Carmen de Sole, Contemporary Works for Male Voices)

ERIK BERGMAN MASTERPIECE

The biggest event in the concert was Erik Bergman's *Lemminkäinen*. Composed in 1984, this was only its third performance, but it deserves to be heard more often. ...Bergman creates tension with a speech chorus and broad glissandos. The climax of the work is the battle scene, entertaining in its ingenuity and artistry. Lemminkäinen is the tops, absolutely the tops.

Helsingin Sanomat 3 September 2005 / Samuli Tiikkaja

Erik Bergman's Lemminkäinen was performed at the Helsinki Festival by the Tapiola Chamber Choir with Hannu Norjanen conducting.

FULL CIRCLE BY TRBOJEVIC

Choreographer Petri Kekoni was looking for a composer with whom to collaborate over a forthcoming work when he came across the string quartet Oro by Jovanka Trbojevic. The result was a composition (*Full Circle*) based on Oro but added to like a jigsaw puzzle for Kekoni's choreography Hämärän hohde (Glow of Dimness). ...At the end, as the original Oro gathers the musical threads, the elements and episodes of the choreography likewise come to together and the dancers, almost in unison, succinctly recap the entire dazzling chain of events. Hämärän hohde is a raging work that nevertheless leaves a surprisingly calm aftertaste. Nature has, through the performance, revealed both its power and its beauty, and there is nothing more to add.

Uutispäivä Demari 20 September 2005 / Annikki Alku

Jovanka Trbojevic's Full Circle is composed for string quartet and tape. It was premiered in Helsinki on 16 September by Hannu Vasara and Peter Achrén (violin), Tuula Riisalo (viola) and Sami Mäkelä (cello).



RASPUTIN - A GRAND SHOW

Rautavaara's music is recognizable; he favors swirling figurations in upper strings and upper winds that can be either dreamy/otherworldly or used as a backdrop for expressive wind and voice writing. There are Leitmotif-like tunes that repeat or alter slightly. And one thing is certain: he's a fine dramatist, as anyone watching his latest opera, *Rasputin*, will attest to.

Classics Today com 28 July 2005 / Robert Levine

Einojuhani Rautavaara: Rasputin (DVD Video Ondine ODV 4002)

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Lahti Symphony Orchestra, cond. Osmo Vänskä, sol. Sharon Bezaly
BIS-CD-1499 ("Nordic Spell")



Halvor Haug: Sonata Elegica

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Olli Kortekangas: Choral Works (Music for the Jubilee Year, The Green Madonna, Verbum, Pia Cantiones cycle, Three Romances, Mediterranean Sea)

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Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra, cond. Juha Kangas
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Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra, cond. Juha Kangas, sol. Marko Ylönen
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Einojuhani Rautavaara: Book of Visions, Adagio celeste, Symphony No. 1

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Einojuhani Rautavaara: Rasputin (DVD Video)

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KLCD 005 ("Kivi sydämellä")

Jean Sibelius: Song of the Earth, Hymn of the Earth (Maan virsi) etc.

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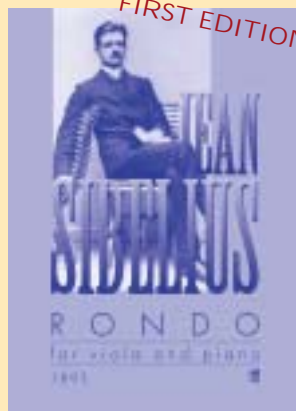
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