

Magical and ethereal

Elizabeth Llewellyn whose radiant soprano both soared effortlessly and floated with sublime gentleness, luxuriantly bathed in a kaleidoscope of instrumental textures and colours. Martinsson uses a large orchestra, including piano, harp and celeste which add a magical and ethereal dimension at times. He's a skilful orchestrator, though, and just as the voice is never overwhelmed, so the instrumental fabric always works with rather than against the voice, as Martinsson crafts onomatopoeitic images and fervent emotional landscapes. *Opera Today July 2022*

Rolf Martinsson: *Ich denke dein...*

UK premiere: Philharmonia Orchestra/Emilia Hoving, sol. Elizabeth Llewellyn, sop, 24.7.2022 Hereford, UK (Three Choirs Festival)



Elizabeth Llewellyn

Photo: Frances Marshall

Passionate Pettersson

In the Viola Concerto the music often carries the sense of an avalanche of an idea being swept downhill while elements, including the soloist, aspire upwards. The music is keenly, almost manically, passionate and has a profile constantly in motion. Ellen Nisbeth gives every appearance of not merely knowing the notes but having a grip on the shifting emotional landscape.

Allan Pettersson's Fifteenth Symphony can be a tough nut to crack, but is certainly worth the effort... one can rarely escape Pettersson's aura of having something important to say, or his knowledge of the symphony orchestra in how to say it.

MusicWeb International August/September 2022

Allan Pettersson: *Symphony No. 15 & Viola Concerto*

CD: Norrköping SO/Christian Lindberg, sol. Ellen Nisbeth, vla (BIS-2480 SACD)

Fascinating story and stylistic finesse

The story has an extremely fascinating, unrealistic side... Nordgren's music of the 1980s has many vocally rewarding features in combination with dramatic nuances when operating within the sick soulscape of the leading character... Nordgren uses the chamber musical and vocal means of expression with convincing emotional pathos and stylistic finesse. *Hufvudstadsbladet 4.9.*

Pehr Henrik Nordgren: *Den svarte munken (The Black Monk)*

Sinfonietta Fortis/Teemu Hämmäläinen, sol. Kristian Lindroos, Johanna Isokoski, Pekka Kuivalainen etc., 3.9.2022 Helsinki, Finland

Inventive, timeless chamber music

The music of Wessman sails on a sea of sounds, avoiding predictable routes. His works are timeless in the best sense of the word... In the Piano Quartet, the musical execution is simply fascinating, and its dramaturgy tangible. *Kompositio 1/2022*

Harri Wessman: *Piano Trios, Piano Quartet, Prelude and Sicilienne for piano trio*

CD: Kaaás Trio (Alba ABCD 511)



Aho's Double and Triple Concertos

The fact is, every Aho piece inhabits its own unique world. These two concertos provide a clear example: The Double Concerto exists in the shadows, while the Triple Concerto is comparatively bright and open... The music reaches its deepest, most dreamy state in the third movement, marked *Tranquillo, misterioso*: from its drifting string and then brass textures at the opening through the thematic musings of the piano trio, this movement is utterly mesmerizing. If BIS ever releases an "Aho's Greatest Hits" disc, this movement, and perhaps this concerto, probably will be on it. *Fanfare Sept 2022*

Kalevi Aho: *Double Concerto for English Horn, Harp and Orchestra, Triple Concerto for Violin, Cello, Piano, and Chamber Orchestra*

CD: Antwerp SO/Olari Elts, sol. Dimitri Mestdag, ca, Anneleen Lenaerts, hp, Storioni Trio (BIS-2426 SACD)



Photo: Ville Junnikkala

Damström's powerful and entertaining Wasteland

The music was characterised by powerful dynamics, a shifting variety of colours, and not least sharp contrasts. Here the orchestral attire is indeed utilised for striking rhythms. With the clothes industry and greenwashing as its theme, the work also brought a strong contribution to the ongoing climate debate. *Västerbottenskuriren 2.9.*

A piece of highly entertaining orchestral music... *Folkbladet 2.9.*

Cecilia Damström: *Wasteland*

World premiere: Norrlandsoperan SO/Ville Matvejeff, 1.9.2022 Umeå, Sweden

Thought-provoking Silent Earth

The earth quakes in Karin Rehnqvist's oratorio about the climate crisis. A powerful and thought-provoking piece of music and poetry... especially in the depiction of mankind's devastation of its only planet. *Dagens Nyheter 28.8.*

If any Swedish composer could write a powerful musical manifesto for the environment, it is Karin Rehnqvist... Already the choice of excluding solo singers and instead letting the orchestra and the choir be the components... creates a community that the listener can be part of. We mourn together a world that is on its way to destruction... *Svenska Dagbladet 29.8.*

Here humanity sings to the earth, after which a natural disaster in *forte* occurs. The work is both dramatic and romantic, as if we in the midst of the catastrophe should not forget that which once was... Musically it is both suggestive and exciting. *Aftonbladet 29.8.*

Karin Rehnqvist/Kerstin Perski: *Silent Earth*

Swedish premiere: Swedish Radio SO & Choir/Dima Slobodeniouk, 27.8.2022 Stockholm, Sweden (Baltic Sea Festival)



Karin Rehnqvist & Kerstin Perski

Photo: Arne Hydenberg

Raffish Iiro Rantala

Genres cheerfully melted in a mutual embrace ... Joy of Life is a work that gives *joie de vivre* a whole new spectrum, exquisitely and dazzlingly interpreted by Rantala on the piano and Minna Pensola the violin... The *Overture* was a rhythmic jamboree for the percussionists and wind players and a whopping caprice for the full orchestra. *Keskisuomalainen* 7.7.

Iiro Rantala: Joy of Life (Double Concerto for Violin, Piano and Orchestra), Seven O'Clock Overture

Jyväskylä Sinfonia/Antti Tikkanen, sol. Iiro Rantala, pf, Minna Pensola, vln, 6.7.2022 Jyväskylä, Finland

Entrancing Moomin Opera

The performance was quite simply entrancing... Zest and dangerous situations abound. Kuusisto's music is steeped in colour, lively and strongly descriptive... The references and stylistic allusions point here and there to the history of opera, and it all culminates in Carmen's Habanera aria. *Helsingin Sanomat* 26.5.

Ilkka Kuusisto: Moomin opera (Muumiooppera)

Libretto: Esko Elstelä after Tove Jansson, Swedish by Christian Holmqvist

Pori Sinfonietta/Kaapo Ijas, sol. Joel Bonsdorff, Reetta Haavisto, Ville Salonen etc., 25.5.2022 Helsinki, Finland



Timo-Juhani Kyllönen and Leena Lehtolainen

Hard-hitting monologue opera by Kyllönen

The opera is in 11 scenes dealing with the position of women in present-day society... Kyllönen has built a dramatic span with rises and falls, conflicts and comic relief. The tension and energy level are consistently high... The hard-hitting libretto has also some playful language and humour. Marthens is a veritable dramatic sound cannon and excels in the opera's furious outbursts and flare-ups. *Helsingin Sanomat* 20.8.

Timo-Juhani Kyllönen: Ilona irti

Libretto: Leena Lehtolainen

World premiere: Aurora Marthens, sop, Trio Roozeman, 18.8.2022 Espoo, Finland (Organ Night and Aria Festival)

Martinaityt's compelling and arresting music

Her scores similarly appeal to something beyond the immediately cerebral, creating vast shimmering soundscapes that lead the mind somewhere dream-like and seem to speak directly to the body's senses in arresting and unexpected ways.... this excellent disc offers a welcome introduction to Martinaityt's compelling and transporting music. *BBC Music Magazine* 21.7.

Žibuoklė Martinaitytė: Ex tenebris lux, Nunc fluens. Nunc stans, Sielunmaisema

CD: Lithuanian CO/Karolis Variakojis (Ondine ODE 1403-2)



Karolina Blixt, Elisabeth Leyser & Matilda Sterby

Photo: Daniel Strandström

Tintomara at Läckö Castle

Lovely singing, inspired orchestral music, lively presence on stage, and period make-up & costumes suffice for a complete success this season. The music of "Tintomara" is beautiful as well as emotive... *Expressen* 11.7.

Werle was a modernist but with a strong feeling for melody, leitmotifs and guarded pastiche. His music is discreet and, by small but distinct means, brings out Almqvist's fantastic and ultraromantic text. He lets Almqvist represent the romanticism, and doesn't give it further emphasis in the musical expression. This works splendidly... One of the best versions ever. *Aftonbladet* 13.7.

The ensemble of first-class Mozart voices at Läckö have fun with all the Shakespearian mistaken identities. And, to be sure, there is an air of *Midsummer-Night's-Dream* enchantment over the young Tintomara's ability to get everyone he/she meets to lose their composure and wits. *Dagens Nyheter* 11.7.

Lars Johan Werle: Tintomara

Libretto: Leif Söderström after C.J.L. Almqvist

Läckö CO/Simon Kim Phipps, sol. Sidesel Eriksen, Matilda Sterby, Elisabeth Leyser, Carl Ackerfeldt, Per Lindström etc. 9.-30.7.2022, Läckö Castle, Sweden



Photo: Mikko Kauppinen

Kortekangas's Partita Concertante

This is a work of great symphonic elements compressed into a chamber music context. The premiere was deservedly the concert's big attraction... The instrumentation created symphonic aural impressions with only a small number of players, and a variety of timbral textures, such as combinations of sustained lines and snappy catchiness. The harmonies conjured up a sense of mystery and contrasts. *Turun Sanomat* 16.6.

Olli Kortekangas: Partita Concertante for cello and ensemble

World premiere: Arto Noras, cello, and ensemble, 15.6.2022 Naantali Music Festival, Finland

A gorgeous piece of musical lacework by Lotta Wennäkoski

Of Footprints and Light, a tender, insinuating score by the Finnish composer Lotta Wennäkoski...an intricate, gorgeous piece of musical lacework. Her 12-minute dreamscape opens with eerie footsteps through a fog, scored to immaculate perfection. When the oboe arrives with the first melodic quotation from Moberg's forgotten score, the effect is like a shimmery spectral visitation come to light. *San Francisco Chronicle* 3.6.

Lotta Wennäkoski: Of Footprints and Light

(Om fotspår och ljus)

San Francisco Symphony/Ruth Reinhardt, 3.-5.6.2022 San Francisco, USA



Olli Kortekangas