

NORDIC

HIGHLIGHTS

4/2019

NEWSLETTER FROM GEHRMANS MUSIKFÖRLAG & FENNICA GEHRMAN

A close-up portrait of Lotta Wennäkoski, a woman with short, wavy, light brown hair and striking blue eyes. She is wearing a dark purple, short-sleeved button-down shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green wall with some faint white floral patterns.

Lotta Wennäkoski
at 50

Focus on
Carl Unander-Scharin



Tebogo Monnagotla

Monnagotla's Un clin d'œil

Tebogo Monnagotla's acclaimed song cycle *Un Clin d'œil* to poems by the Madagascan poet Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo, will be heard again in spring 2020. Baritone Luthando Qave will be soloist with the Norrköping Symphony under Marc Soustrot on 29 February, and Anja Bihlmaier will lead the Nordic Chamber Orchestra in a performance on 2 April with Fredrik Zetterström as soloist.

Allan Pettersson's Six Songs

Staffan Storm has arranged Allan Pettersson's *Six Songs/Sechs Lieder* for baritone, strings and harp. The new arrangement will shortly be published by Gehrmans, and has already been recorded by baritone Jakob Högström and Musica Vitae under Daniel Hansson, and released on CD by the CPO label (CPO 999.286-2).

Fennica takes over Warner's light catalogue

As of 1 January 2020, Fennica Gehrman will be acting as agent for the orchestral material of Warner/Chappell Music Finland. Under the new agreement, nearly 300 works, mainly light-orchestra arrangements, will from then onwards be distributed by Fennica. The bulk will consist of works by George de Godzinsky, Rauno Lehtinen, Toivo Kärki and Unto Mononen, among others. Many of them are in versions made by different arrangers.



Photo: Camilla Svensk

Swedish MPA Award to Schnelzer

Albert Schnelzer has been awarded the Swedish Music Publishers' Prize 2019 for his *Piano Concerto – This is Your Kingdom*. "This is Schnelzer's third orchestral work with the ambition to depict life outside the centre and outside the glare of the floodlights. The piece alternates stirring rhythms with fragile simplicity; it leaves no one unmoved", says the jury. The piano concerto was commissioned by the Swedish RSO for the American pianist Conrad Tao and was premiered in Stockholm on 14 March 2019.

Rautavaara's Vigilia

Einojuhani Rautavaara's *All-Night Vigil (Vigilia)* is a new release on the BIS label. Nils Schweckendiek conducts the Helsinki Chamber Choir, and the soloists are Niall Chorem, tenor and Tuukka Haapaniemi, bass.

In 1971-72 Rautavaara composed a Finnish Orthodox church service similar to that of Rachmaninov, comprising Vespers as well as Matins. He then reshaped the music into what we now know as *Vigilia*, a concert version forming a musical entity. The 70-minute work is in 34 sections and features prominent parts for a bass and a tenor soloist.

Heino Kaski piano album

Fennica Gehrman has published a treasure trove for piano enthusiasts: an album of 32 piano pieces by Finnish composer Heino Kaski (1885–1957). One of them, in particular – *Yö meren rannalla (Night by the Sea)* – is a lasting favourite with pianists. Also in the collection are many more lyrical miniatures with beautiful arching melodies. Janne Mertanen has released a CD of Kaski's piano pieces, and all the works on the disc are included in this collection.



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Sound samples and video clips and other material are available at www.gehrmans.se/highlights www.fennicagehrman.fi/highlights

Cover photo: Lotta Wennäkoski (Maarit Kytöharju)

Editors: Henna Salmela and Kristina Fryklöf
Translations: Susan Sinisalo and Robert Carroll

Design: Tenhelp Oy/Tenho Järvinen

ISSN 2000-2742 (Print), ISSN 2000-2750 (Online)
Printed in Sweden by TMG Sthlm, Bromma 2019

Isabelle van Keulen plays Högberg

In the spring of 2020 Isabelle van Keulen will give four performances of Fredrik Högberg's *Absent Illusions – A Hunt for the Eluded Muses*. Joseph Bastian will conduct the Nürnberger Symphoniker in a performance on 19 January. Eivind Gullberg Jensen will lead the Odense Symphony Orchestra in the Danish premiere on 23 January, and finally the Norrköping Symphony will give two performances on 7 and 8 May under the direction of Joshua Weilerstein. *Absent Illusions* is a multimedia concerto for violin/viola and orchestra with film, dedicated to the nine Muses, and was premiered by Isabelle van Keulen and the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker in 2018.



Kimmo Hakola's Fidl

Kimmo Hakola's *Fidl* Op. 99 for violin and orchestra was the commissioned work for the Queen Elisabeth Competition 2019. *Fidl* is the Yiddish word for a violin – Hakola's first instrument. This 17-minute work radiates light and humour and combines everything Hakola always dreamt of when imagining music for the violin, its textural and expressive potential. In the final round of the competition the candidates performed a concerto of their choice and Hakola's work, accompanied by the Belgian National Orchestra under **Hugh Wolf** (See: Reviews).



Stella Chen was awarded 1st prize at the Queen Elisabeth Violin Competition.

Photo: Bruno Vesizic



Photo: Lisa Wessman



Photo: Nea Linnevala

Wessman and Turriago on CD

Pilfink has released a disc of solo and chamber works for the guitar by **Harri Wessman**. The performers are **Matti Riutamaa** and **Patrick Vena**, guitar, **Eva Trygg**, flute and **Antti Leinonen**, accordion.

A disc of the complete works for solo piano by **Tuomas Turriago** was released on 3 December. Included are *Somber* and *Jitters*, published by Fennica Gehrman as sheet music. Pilfink is also planning a CD of Turriago's four chamber sonatas: for flute, alto sax, French horn and tuba.



Benjamin Staern

Benjamin Staern news

Benjamin Staern's *Wave Movements* will receive its North American premiere on 31 January at the Winnipeg New Music Festival, with **Daniel Raiskin** conducting the Winnipeg Symphony. Staern is presently working on a commission from the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, a work inspired by "Pippi Longstocking" – next year will be the 75th anniversary of **Astrid Lindgren's** famous children's book character. Staern will depict the strong and fearless Pippi who stands up for herself and, not least, for others. He is dedicating the piece to climate activist **Greta Thunberg**. The orchestral work will be premiered on 22 April in Berwaldhallen in Stockholm under the direction of **Ariane Matiakh**.

New choral works by Jan Yngwe and Olle Lindberg

Gehrmans is publishing **Jan Yngwe's** *In State of Emergency* for mixed choir and percussion. It was written for the Vocal Art Ensemble and the Rhythm Art Duo and was premiered during the Point Music Festival at the Gothenburg Concert Hall in May. The piece is based on a poem by the Burundian poet **Ketty Nivyabandi**, who also founded the Women's Movement for Peace and Security, and led the first demonstration of women in Burundy.

Olle Lindberg's *A Requiem for the Living* had its premiere on 2 November in Stockholm. Subtitled "A Journey Towards Eternal Light", the piece shows influences from classical music, jazz, folk music and some hard rock too. Scored for two soloists, mixed choir, brass quintet, percussion, piano and strings, it was premiered by the Adolf Fredrik Chamber Choir, conductor **Christoffer Holgersson**, **Agnes Lindberg**, **Staffan Liljas**, the Linnaeus Quintet, et al.



Photo: Henna Salmea

Kortekangas & the Naantali Music Festival

The Naantali Music Festival has commissioned a new work for cello and chamber ensemble from **Olli Kortekangas** for inclusion in the summer 2021 repertoire. The soloist will be **Arto Noras**. The premiere of the *Double Concerto* commissioned earlier by the festival has also been scheduled for 2021. The soloists in that work will be **Osmo Vänskä**, clarinet and **Erin Keefe**, violin.

PREMIERES

Spring 2020

JONAS VALFRIDSSON

A Spark in the Deep Dark

Dalasinfiinietan/Claire Levacher
1.2. Falun, Sweden (Composer in Residence)

John Bauer Overture

Dalasinfiinietan/Tobias Ringborg
28.2. Orsa, Sweden (Composer in Residence)

KALEVI AHO

Solo XV for marimba

Martin Grubinger
9.2. Wien, Austria

Quartet for Accordion and String Trio

Janne Rättäy, Zillacus Trio
6.4. Stockholm, Sweden

MIKKO HEINIÖ

Syvyden yllä tuuli (Wind above the Depths)

Turku PO, Turku University Choir/Tomas Djupsjöbacka, sol. Ville Rusanen, baritone
28.2. Turku, Finland

Sonata for Guitar

Patrik Kleemola
15.3. Boulder, USA

Täällä, kaikkialla (Here, Everywhere) for male choir

Polytech Choir/Saara Aittakumpu
17.4. Helsinki, Finland

MATTHEW WHITTALL

where rain ends... ..begins the sky

KAAAS Piano Trio
1.3. Helsinki, Finland

These Things Remain

Winnipeg SO, Toonkunstkoor Amsterdam/Daniel Raiskin, sol. Henk Neven, baritone
24.4. Winnipeg, Canada

SVEN-DAVID SANDSTRÖM

Trombone Concerto

Swedish Radio SO/Daniel Harding, sol. Håkan Björkman
26.3. Stockholm, Sweden

KARIN REHNQVIST

Silent Earth

Netherlands Radio PO & Choir/Dima Slobodeniouk
18.4. Amsterdam, Netherlands

BENJAMIN STAERN

Pippi Longstocking anniversary work for orchestra

Swedish Radio SO/Ariane Matiakh
22.4. Stockholm Sweden

SVEN-DAVID SANDSTRÖM

Te Deum

Philharmonischer Chor Berlin/Uppsala Academic Chamber Choir/Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester Frankfurt/Stefan Parkman, sol. Karin Dahlberg, soprano, Olle Persson, baritone
10.5. Berlin, Germany

KIMMO HAKOLA

Work for orchestra (Helsinki Variations)

Helsinki PO/Susanna Mälkki
15.5. Helsinki, Finland

Exposed to reality

Lotta Wennäkoski, who will be 50 in February 2020, is one of today's most celebrated Finnish composers. In September, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra premiered her orchestral "Om fotspår och ljus" (Of Footprints and Light), which had as its point of departure an opera by the composer Ida Moberg (1859–1947). Wennäkoski's choice of topic can also be seen as a cultural-political statement. Lotta Wennäkoski here reflects on gender equality in the Finnish musical establishment.

Equality in the world of music has been the subject of sometimes quite heated debate in Finland this autumn. It all began with an article in our leading Swedish-speaking newspaper, *Hufvudstadsbladet* stating that only 4.3 per cent of the works to be performed this season by our three main metropolitan orchestras are by female composers. The bulk of the works on the programme are the old familiar ones, i.e. by men now dead, and those of Beethoven alone, for example, amount to more than all the ones by women put together. The debate has since spread to other media, and other statistics have been dug up. One of the most astounding is that 44 per cent of this summer's Finnish chamber music festivals did not perform a single piece composed by a woman.

The fact that the opening move in the debate came from Finland's Swedish-speaking minority possibly says a lot. Because I can remember being surprised as a student back in the 1990s that Sweden had far more female composers than Finland. All in all, the equality debate in our western neighbour seems for a long time to have been ahead of us. I personally raised the issue in the magazine *Rondo Classica* three years ago. As its top priorities, Statens Musikverk (Swedish Performing Arts Agency) quoted children, young people, diversity and gender equality, and a few years earlier, it had earmarked SEK 8 million expressly for the promotion of equality. "A lot needs to be done," I quoted them in my column, "especially in making music by female composers better represented in the repertoires of orchestras and opera houses. We need both conscious strategies and task forces to tackle the issue."

An objective stated in such clear terms is unfortunately still very difficult to imagine in the Finnish cultural climate. Gender equality in music has, it is true, been thrashed out in many a forum and on numerous occasions, at least in musicological circles but also in various projects and festivals. Yet not until this autumn does the topic seem to have penetrated public awareness and been more widely debated. Only now, it seems, has the demand for equality at last been registered by the "establishment" – the "weightiest" and most prominent level of classical music. It is precisely here that attitudes in Sweden possibly differ most from

those in Finland; over there, the striving towards a pluralist society seems nowadays to be taken for granted by "men" as well. ("Men" because biological gender does not in any way directly imply any particular worldview or a need for change.) Three years ago in *Rondo Classica*, I reckoned that the Finns do not even seem to have a particular problem with gender equality, or at least not in the arts. The general atmosphere was, that after all, we have **Kaija Saariaho** and a couple of others, so why go on about it?

A number of things have surprised me in this autumn's debate. Any female composer has, right at the start of her career, had to come to terms with the fact that the active role in the history of music best known to us has beyond all doubt been reserved for a man. The few female composers have been exceptional individuals in many ways, and their music has – from time immemorial and right up to the past few decades – been viewed from the perspective of womanhood more than anything else. It would, after all, be strange if this *did not* still have psychological and structural consequences, even if there were no longer any obvious concrete obstacles to women's composing. The Finns happily subscribe to a view of their country as a paradise where all are equal. It is nonetheless short-sighted to close our eyes to the expectations and demands, both stated and unstated, still imposed on us by gender in matters both large and small.

On the other hand, the performance of classical music all in all relies so strongly on age-old tradition that contemporary male composers may with good reason feel alienated and excluded (to say nothing of other genders). Yet I find it hard to imagine that many of us in any way categorically despise the "canon"; for me at least, many of the orchestral works in the Classical-Romantic canon are quite honestly important and stirring, even though they were composed by men. They are part of the tradition of which I am part. I would, however, quite probably love and respect certain works by women just as passionately if they had etched themselves on my musical memory with the same intensity and through as many repetitions as my favourite works in the canon. We cannot know things unless we are exposed to them.

The reaction to this autumn's equality debate



Photo: Maarit Kyösti

has in many respects been the resolute defence of the way things have always been done, of "quality" and "masterpieces". Where does this innate reluctance spring from, when the statistics could, I am sure, quite easily be slightly rectified? How about some music by, say, **Louise Farrenc** instead of even a little by Beethoven, regardless of whether or not he has a jubilee year? If the New York Philharmonic can, just like that, put on a concert in honour of the City's Pride Week, as it did this year, couldn't Finland, which prides itself on being a modern society, just as well do something similar, if only occasionally? Would it not be possible to find material composed by women suitable for all levels of our music education? It wouldn't be difficult these days, and would set a good example. Could we not make it a point of honour to always ensure that a competition jury, a committee or composer consortium always has a member representing more than a single gender? Why not introduce quotas to boost the pluralist agenda, even just as a start and in passing – until things really get moving?

For it will be odd if the audience aware of the ongoing debate in society do not soon start demanding all this. We are not indebted to Beethoven, but we are to our society.

Lotta Wennäkoski

Footnote

Lotta Wennäkoski will be 50 on 8 February 2020. On that day, the Avant! Chamber Orchestra is holding a birthday concert in Helsinki including works by *Hele, Zeng* and others.

Music by Wennäkoski will be widely performed during the year. The Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by **Sakari Oramo** will be performing *Flounce* at a 'Ladies versus Beethoven' concert in Stockholm in March, and *Uniin asti* (Until the Dreams) is on the programme for a concert by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in April. Lotta Wennäkoski is at present composing an opera, *Regine*, to a libretto by **Laura Voipio** for the Savonlinna Opera Festival.



TOBIAS BROSTRÖM
On Urban Ground (2013) Dur: 9'
 3222-4231-12-str
 Broström's comment on Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony (No. 6), has certain characteristics in common with the symphony's fourth movement *Gewitter, Sturm* (Thunder, Storm), although Broström has chosen to contrast the pastoral theme with the life in a whirling, pulsating and up-tempo urban environment. Eventually, however, even the sounds of the big city are brought to rest, and through the urban noise you can still hear the birdsong.



CECILIA DAMSTRÖM
Tundo! (2016/2018) Dur: 11'
 2222-4231-11-str
 Tundo is the Latin word for "knock", and Cecilia Damström has used it as a metaphor for the refugee crisis of our time. The piece begins and ends with the entire orchestra knocking on the doorway to safety, with energetic semiquavers in fortissimo. In between, the music conjures up images of the refugees' hazardous journeys through war zones, sometimes beautiful landscapes and the dangerous boat rides over heavy seas.



MATS LARSSON GOTHE
The Apotheosis of the Dance (2012) Dur: 10'
 2222-4231-11-str or 2222-2200-11-str
 An ingenious companion piece to Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. The piece begins with a bobbing, modulating, chromatic ascending motif. Larsson Gothe then continues to reflect on themes from the symphony. The aim was to write a piece that could be listened to as a standalone composition, without prior knowledge of Beethoven's work; but also that the experience would hopefully be enhanced still further if the listener was already familiar with the original symphony.



KIRMO LINTINEN
Mobile festivo (2003) Dur: 11'
 3333-4331-13-1-pf-str
 Lintinen is a master of orchestral timbres, and at giving different instruments a chance to stand out in the texture. As its title suggests, the piece proceeds at a lick, with swinging echoes of jazz alternating with a dream-like mood created by the piano. A work abounding in exciting details, it accelerates up to an ultimate climax.



ROLF MARTINSSON
Tour de Force (2013) Dur: 10'
 2222-4231-12-str
 This is a short, energetic and dramatic opening piece. Its form can be described as a single long crescendo with dynamic and dramatic tempo changes, a crescendo that also embodies the increase in intensity that occurs as the number of instruments being played gradually increases. Each of the musical parameters of melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamic, timbre and tempo undertakes its own intense journey, culminating in the inevitable overall eruption at the end of the piece.



TIINA MYLLÄRINEN
Traces (2014) Dur: 10'
 3333-4331-13-pf-hp-str
 Myllärinen's music has been described as cheerfully curious and energetic. *Traces* begins with concentrated outbursts of different effects and noises. It follows the various, different-sized traces left by the musical material, zooming in and out in different ways, sometimes at the centre of the action and at others far away in an aura of echoes and resonances.



DANIEL NELSON
Steampunk Blizzard (2016)
 Dur: 8' 3222-4231-01-str
 This is an attractive, fun and swinging concert opener, with rhythmic and powerful brass sections. The music conjures associations with steam engines. It is easy to imagine the smoke billowing from the chimneys, and the industrial cogs turning to the tempo of the music. Nelson has himself described this piece as a "steam engine ballet in a snowstorm".



MARIE SAMUELSSON
Singla/Float (2007) Dur: 16'
 2222-2221-13-pf/cel-str
 Singla is an enigmatic and shimmering work. The title suggests something light, such as snowflakes or leaves, floating down, twisting and turning, swirling and twirling, just like the music, which explores tempo changes and a variety of spinning and vibrating musical movements.



ALBERT SCHNELZER
Bulletproof (2016) Dur: 15'
 3333-4331-13-hp-pf/cel-str
 In his music, Schnelzer portrays a dark and unsafe world. It has to do with the conflicting emotions that co-exist in modern times; beauty, fear, anger, aggression. The music begins quietly, with shimmering strings and high woodwinds, although a threatening, muffled, rumbling percussion emerges from below. Rhythmic and expressive outbursts are intertwined with lyrical and dream-like sequences in which a glimpse of hope can be discerned.



TAPIO TUOMELA
Nordan (2003) Dur: 10'
 3333-2331-13-hp-str
 Nordan (The North Wind) continues Tuomela's quest for examining his northern roots and the arctic atmosphere. In this overture, written for the Orkester Norden youth orchestra, violent and virtuosic orchestral textures marked "con una furia arctica" alternate with rough melodic expression.



JENNAH VAINIO
Winterborn (2008) Dur: 12'
 1111-1000-str
 As is often the case in Vainio's music, this wild piece carries hints of metal music, a serene and even earnest ambience, and rhythmic oriental harmonies. A commission from the Zagros Ensemble and Petri Komulainen, Winterborn travels through cold, winter landscapes from dawn to moonlit darkness.



LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI
Flounce (2017) Dur: 5'
 3232-4221-03-hp-str
 The BBC commissioned this five-minute 'curtain raiser' for the last night of the 2018 London Proms, and it quickly became a hit: close to 30 performances worldwide. It is a toolbox of exciting sounds offering plenty of action for all the sections of the orchestra. A witty scherzo, deft and surprising – as it was described in the enthusiastic reviews.



VICTORIA YAGLING
Finnish Notebook (2003)
 Dur: 20' 3332-4231-11-hp-cel-str
 Yagling's expressive, romantically-orientated idiom is Russian in spirit. Apart from being an outstanding cellist she was also a prolific composer, who wrote several works for her own instrument, e.g. three cello concertos. Other orchestral works include the Finnish Notebook, which is an example of Yagling's style: fresh energy and temperament combined with profound lyricism.



Catharina Chen, Christian Karlsen, Marie Samuelsson & Jacob Kellermann

Profoundly gripping Samuelsson

Music can be indifferent, something that flits by, pleasant for the moment but quickly forgotten. Or it can be completely fulfilling. The tones create a world that fascinates, that we continue to explore. The premiere of Samuelsson's "The Crane's Beak" was one of those special moments. This music had concentration, sharp contrasts and a sensitive beauty in a barren landscape that grips one profoundly. *Arbetarbladet* 9.11. There is something enigmatic over stretchable guitar strings against a foundation of the celesta's eerie glittering crystal tones... This is about a kind of delicacy characterised by an implacable strength, and the way in which Samuelsson transforms her visions is absolutely superb... It creates a feeling of wandering around in nature, marvelling at its beauty and its raging forces. *Dagens Nyheter* 9.11.

Marie Samuelsson: Brandnäva/The Crane's Beak

World premiere: Gävle SO/Christian Karlsen, sol. Jacob Kellermann, guitar, Catharina Chen, violin, 8.11.2019 Gävle, Sweden

Brilliant and intricate

Schnelzer's concerto is intricate but at the same time easily accessible, and builds on a close interplay between soloist and orchestra. It is, in short, a splendid work. And when, in addition, the soloist's performance is just as glowing as the orchestra's is inspired, there is nothing more to be desired. *Jönköpingsposten* 20.10.

Albert Schnelzer: Violin Concerto – Nocturnal Songs

Jönköping Sinfonietta/Gérard Korsten, sol. Ilya Gringolts, 20.10.2019 Jönköping, Sweden



Magical Fidl by Kimmo Hakola

An exceptionally positive experience... This piece is much more than a compulsory work that will end up in the archives after this competition. It's a truly inspired composition which possesses delicate finesse supplemented by everything a thoroughly trained young solo artist must meet in terms of mastery of the instrument. The composer deserves a standing ovation for his work. *Klassiek Centraal* 21.5.

Kimmo Hakola: Fidl for violin and orchestra

World premiere: Belgian National Orchestra/Hugh Wolff, sol. finalists of the Queen Elisabeth Competition, 20.5.2019, Bruxelles, Belgium

Allan Pettersson – still alive and kicking!

And how they play! Wallin approaches the solo part with a passionate, fiery and intense performance that grips me from the very first tone. The Norrköping Symphony and Christian Lindberg are catching on. There is a fantastic interaction between soloist, conductor and orchestra that is highly impressive. And I am amazed at the drive and the frenzy that streams out of the loudspeakers... Allan Pettersson's music is still alive and kicking! *Opus #92 Oct-Nov 2019*

Allan Pettersson: Violin Concerto No. 2 🎧

CD: Norrköping SO/Christian Lindberg, sol. Ulf Wallin, violin (BIS-2290)

Angelic dance

Mühlrad's style is easily recognisable with its slow chordal progressions, melismatic melodies and reverberations that yearn for eternity. This is especially effective in *Time*, where the text consists of about twenty different words for "time". It is like hearing the first translations between strangers in an angelic dance in the sky over the Tower of Babel.

Dagens Nyheter 24.10.

Jacob Mühlrad: Anim zemirot, Time, Nigun, Kaddish 🎧

CD: Swedish Radio Choir/Ragnar Bohlin/Fredrik Malmberg (Deutsche Grammophon/Universal 060250825366 'Time')



Vickan & Väinö

Charming mice in Helsinki

Vickan & Väinö warmly encourage a living bilingualism. Language is an opportunity, not a hinder, even when we don't understand one another at all... Cecilia Damström's music effectively underlines the various moods and dramatic events... The sole musician, Janne Valkeajoki, had to stand in for two, but with his accordion he pulled it off with flying colours. The trio of singers handled the operatic aspects with finesse. *Hufvudstadsbladet* 19.10.

Cecilia Damström: Vickan & Väinö (Children's opera)

World premiere: Opera Box, sol. Hedvig Paulig, soprano, Ville Salonen, tenor, Aku Rantama, baritone, Janne Valkeajoki, accordion, 17.10.2019 Helsinki, Finland

Damström's important Requiem

Damström's Requiem for Our Earth is at its strongest in the introduction where Greta Thunberg's parable of a burning house is illustrated effectively in Marek Pluciennik's flames projected on the choir singers. The work feels like the most important I have seen in a long time... It is not without reason that Damström earlier has been explicitly praised for her choral music. *Hufvudstadsbladet* 9.11.

Cecilia Damström: Requiem for Our Earth

Academic Female Voice Choir Lyran/Jutta Seppinen, Marek Pluciennik, video, 7.11.2019 Espoo, Finland



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Moomin Opera in the mood

The Moomin Opera proves that opera can, at its best, be anything but stiff ... the performance appeals to adults and children alike. The music is magnificent, and the stage quivers with the genuine mood of Tove Jansson's Moomin stories. *Kulttuuritoimitus.fi* 15.9.

Ilkka Kuusisto: Muumiooppera (Moomin Opera)

Tampere Music Academy, Valkeakoski City Theatre/Tuomas Turriago, sol. Allan Sääski, Sanna Vähälä, Olli Lammi etc., 15.9.2019 Tampere, Finland

Premium-quality concertos

Aho has a way of adding a twist to familiar genres that always engages and, quite often, intrigues. And what a meticulous approach he takes to his art; in the concertos Aho makes it his business to understand the range and unique character of the solo instrument in question... Aho is still at the top of his game, and that there's so much to relish in this splendid score... Two premium-quality concertos, stylishly played and magnificently recorded; Aho and BIS at their considerable best.

Musicweb International 2019

Kalevi Aho: Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra, Concerto for Trumpet and Symphonic Wind Orchestra

CD: Antwerp SO/Martyn Brabbins, sol. Jörgen van Rijen, trombone, Alain De Rudder, trumpet (BIS-SACD 2196)



Kalevi Aho

Photo: Ghadi Bouriani

Linjama opera in Oulu

Kind about Laestadius, critical about Laestadianism... What's not to like? Linjama's music is captivating and high-impact, among other things making use of several Songs of Zion melodies. *oopperaa.blogspot.com* 12.10.

Jyrki Linjama: Kolme kirjettä Laestadiukselle (Three Letters to Laestadius)

Soli Deo Gloria/Juhani Lamminmäki, sol. Esa Ruuttunen, Laura Mäkitalo, 12.10.2019 Oulu, Finland

Rautavaara's Vigil is a wonder

On its own terms, the piece is a wonder. Rautavaara harbours the Vigil's structure to monumental effect in the creation of a tapestry that ebbs, flows, declaims and recedes. The mood can turn on a sixpence from lamentation to radiant joy. *Gramophone, Autumn* 2019

Einojuhani Rautavaara: Vigilia (All-Night Vigil)

CD: Helsinki Chamber Choir/Nils Schwegkendiek (BIS-SACD 2422)

Thrilling and exquisite Broström

With lovely Anna Larsson in the vocal part, Fröding's "Atlantis" is performed in an English version in which the orchestra dramatises and carries the content of this clearly wondrous poem forward... It is thrilling and exquisitely harmonious, as are the other works on this album – especially the percussion concerto "Theatron" from 2015.

Dagens Nyheter 9.10.

Beatnik is four minutes of festive and impetuous music... The rhythms dance wildly... Stellar Skies lets flute soloist Malin Nordlöf frolic, imbedded in pastoral, lyrical sonorities... But Theatron affords the most exciting music of all, where the soloist duo Malleus Incus really show off.

Opus #92 Oct-Nov 2019

Tobias Broström: Beatnik, Crimson Seas, Stellar Skies, Theatron 🎧

CD: Malmö SO/Ingvar Bergby, sol. Anna Larsson, alto, Malin Nordlöf, flute, Norrlandsoperan SO/Johannes Gustavsson, Malleus Incus, percussion



Tobias Broström

Carl Unander-Scharin – singing composer, composing singer

The four pillars in my compositional work are text, song, nearness to nature and empathy, says composer and lyrical tenor Carl Unander Scharin, who has composed twelve operas to date and a considerable amount of choral music.

The island of M \ddot{o} ja, the Stockholm archipelago. Carl Unander-Scharin dips his paddle into the water, pushes out, glides away toward the outskirts of the archipelago. He takes calm, deep breaths. At the Ingesund College of Music he teaches breathing techniques combining the Indian yoga tradition with British vocal pedagogue Anna Sim's exercises, a singing technique developed over her long and eventful career as a singer.

– My creativity is intimately bound up with my need for the archipelago and proximity to nature, says Carl. I cannot be indoors for longer than an hour or so at a time. I simply have to go out. The music comes while I ponder, and such thinking must be anchored in some form of ideal world or experience. And that is what takes time. The parallel tracks in Carl Unander-Scharin's life are closely connected: his profession as a singer, his composing and his nearness to nature. He was first educated as a church musician and a choral pedagogue; he later studied at the Electronic Music Studio in Stockholm (EMS), has a degree from the University College of Opera and holds a doctorate in the subject Opera and Technology from the Royal Institute of Technology.

Innovative and unique

Twelve operas and a considerable number of choral and vocal works have seen the light, from his highly acclaimed debut with *Tokfursten* (*The King of Fools*) at Vadstena Castle (1996) to the well-nigh intangible universal art-work "The Heavenly Mechatronics" at Berwaldhallen (2017), where the Swedish Radio Choir accompanied themselves in the work *Calligrammes* by playing on red ropes suspended from the ceiling to the floor of the concert hall, a collaboration with his wife and dancer Åsa Unander-Scharin and the musician and technological developer Ludvig Elblaus. Berwaldhallen, celebrating their 40th anniversary, has a description of the project in their Jubilee folder, calling it "innovative and unique" and the absolute highlight of the season. The artistic research behind the interactive music installations that were set up in the foyers of Berwaldhallen during the project resulted in the dissertation *Extending Opera* (2015), about liberating the opera singer with the aid of electronic instruments that are played by the singer herself/himself.

Carl Unander-Scharin follows his tracks, sidetracks and new paths from new angles. He works non-stop, a habit that began when as an eleven-year-old he started to sing in the Adolf Fredrik Boy's Choir, and suddenly had to combine school work with performances at the Royal Opera three evenings per week.



Photo: Mikkel Orstedholm

"Scharin's music is intelligent and singable, it is written by an active singer who knows how to utilise all the finesses in the art of opera", wrote Tobias Theorell in *Finanstidningen* concerning *Hummelhonung* (Sweetness) at the Royal Swedish Opera (2001), a musical interpretation of Torgny Lindgren's eponymous novel. "His soundscape is deeply personal and every tone has meaning. This is music in which the melody of language has imperceptibly passed over into song; music so dense that it is tangible, thickly flowing as honey and nourishing as pork."

The language and poetry lie extra close to a light lyrical tenor, *tenore leggero*, with "a special awareness of the meaning of the text and thus of the phrasing, just like other tenors who of tradition sing Rossini, Bach, Handel and Mozart", as Carl Unander-Scharin says in his interview as Composer of the Month #5 in the series #swedishchoralmusic.

The Cloud of Unknowing

The work – to be premiered live throughout Europe in February 2020 – is the first that has been composed entirely "outside the skerries", as Carl puts it. In the house at M \ddot{o} ja, with the outer archipelago just a paddle trip away, an anonymous medieval text has been attired in tones. *The Cloud of Unknowing* has followed Carl Unander-Scharin during his many and extended working journeys by train, when he has time to read literature.

– It's an absolutely fantastic text, associated with my own spirituality; the union of body and soul and the insight that we never reach God through knowledge but by letting ourselves be touched, says Carl. It is a text which I have longed to get the opportunity to use.

The opportunity arose when the Erik Westberg Vocal Ensemble commissioned a work for choir and organ. In six movements, with names such as "Unknowing and Forgetting", "God & Love" and "Darkness", the choir depicts six themes from the text, in harmony with an organ part, that were pleasurable to compose for a composer who has been trained as a church musician. These pieces, with complex choral textures, pose a challenge even for a professional vocal ensemble. And that is as it should be. Carl Unander-Scharin is intensely interested in reaching the core of the text.

– I wanted to be a poet when I was young...I still have that love for the text and it goes into the music. I am, of course, biased by the fact that I sing and have always sung. The "cantabile" is essential, even when I write for instruments. And then nearness to nature. And empathy. I am so curious! I want to understand people and how they think. Indeed, there you have the four pillars in my compositional work: text, song, nature and empathy.

Janna Vettergren

Footnote

The Cloud of Unknowing will be premiered on 3 February 2020 by the Erik Westberg Vocal Ensemble, broadcast live on Swedish Radio P2 and throughout Europe via the network EBU. It will also be recorded on CD in connection with the concert.

Read more about Carl Unander-Scharin on electronic-opera.com

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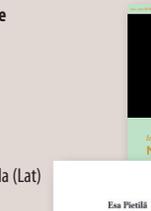
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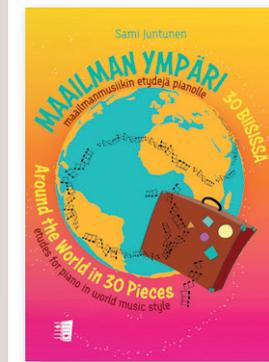
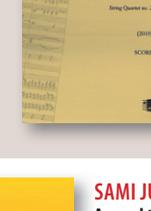
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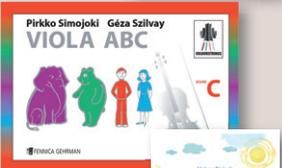
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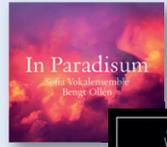
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