NORDIC HIGHLIGHTS

2/2019

NEWSLETTER FROM GEHRMANS MUSIKFÖRLAG & FENNICA GEHRMAN

Focus on Tobias Broström & Esa Pietilä

Ten performances of the Moomin Opera

There will be ten performances of the Moomin Opera by **Ilkka Kuusisto** in September: in Tampere on 13–15 and Valkeakoski on 21–29. The opera is based on the book *Vaarallinen juhannus* (*Moominsummer Madness*) by **Tove Jansson**, in which the Moomins take refuge from the flood in an opera house floating by. The project is a joint Tampere Music Academy and Valkeakoski City Theatre production. Also taking part in the performance conducted by **Tuomas Turriago** will be students and young actors from the Valkeakoski Music Institute and Theatre School.

Collections for saxophone and clarinet

Finnish Favourites for the Saxophone is a compendium of works written for saxophone and piano in 1930–1950. Edited by **Olli-Pekka Tuomisalo**, this anthology contains works published now for the first time, including a few arrangements.

The previously published *Finnish Favourites for the Clarinet* edited by **Mikko Raasakka** presents music for clarinet and piano. Pilfink Records has released a new CD that includes works from the collection by **Leevi Madetoja**, **Sulho Ranta**, **Väinö Hannikainen**, **Erik Bergman** and others performed by Raasakka and **Antti Vahtola** (See: new CDs).

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

Cover photo: Ari Kauppila in the opera Flash Flash (Maarit Kytöharju), Tobias Broström (Nicklas Raab), Esa Pietilä (Heikki Tuuli)
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Photo: Maarit Kytöharju

Flash Flash available at Yle Areena

Juhani Nuorvala's opera *Flash Flash – Two Deaths of Andy Warhol* is now at Yle Areena and available also to viewers outside Finland. This opera to a text in English by **Juha Siltanen** has enjoyed cult status on the Finnish opera scene; it is seductively melodious, pop-inflected, absurd and thrilling – something quite unique. Flash Flash was premiered on 9 February and received four additional performances at Espoo City Theatre in May. The soloists were **Tuuli Lindeberg**, **David Hackston**, **Martti Anttila**, **Sampo Haapaniemi** and **Varvara Merras-Häyrynen**. Tap dancer **Ari Kauppila** performed a stunning scene at the end.

Photo: Anna-Kaisa Nokl/Tampere-talo

Church opera by Kortekangas

The church opera *Elämänkuvat* (*Pictures of Life*) by **Olli Kortekangas** is to be premiered at the Korsholm Music Festival on 1 August by the Seinäjoki and Vaasa City Orchestras, Vaasa Opera Choir and Children's Choir, as well as two soloists: soprano **Päivi Nisula** and baritone **Waltteri Torikka**. The conductor will be **Anna-Maria Helsing** and the stage director is **Ville Saukkonen**. The libretto is by **Pia Perkiö** and the opera was commissioned by the Finnish Cultural Foundation. Lasting about one hour, the opera follows the stories of two characters side by side: a 16th-century Painter and present-day Mariia. It will be performed in the medieval Isokyrö Church and was inspired by the paintings on its walls.

Kalevi Aho premieres

The BBC commissioned a work from **Kalevi Aho** as part of a set entitled *Pictures Within: Birthday Variations for M.C.B.* Elgar's 'Enigma Variations' provides both model and inspiration for this new set of variations by 14 living composers to mark the 60th birthday of conductor **Martyn Brabbins**. The premiere by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Brabbins will take place on 13 August as part of the BBC Proms.

Yet one more instrument is being added to the list of solo concertos by Aho, this time for bass clarinet and orchestra. The concerto is a joint commission from the Jyväskylä Sinfonia and the Joensuu City Orchestra on the initiative of **Mikko Raasakka**. (See: premieres).

Valfridsson & Dalasinfoniettan

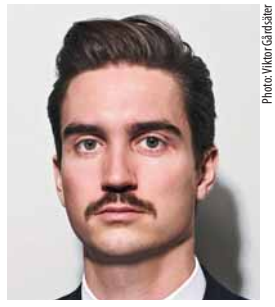


Photo: Viktor Gårdsäter

Jonas Valfridsson will be the Dalasinfonietta's composer profile during the 2019-2020 season. He will compose two new works: a chamber piece for string quartet, flute, oboe, clarinet and French horn, and an orchestral work comprising the third part of a trilogy inspired by the fairy-tale artist **John Bauer**. Rounding off the season, the main work in the trilogy, *John Bauer Suite 1918* for choir and orchestra, will be performed. The award-winning work *The Only Thing That You Keep Changing Is Your Name* will open the season on 20 September, and in January we can listen to the Swedish premiere of *A Spark in the Deep Dark*.

New CEO at Gehrmans

Filiz Erat Edhlund has assumed the position of CEO at Gehrmans Musikförlag. She is a trained pianist with a focus on chamber music and has long worked in leading positions in the music industry, mainly in the copyright and licensing company ICE. "I feel both excited and inspired at the prospect of leading Gehrmans' development together with the team. At the same time as we oversee an important part of Swedish music heritage, we must seek out and promote the composers who are creating the music we believe will be played in the future." says Filiz Erat Edhlund. Current CEO **Gunnar Helgesson** will remain at Gehrmans in the role of Senior Director Composers & Repertoire.

Karin Rehnqvist

Photo: Ester Sorn

Further collaboration with Karin Rehnqvist

Gehrmans is increasing its collaboration with **Karin Rehnqvist**. Upcoming publications include *Ljus av ljus/Light of Light* (2003) for children's choir and orchestra (a resplendent song extolling life and nature), *Day is here!* (2018) for eight voices and orchestra (set to traditional Native American texts and a text from the Swedish Hymnal, about life and survival), and the frequently performed orchestral piece *Arktis Arktis!* (2000), a co-commission by the Swedish and Scottish Chamber Orchestras, inspired by a voyage with a Swedish polar expedition in 1999. At present Rehnqvist is composing a piece for choir and orchestra to a newly written text by **Kerstin Perski**. "It's about our planet earth, our home in space. It is difficult today not to mention the threats we humans face, and that we ourselves cause", says Rehnqvist. The work is a joint commission from the Netherlands Radio and the Swedish Radio, and the premiere will take place in the Concertgebouw in April 2020 under the baton of **Dima Slobodeniouk**.

Photos: Music Finland

Helsinki Variations

The Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra celebrated a century of Finnish independence in 2017 by launching a commissioning project under the title of *Helsinki Variations*. Works by six composers will receive an orchestral performance in 2019–2022. The first, on 11 September, will be **Lotta Wennäkoski** with *Om fotspår och ljus (Of Footprints and Light)*, followed by **Kimmo Hakola** (spring 2020), **Antti Auvinen** (autumn 2020), **Matthew Whittall** (spring 2021), **Seppo Pohjola** (autumn 2021) and **Sampo Haapamäki** (spring 2022).

Staern in Tanglewood and Stralsund

Benjamins Staern's *Confrontation* for trumpet solo and brass quintet will receive its US premiere with **Håkan Hardenberger** and musicians from the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the Tanglewood Festival on 30 June. Hardenberger will also give the Australian premiere of the work at ANAM in Melbourne in October. Theater Vorpommern will stage Benjamin Staern's popular family opera *The Snow Queen/Die Schneekönigin*, to a libretto by **Anelia Kadieva Jonsson**, translated into German by **Lisa Henningson**. Directed by **Horst Kupich** there will be nine performances at the theatres in Stralsund and Greifswald between 30 November and 5 March 2020.

PREMIERES

July–September 2019

OLLI KORTEKANGAS
T'have seen what I have seen
Tuuli Lindeberg, soprano, Petri Kumela, guitar
9.7. Kemiö, Finland (Kemiönsaari Music Festival)

Due per due for two violins
Katinka Korkeala, Sonja Korkeala
11.7. Salo, Finland

Partita for organ
Tomi Satomaa
28.7. Turku, Finland

Elämänkuvat (Pictures of Life)
Vaasa & Seinäjoki Orchestras/Anna-Maria Helsing, Vaasa Opera Choir etc., sol. Päivi Nisula, soprano, Waltteri Torikka, baritone
1.8. Isokyrö, Finland (Korsholm Music Festival)

CECILIA DAMSTRÖM
Piano Quintet – Helene
Heli Haapala, flute, Kristiina Salmi, oboe, Helmi Malmgren, clarinet, Topias Kiiskinen, bassoon, Tiina Karakorpi, piano
2.8. Janakkala, Finland (Kokonainen Festival)

Öar i ett hav som strömmar (Islands in a Flowing Sea)
Marika Hölttö, soprano, Maritta Manner, piano
18.8. Lappeenranta, Finland (Kumaus Festival)

JYRKI LINJAMA
String Quartet No. 2 (Allerheiligentag III)
Festival Quartet
10.7. Kemiö, Finland (Kemiönsaari Music Festival)

LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI
Zeng for recorder, percussion and strings (version for string orchestra)
Ostrobothnian ChO/Dalia Stasevska, sol. Anna Petrini, recorder, Antti Ohenoja, percussion
25.7. Korsholm, Finland (Korsholm Music Festival)

Om fotspår och ljus/ Of Footprints and Light
Helsinki PO/Susanna Mälkki
11.9. Helsinki, Finland

VELI-MATTI PUUMALA
Hommages fugitifs II (Bagatelles for Piano)
Joonas Ahonen
10.8. Oulu, Finland (Oulunsalo Soi Festival)

MATTHEW WHITTALL
Bright Ferment (String Quartet No. 2)
Banff International String Quartet Competition
26.8.-1.9. Banff, Canada

KALEVI AHO
Variation XII for Pictures Within: Birthday Variations for M.C.B.
BBC SO/Martyn Brabbins
13.8. London, UK (Proms Festival)

Concerto for Bass Clarinet and Orchestra
Jyväskylä Sinfonia/Ville Matvejeff, sol. Mikko Raasakka
4.9. Jyväskylä, Finland

Rolf Martinsson festival composer in Nora

Rolf Martinsson is composer-in-residence at the Nora Chamber Music Festival on 15-19 June. The repertoire will range from his Opus 1, *String Quartet No. 1* from 1980, to his *Suite for Woodwind Quintet* from 2014. The artistic leader of the festival is violinist and conductor **Katarina Andreasson**, who also leads the festival orchestra in the final concert including *Airy Flight* for trumpet and string orchestra.

Photos: Heikki Tuuli

Esa Pietilä – modern music with room for improvisation

Saxophonist Esa Pietilä has not forsaken jazz and free improvisation, but his musician profile has changed and his main focus is now on composing orchestral and chamber music.

Esa Pietilä (b. 1964) is the very epitome of the player-composer – a rarity in contemporary Finnish music. Not only does he often play the solo tenor sax in works of his own; he also gives their performers freedom and responsibility in the form of improvisation. One reason for this is his background in jazz. In 2016, one of Finland's finest representatives of modern free jazz, he was the recipient of the number-one prize, the Yrjö, awarded to a Finnish jazz musician. He has been the tenor sax soloist in his own solo concertos and with the main line-ups led by him, such as Liberty Ship founded in 2012.

The emphasis in Pietilä's work in the present decade has shifted towards modern art music. He had already listened to lots of modern classical music and composed some works of his own when a recording of Lutosławski's third symphony conducted by **Esa-Pekka Salonen** finally prompted him to steer his own composition in the direction of modern art music. He has not forsaken jazz and free improvisation, but his musician profile has changed and his main focus is now on composing. Meanwhile, he has also become more versatile as a musician, performing new works for sax by other composers, too; **Kalevi Aho** and **Eero Hämeenniemi** are among those who have composed a concerto for him.

Modernistic roughness and timbral richness

Free improvisation has provided Pietilä with a natural bridge from jazz to art music. His idiom is coloured by a modernistic roughness of timbre and harmony along with vibrant multi-level rhythms. His world of sound is often enriched by extended performing techniques. Counterbalancing his spikiness there may often also be more sensitive, even lyrical moments, such as in the closing section of *Blazing Flames* (2018) for tenor sax and string quartet.

One of Pietilä's weightiest works is *Graffiti Play* (2012), conducted at its premiere by Esa-Pekka Salonen. The solo part is assigned to a jazz trio, alongside which the large chamber orchestra creates rich worlds of timbre. *Asterion* for saxophone and octet (2014) has a similar, multi-timbre mode of expression but in a more chamber music-like context.

Pietilä has many interesting works in the pipeline. One is a double concerto for violin and tenor sax he has written for himself and a violinist renowned for his powers of improvisation, **Pekka Kuusisto**. The idea was to create a sister work for the Ligeti Violin Concerto, so that the two could perhaps be performed in the same concert.

Improvisation as a tool

The compositions by Esa Pietilä frequently incorporate an element of improvisation. It may be part of the initial process, a means of seeking and shaping the material, but is most obvious in works with a solo tenor sax. Passages for other instruments may nevertheless include various degrees of improvisation. Then again, he may in some of his works write the parts out note by note, as in *Three Strides of Light* (2017) for piano. There is also very little improvisation in *Brisk* (2017), a duo for cello and marimba.

Though musicians with a traditional classical training seldom have much experience of improvisation, Pietilä has not encountered any problems in the performance of his works, especially if the players are given precise instructions. On the contrary: it has been a liberating experience for many. In *Uirapuru* (2016) for tenor sax and male choir, for example, the choir paints colourful, playful sound pictures inspired by the Amazon rainforest and the Uirapuru bird in an exultant happening vein.

The degree of improvisation varies from one Pietilä work to another. Sections may at times be totally free, and at others he may make verbal requests or suggestions. Then again, the improvisation may be restricted to specific notes or melodies, or to motivic variation. He may allow the performers liberties such as in Lutosławskian aleatory, though even then the sound does not resemble or imitate that of the great Polish master.

The transitions from improvisation to precise notation tend to be seamless and carefully calculated rather than sharp. Hence it is often difficult for the listener to decide whether a passage was improvised or notated, and when the transition actually took place. This gives Esa Pietilä's works a strong narrative feel and dramatic drive.

Kimmo Korhonen

Tobias Broström: composing solo concertos

Photo Nicklas Raab

Tobias Broström is in the limelight with a new CD and with his new double concerto "Nigredo" for two trumpets and orchestra premiered in Malmö in March, and to be performed at the BBC Proms in London this summer. In an interview with the composer shortly before the premiere, Tobias Broström gave an insight both into the new work, but also into how he relates to composing solo concertos and working with soloists.

The soloistic, virtuosic element in music has always interested Broström. Already his first large-scale work *Arena* was a concerto for percussion, after which followed a number of solo concertos. "It is simply much more fun to work with the concerto form", Broström says, "both for the collaboration with the musicians, but also because the soloist creates a 'common thread' in the orchestral texture. The solo part becomes a point of reference, it has the fundamental musical material and the orchestra can follow like a shadow or engage in a dialogue with the soloist", he says. When asked what he thinks about virtuosity, a concept that has been interpreted differently in different periods throughout history, Broström replies that it isn't a question of the Paganini type of virtuosity, just to show off, but that he likes a "furious, hectic virtuosity that provides focus, especially when it comes to creating rhythm". Moreover, rhythmical structures often create the very backbone in Broström's music; it is around these that the musical flow and form are built up: "The rhythm and the flow can in many cases come before both harmony and melody, even though timbre and dynamics are also central elements" – something that not least characterises the double concerto *Theatron* for two percussion players.

In contrast to this is *Stellar Skies* for flute and string orchestra – a tranquil and lyrical piece, and even though the solo part has virtuoso features it is of another type than those one finds in Broström's larger concertos. While a number of Broström's works build on clear-cut rhythms, we encounter in Stellar Skies more fluid, almost intangible structures where the string orchestra creates a shimmering background with trills, tremolos and figurations, against which the livelier phrases and the free declamation in the solo part are outlined.

The short and intensive *Beatnik*, the opening piece on the new CD, is an orchestral version of *Sputnik* for piccolo trumpet and orchestra, written for **Håkan Hardenberger** and the inauguration of the concert hall Malmö Live in 2015. Both titles are redolent of the 1960s and while Sputnik has a musical connection via the piccolo trumpet part that soars off to great heights, specially designed for Håkan Hardenberger's virtuosic capacity, the other title alludes to music's rhythmic activity, with odd and varied time signatures. It is a fast and virtuoso piece, almost – as the composer himself says – "like a mini-concerto for conductor and orchestra".

Nigredo: Dark Night of the Soul

Trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger, together with his colleague **Jeroen Berwaerts,** is also behind the commission of the new concerto for two trumpeters and orchestra. The work was entitled *Nigredo*, with the subtitle "Dark Night of the Soul", after the famous poem by the 16th-century mystic **St. John of the Cross**. "The manner in which I have composed the music and chosen the title of the work is linked to Jung's definition of 'nigredo', which can be described as a moment of ultimate desperation, and this is a prerequisite for personal development", says Broström. It is also reminiscent of alchemy "where nigredo (blackness) means decay or decomposition. Alchemists of former times believed that this was a first step on the way to the philosopher's stone".

Already in the earlier trumpet concerto, *Lucernaris* , there was an interplay between light and dark. But if it was light that was central in Lucernaris, the new work is characterised more by darkness, or rather journeying through darkness.

The concerto is written in two large sections but can in principle be divided up into three movements. In the first movement "Shades and Echoes" the second trumpet follows the first like a shadow or an echo. In Lucernaris Hardenberger played against a second trumpet, in fact played by himself via prerecorded material, but now he has a physically present playing partner and the notion of a "shadow" or an "echo" has become more of an accomplished idea.

In the movement that follows, "No Man's Land/Antagonism", the first trumpet is the antagonist while the second plays long lines. It becomes a dialectical struggle between two characters. The third movement "Equilibrium/Dystopia" and "Remembrance" follows without a break and paints a dismal picture of the future with memories of the past. "These descriptions have inspired me in my work of deciding what roles the solo trumpeters will get vis-à-vis one another and can be seen as a musical pointer toward how the listener, too, can embrace the music", says the composer.

Also, in connection with this work, we discuss the composition of concertos as such. Broström agrees that these close collaborations with musicians strongly influence his choice of musical material, especially his familiarity with the individuals' technical possibilities and capacity. At the same time, "for musicians like Håkan Hardenberger and Jeroen Berwaerts there are hardly any limitations to challenge". Nigredo, however, is "not a virtuoso concerto in the spirit of Theatron, but rather a concertising symphony with two soloists, music with long lines in which the material is allowed time to develop". And perhaps this gives a hint about the next piece that Broström is working on – *Symphony No. 1* is on the way.

Staffan Storm

Footnote: *Nigredo was premiered in March by the Malmö Symphony Orchestra/**John Storgårds** and is now awaiting its UK premiere in Royal Albert Hall during the BBC Proms on 25 July with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales/**Markus Stenz**. In connection with the 40th anniversary of Berwaldhallen it will also be performed by the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra under the direction of **Daniel Harding** in November 2019.*

REPERTOIRE TIPS

21th century works for strings

KALEVI AHO
Letter to the Netherworld/Kirje tuolle puolen' (2018) Dur: 12'
Pehr Henrik Nordgren in memoriam
for strings 55432

Dedicated to the memory of fellow-composer Nordgren, Letter to the Netherworld is a musical question-and-answer in which the violins put questions to the low strings and the rich viola tones act as catalysts. The result is beautiful, moving music.

TOBIAS BROSTRÖM
Mirage (2013/2016) Dur: 5'

Mirage is an arrangement for string orchestra of a movement from Broström's String Quartet No. 1. The opening trills of the violins against the natural overtones in the viola and cello give the piece a magical, shimmering character, like a vibrating light over the horizon – like a mirage. The violins' trills then change into a whirling rhythmical accompaniment. The melodic element is found throughout the piece in the viola and the cello. The music is continually in motion and doesn't come to a stop until the very end, when it ebbs away and concludes in a quiet pizzicato.

CECILIA DAMSTRÖM
Infirmus (2015) Dur: 7'

Infirmus is the Latin word for ill or weak, and this piece is dedicated to all those who suffer from chronic illnesses. And one can indeed feel the pain in Damström's striking piece, which is full of glissandi, achingly high strings, rapid runs and playing "sul ponticello". In this piece we can also find a quotation from her earlier choral composition on the theme "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me"?

ANDERS ELIASSON
Sinfonia per archi (2001) Dur: 35'

The sorrowfully singing Sinfonia per archi consists of a long continuous movement that ranges from the most delicate tenderness and achingly beautiful melodic lines, to dramatic outbursts. A twenty-minute-long opening Adagio turns into a restless, slightly jerky and onrushing Allegro that leads to a Lento, in which the character of the beginning returns. The work ends on a bright, pure, open chord that imparts a feeling of release and hope.

TOMMIE HAGLUND
Serenata per Diotima (2014/2015) Dur: 14'

Serenata per Diotima is dedicated to Haglund's first grandchild. He has told how looking into the little girl's eyes inspired him while composing. The music is characterised by an uncanny beauty, emotional directness and intimacy. There is a melancholy shimmer over the fluid string texture. And here there are also recurrent lyrical, cantabile and dizzyingly beautiful interjections from a solo violin.

MIHKEL KEREM
String Sextet 'Restless Night' (2004) Dur: 30'
Laudatio (2011) Dur: 10'

"Anyone who believes traditional tonality to be no longer capable of expressing anything more than timeworn clichés should listen to Kerem's work," wrote Fanfare. Kerem, himself a violinist, has written idiomatic and hauntingly beautiful music for strings. The idea of the String Sextet was connected to Schönberg's Verklärte Nacht so that the two pieces could be performed together. The mood goes from calm to agitated and finds peace at the end with a long, meditative stretch in D Major.

ROLF MARTINSSON
Kalliope (2003) Dur 27'

In the highly expressive nine-movement work Kalliope, Martinsson lets the Muses of Greek mythology come forth, each in a movement of her own. The movements are divided into three groups of three so that the tempi and the Muses' different characters are contrasted and varied as much as possible throughout the work. The characters fluctuate between the harsh and the more romantic, between tranquility and rhythmic tension.

JUHANI NUORVALA
Variationes ex "Bene quondam" (2017) Dur: 24'

Eight variations on Bene quondam dociles in the medieval Piae Cantiones collection. The solo viola binds the movements together and the theme passes through different eras, musical cultures and styles. Here again Nuorvala handles his material with real skill. Shifting rhythms, archaic tones, toe-curling sounds, beautiful flageolet notes and gamelan allusions, hints of tango and rock – all these can be found in this relaxed, enjoyable piece.

VELI-MATTI PUUMALA
Rime (2013) Dur: 24'
for strings 55432
Memorial Fragment (2008) Dur: 13'
for violin obligato and strings 54432

Like many of these 'tips', both pieces were premiered by the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra. Rime alludes to the frosty autumn fields of Central Ostrobothnia. The thread running through is a folk melody noted down by Toivo Kuula. The Memorial Fragment is subtitled "In memory of P.H. Nordgren" and quotes a piece by him that engages in dialogue with Puumala's own idiom. Breathtaking, quiet moments are often a mystical fundamental element of Puumala's works.

HARRI VUORI
To Fly, to Fly / Lentoon (2015) Dur: 10'
for 18 strings 44442

Sakari Oramo conducted the premiere of this work in 2015. It pictures the polyphony of swans on the wing: The composer wrote: "In summer 2014, four swans landed on the lake by my summer cottage. My attention was immediately caught by their joint song using the first four notes of a major scale, at times slightly extending their melody up or down. I was also impressed by the strange hypnotic rhythm of their singing."

REVIEWS

Photo: Jesper Berg

Jeroen Berwaerts and Håkan Hardenberger

Broström's Nigredo

The composer evinces an eminent talent when it comes to handling timbre… he keeps the percussion busy creating a soft swarming atmosphere, together with the harp, the piano and the whole multifarious orchestra's web of parts. The soloists liberate themselves from this fantastic throng to excel, while the amazing secrets of trumpet technique crop out in duels and bickerings. Otherwise, images predominate of the impressionistic tone painting of wide oceans. And Broström is lord of the waves. *Sydsvenskan 15.3.*

Tobias Broström: Nigredo
World premiere: Malmö SO/John Storgårds, sol. Håkan Hardenberger, Jeroen Berwaerts, trumpets, 14.3.2019 Malmö, Sweden

Högberg's entertaining Baboon Concerto

The soloist told stories, blew smoke rings through the instrument, distorted the composer's melodies and gradually took his instrument apart piece by piece, until at last only the pipe was left… A work with so many comical gimmicks requires a performer who not only masters the virtuosic passages on the instrument, but also dares to loosen up in the theatrical features inserted in the score. Sebastian Stevensson is such an entertainer – he obviously enjoyed his role as the baboon, who cunningly stole the show from the highly competent conductor Susanna Mälkki.
Jyllands-Posten 1.3.

Fredrik Högberg: Baboon Concerto
Danish premiere: Danish National SO/Susanna Mälkki, sol. Sebastian Stevensson, bassoon, 28.2.2019 Copenhagen, Denmark

Wennäkoski's Soie the highlight of the evening

Lotta Wennäkoski's extremely virtuosic concerto was the highlight of the evening. Atmospheric poetry, refined instrumentation, rich handling of detail and sovereign play with the orchestra's timbral potential – astounding and impressive … Kersten McCall places his outstanding competence in the service of the work. This is great art, free from the airs and graces of stardom. *Westfälischen Anzeiger 25.3.*

Lotta Wennäkoski: Soie
Concertgebouw Orchestra/Thomas Hengelbrock, sol. Kersten McCall, flute, 22.3.2019 Dortmund, Germany

Finesse and radiance

The guitar concerto Susurrus by Lotta Wennäkoski is distinguished by the finesse and invention of a score in which the orchestra becomes the sound box for the guitar. The energy of the solo part and the novel ideas give an instrument so difficult to confront with an orchestra an astonishing radiance. *resmusica.com 11.5.*

Lotta Wennäkoski: Susurrus
Estonian National SO/Olari Elts, sol. Petri Kumela, 3.5.2019 Tallinn, Estonia (World Music Days)

Albert Schnelzer & Ilya Gringolts

Nocturnal Songs

In Nocturnal Songs the common denominator for the inspiration is a state in-between wakefulness and sleep… an exceedingly successful work that received standing ovations… Ilya Gringolts gave an assured and moving performance.
Upsala Nya Tidning 13.4.

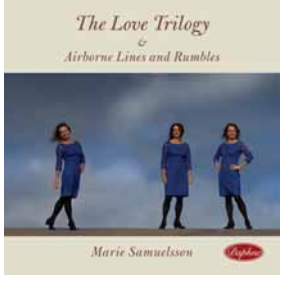
Albert Schnelzer: Violin Concerto – Nocturnal Songs
World premiere: Uppsala CO/Gérard Korsten, sol. Ilya Gringolts, 11.4.2019 Uppsala, Sweden

Schnelzer's sure-fire hit

A modern piano concerto that feels like a sure-fire hit the very first time you hear it… He has a tone language that is up-to-date but not too complicated, with colourful orchestration… Above all, he has something to tell… Conrad Tao performs splendidly, and the orchestra and the conductor Søndergård seem equally inspired. This is a piano concerto that deserves to be performed many times and recorded on CD as soon as possible. *Dagens Nyheter 15.3.*

Albert Schnelzer: Piano Concerto – This is Your Kingdom
World premiere: Swedish Radio SO/Thomas Søndergård, sol. Conrad Tao, 14.3.2019 Stockholm, Sweden

Striking beauty and delicacy



Katija Dragojevic's passionate voice can be heard in longspun melodic lines… The beauty is striking when she succeeds in getting this first part to rise like a slowly emerging protuberance of land out of the sea, and there fill the air with archaic sounds high up in the treble register… In the second part the pulse is much quicker and the mobility almost boundless. A jubilant feeling that Andreas Sundén emits on his clarinet… In the third part Samuelsson has chosen to be at her most searching, and delicacy permeates the whole movement, including achingly beautiful string and wind parts.
Dagens Nyheter 21.3.

Marie Samuelsson: The Love Trilogy
CD: Swedish Radio SO/Daniel Blendulf, Malmö SO, Nordic CO/Sarah Ioannides, sol. Katija Dragojevic, mezzo-soprano, Andreas Sundén, clarinet (Daphne 1062)

Symphony No. 17 – an Aho masterpiece

Kalevi Aho's Symphony No. 17 is a modern masterpiece… It is one of the finest, most impressive works of art ever produced in this country or that I have come across anywhere for a long time now. The greatest music is never an honour just to the composer or the style he represents; it is something that exists for the listener, making his soul and innermost being shiver… Aho's symphony arouses a feeling such as this – wonder, astonishment, emotion. *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat 6.4.*

Kalevi Aho: Symphony No. 17
World premiere: Lahti SO/Dima Slobodeniouk, 4.4.2019 Lahti, Finland

Ever innovative Aho

Possibly Aho's greatest feat, triumphant as ever in these works, is a truly unique harmonic compromise between atonality, free tonality and tonality – a sort of 'Ahotonality'. *Hufvudstadsbladet 24.4.*

Kalevi Aho: Trumpet Concerto, Trombone Concerto
CD: Antwerp SO/Martyn Brabbins, sol. Jörgen van Rijen, trombone, Alain de Rudder, trumpet (BIS SACD-2196)

Gripping new Guitar Concerto

The seven-movement work traced an almost cinematic arc in which different effects intertwine as part of a growing story…the magnificent result kept the audience gripped to the very last note.
Lapin kansa 13.5.

Kalevi Aho: Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra
Lapland CO/John Storgårds, sol. Ismo Eskelinen, 10.5. 2019 Rovaniemi, Finland

Photo: Romain Etienne

A resonant, glowing song cycle

Heiniö uses resonant, spectral-led harmonies to set Nummi's tender characters to music…The cycle, both its poetry and its mood, fits the meditative, dark basic hue of the deep bass voice. Song of Late Summer, though melancholy, nevertheless glows. *yle.fi 12.3.*

Mikko Heiniö: Syyskesän laulu (Song of Late Summer)
CD: Sami Luttinen, bass, Tuula Hällström, piano (Alba ABCD 427)

Photo: Mats Lundqvist

Haglund Festival

The Symphony stands out as a spiritual monolith, a pillar of wisdom that radiates in shifting colours, vibrates, breathes, perhaps even consoles. The music, with features of voluptuous melancholy, forms a slow, hesitant flow where impulses and ideas succeed one another. *Svenska Dagbladet 1.4.*

In the violin concerto "Hymnen an die Nacht"… the soloist becomes the subject that seems to howl in the musically austere moonlight… until the day dawns and "the hour of the wolf" passes into a more elegiac tranquility… "La rosa profunda" is about life's frailty viewed through the transitoriness of the rose. It is sensual, shimmering music, fervently conveyed by the soprano Miah Persson. *Dagens Nyheter 29.3.*

Tommie Haglund: Symphony (World premiere), Hymnen an die Nacht, La Rosa Profunda
Royal Stockholm PO/Tobias Ringborg, sol. Ilya Gringolts, violin, Miah Persson, soprano, 28.3.2019 Stockholm, Sweden (Stockholm Composer Weekend)

Captivating music

The Sea Lapland String Quartet conjured forth Nieminen's atonal yet melodic texture with a bold spatiality… The enchanting thematic repetitions and spatial echoes engulf the mind and captivate one to listen.
Lapin kansa 4.3.

Kai Nieminen: Gestures of Winter (Three Quartets of Winter)
CD: Sea Lapland String Quartet (Pilfink JJVCD-204)

A work just begging to be played

It is obvious from Somber that Tuomas Turriago is a first-class pianist. A work of smoothly changing tempos, rhythms and tonal richness, it tastes strongly of jazz in addition to impressionistic shades. A work just begging to be played! *Aamulehti 7.3.*

Tuomas Turriago: Somber for Piano Solo
World premiere: Ville Hautakangas, 6.3.2019 Tampere, Finland

Photo: Nea Ilmevalta

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Piano Sonata No. 2 – Hommage à Beethoven
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for piano
GE 13665

La noche oscura
for clarinet
GE 13585

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String Quartet No. 4 Op. 95
FG 9790-55011-497-5 (score)
FG 9790-55011-498-2 (parts)

Wind Quintet Op. 96 "Compressions"
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FG 9790-55011-509-5 (parts)

PAAVO HEININEN
Sonatas for Violin and Piano Op. 134
Boston Sonata: FG 9790-55011-500-2
Boston Variations: FG 9790-55011-501-9
Boston Ballade: FG 9790-55011-502-6

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Who can sail without a wind (Vem kan segla förutan vind)
for organ
FG 9790-55011-507-1

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Three Quartets of Winter
for string quartet

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YRJÖ KILPINEN
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Sami Luttinen, bass, Tuula Hällström, piano
Alba ABCD 427
('Songs of Late Summer')

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Malmö SO/Paul Mägi, sol. Lisa Larsson, soprano
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GEHRMANS MUSIKFÖRLAG

Gehrmans Musikförlag AB
Box 42026, SE-126 12 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel. +46 8 610 06 00 • Fax +46 8 610 06 27
www.gehrmans.se • info@gehrmans.se
Hire: hire@gehrmans.se
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FENNICA GEHRMAN

Fennica Gehrman Oy Ab
PO Box 158, FI-00121 Helsinki, Finland
Tel. +358 10 3871 220 • Fax +358 10 3871 221
www.fennicagehrman.fi • info@fennicagehrman.fi
Hire: hire@fennicagehrman.fi
Web shop: www.fennicagehrman.fi
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