



Heiniö is a keen marathon runner.

**THE MUSICAL UNIVERSE** of Mikko Heiniö (b. 1948) is stylistically vast and rich in content. Despite its strong emotional and perceptual charge, his music is subject to strict analytical control. Heiniö once said that contemporary music can in theory use just any material, but not in just any way, and the same still holds. He personally traces the roots of his present expression back to his first symphony, *Possible Worlds* (1987) 🎧.

The kingpins of Heiniö's output are his three operas, concertos, orchestral and large-scale vocal works, but equally important are his many compositions for smaller ensemble. One major new addition to his catalogue is his third symphony (2017), to be premiered by the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra on 18 May, at his 70th birthday concert.

### New takes on traditional genres

Like symphonies for Sibelius and string quartets for Bartók, piano concertos have become the genre through which Mikko Heiniö has most regularly examined his composer persona. In them, he has sought new takes on the genre, and most of the nine require some unconventional 'extras'. Three of them have vocal sections, and the sixth (*Hermes* 1994) and seventh (*Khora* 2001) were planned as dance works, though they can also be played as concert items. The ninth – *Nonno* (2011) – is for amplified piano and big band.

"I have consciously sought different takes for the concertos," says Heiniö. "To me, it's the only way to keep this genre alive. The same search for novel ideas is also manifest in my chamber music, and I don't have any two chamber works scored for the same line-up."

Mikko Heiniö's three symphonies likewise reflect a similar approach. The second, for example (*Songs of Night and Love* 1997) 🎧, has a big part



ERI Dance Theatre in the performance of *Ilta* (Evening)

## Creative balance between tradition and innovation in Mikko Heiniö's music

*Sumptuous, colourful worlds of sound, swiftly-soaring melodies, vigorously-beating rhythms and grand gestures. But also loaded retreats into quiet waters, pictorial moods and moments of inner reflection. Musical drama devoid of dead moments.*

for baritone, and the third is in the nature of a sinfonia concertante for percussion and orchestra.

"It's been my idea to create a series of symphonies in which I take stock of my situation at intervals of roughly ten years. There's been a slightly longer gap between the second and third, but the new one nevertheless continues the same idea. It's important for it to be a sinfonia concertante and not a percussion concerto."

### Theatre man

The linguistic dimension is pronounced in the music of Heiniö, as demonstrated by his many operas and vocal works. The languages of his chosen texts bear strong cultural meanings, and the same can be said of the titles of his works and their movements. The five movements of the *Maria Suite* (2011), for example, address interpretations of the Virgin Mary in five different languages and cultures.

The biggest of Mikko Heiniö's choral works is *Ilta* (Evening 2013–2014) 🎧, lasting nearly an hour in performance. It paints eleven powerful atmospheres and evokes thoughts and feelings of evening through texts in no fewer than six languages (Finnish, Swedish, English, German, Spanish and French). *Evening* has been performed both as a pure concert item and as a dance theatre production. Heiniö has collaborated closely with the Turku dance theatre ERI, and both *Hermes* and *Khora* are intended both as concertos and as dance works with ERI.

"I classify these works as music theatre. I'm sim-

ply enthralled by the theatre, which is one reason why I've done operas. I might have an easier time if I did something else, but it's such a fascinating world."

His operas likewise represent different approaches. The first to be written was the archaically-tinged church opera *Riddaren och draken* (The Knight and the Dragon 2000). This was followed by *Käärmeen hetki* (The Hour of the Serpent 2006), which was staged at the Finnish National Opera. His third opera, *Erik XIV* (Eric XIV), about the 16th-century Swedish King Eric and his commoner wife, was premiered in the year in which Turku was European Capital of Culture (2011) and was a large-scale production making fine use of modern technology.

Mikko Heiniö is already working on his next opera, to a libretto by **Pirkko Saisio**. He "might have an easier time" if he did not write operas, but composing them seems to be a force impossible for him to resist.

KIMMO KORHONEN

### Footnotes

- Heiniö's *Symphony No. 3* featuring a solo percussion section, piano, celesta and harp is to be premiered by the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra at his 70th birthday concert on 18 May. The concert will also include his *Maestoso* for orchestra. The conductor will be Anja Bihlmaier.

- The Wäinö Aaltonen Museum in Turku is putting on a concert of chamber music on 8 April in honour of Heiniö's birthday. On the programme will be *Café au lait* and the *Piano Quintet*.