KALEVI AHO

Before We All Are Drowned

1995/99, dur: 130', sol: S, M, A, T, 2Bar, B, 2 boys, 11.asax.heckelphone. 22-2111-01-1-str
Libretto: composer (Fin/Ger)

Aho's opera, based on a play by Juha Mannerkorpi, is a forceful drama about a nurse who succumbs to the pressures of work and her private life and commits suicide by jumping off a bridge right at the start of the opera. The events leading up this extreme act are revealed as flashbacks that say much about the hardness of our society. Aho's music does not leave anyone cold; its great emotional content gets right inside the listener and grips its guts.

DANIEL BÖRTZ

Marie Antoinette

1997, dur: 152', sol: 3S, 4Mz, A, 5T, 6Bar, 4B, boy, speaking part, 2232-220-11-0-str
Libretto: Claes Fellbom (Sw)

A dramatic opera about Marie Antoinette's love affair with the Swedish count Axel von Fersen. Börtz and Fellbom use a kind of film technique in this opera, with quick changes between various periods and places. The music, too, changes rapidly between solos, dialogues, ensembles and mass scenes in a varied tone language that includes everything from dense chamber music and borrowed melodies to the convulsed volcanic musical eruption that depicts the storming of the Bastille.

MIKKO HEINIÖ

Käärmeen hetki (The Hour of the Serpent)

2002-05, dur: 140', sol: 3S, 1Mz, A, T, Bar, BBar, B, coro, 3333-4331-13-1-pf(+cel)-str+quintetto scenico
Libretto: Juha Siltanen (Fin)

This opera is a character drama focusing on one woman and four men. In order to defend her honour, Alice holds on to a lie which leads those around her to their destruction. The work unfolds slowly, like the most sophisticated thriller, and the music proceeds through cantatas, pop songs and Khachaturian-like waltzes, while also taking in beautiful ensemble scenes that respect the old opera tradition.

FREDRIK HÖGBERG

The Woman of Cain

2009/13, dur: 135', sol: S, Mz, 3T, Bar, 2B, speaking part, coro, dancers, 3333-4231-13-1-str
Libretto: Tove Alsterdal (Eng)

This is the story about the woman of Cain, whose origin and identity until now have remained unknown. It is a story about the people who believed they were the first people on earth; a drama about truth and lies, forbidden love, the everlasting dream of a paradise and human struggle to control life itself. With irresistible post-modern music and optional spectacular multimedia scenographics noted in the score.

OLLI KORTEKANGAS

Marian rakkaus (Maria's Love)

1996-99, dur: 80', sol: S, MZ, A, 3T, 2Bar, BBar, mimic, coro, 3333-4331-13-hp-cel(+pf)-str
Libretto: Paavo Rintala (Fin)

Maria's Love is set in 20th century Europe and based on a real story about Maria and a theologian who became a martyr to his faith in the 1940s. It is also a contemporary credo about the force of unconditional love that is able to overcome despair and even death. In places, the music features some almost Wagnerian outbursts and is not lacking in romantic references.

VELI-MATTI PUUMALA

Anna Liisa

2001-06, dur: 145', sol: 5S, 3Mz, 2CA, 3T, 4Bar, 3B, coro=singers of the smaller parts, 2121-2220-02-pf-str
Libretto: composer & Tiina Käkelä-Puumala (Fin)

Based on the play by Minna Canth of 1895, Anna Liisa is the tragic, timeless story of a secret infanticide and the consequences of the crime. The marriage of a cast-iron libretto and Puumala's skilful and dramatic music makes this opera a powerful and hypnotic experience. The folk music that bursts out from time to time is also an important element of the opera.

EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA

Das Sonnenhaus (The House of the Sun)

1990, dur: 100', sol: 3S, Mz, A, 2T, 2Bar, B, 1111-2210-02-synth-str
Libretto: composer (Fin/Ger/Eng)

This story of twin sisters and their tragic fate is not without its comical side. The old immigrants refuse to accept that the world has changed and escape into the splendid memories of their youth. Rautavaara's music brings together Russian romances, blues, a polonaise and neo-romantic harmonic textures, and the pluralistic elements co-exist in perfect harmony. The musical core of the opera lies in the lovely lyrical ensembles, especially the twins' duets.

JÜRI REINVERE

Purge (Puhdistus)

2011, dur: 120', sol: 3S, Mz, T, 2Bar, 2B, coro, 3333-4331-14-2-pf(cel)-tape-str
Libretto: composer (Fin+Est)

In this acclaimed story by Sofi Oksanen war and oppression drive people to extreme acts. Zara becomes a victim of sex trafficking, while Aliide has experienced a ruthless era in a nightmarish regime. The choir occupies a big role and transforms from wedding guests and forest brothers to Soviet soldiers. Reinvere's music contrasts the sensitive and subtle with brutality; after this highly successful opera, he received a commission from the Norwegian National Opera.

CARL UNANDER SCHARIN

Lysistrata

1997-98, dur: 90', sol: 4S, Mz, A, 2T, Bar, B, 1010-1110-04-sax-egtr-synth-str(22211)
Libretto: Magnus Carlbring (Sw)

Based on Aristophanes´ comedy about Lysistrata, who, together with the women of Athens and Sparta, initiates a sex strike and takes over the government finances in order to put an end to the Peloponnesian War. This is a witty and entertaining opera in which the music is overflowing with fleeting associations to styles and genres – everything from lofty polyphonic hymns and musical expressionism to musicals and popular music.

EDUARD TUBIN

Barbara von Tisenhusen

1968, dur: 120', sol: S, Mz, 2T, 2Bar, 3B, mixed chorus, 3322-4331-12-0-cel-str
Libretto: Jaan Kross (Est/Sw)

The story by Aino Kallas is set in 16th century Estonia. The protagonist is a girl of noble birth who defies her social class when she flees with a scribe. As a punishment for violating the honour of her family she is condemned to death, and is drowned by her own three brothers in a hole in the ice. Tubin's music is palpably vocal and accompanies the course of events. It begins with happy wedding music in a dancing mood, and ends with icy chords that radiate the chill of death.

LARS-JOHAN WERLE

Tintomara

1973, dur: 130', sol: 6S, Mz, A, 4T, 6Bar, 5B, speaking part, 2222-4221-11-1-pf-str
Libretto: Leif Söderström (Sw/Eng)

Based on CJL Almqvists's novel The Queen's Tiara, the story takes place around the time of the assassination of King Gustav III of Sweden. The beautiful, androgynous Tintomara is accused of complicity in the conspiracy. She is the object of attraction for both men and women, something which leads to jealousy, insanity and death. Werle depicts the complicated interplay with the enigmatic Tintomara by employing subtle harmonic fluctuations. We can hear both the "contemporary" Werle and romantic melodies that sound almost as if they were taken from the time of Almqvist´s "Songes".