



Photo: Tarmo Tormis

### Veljo Tormis Virtual Centre

A Veljo Tormis Virtual Centre [veljotormis.com](http://veljotormis.com) was launched on the 90th anniversary of the composer's birth. This authorised database aims to ensure the collection, availability, preservation and promotion of Tormis' creative heritage and to disseminate information related to his works and activities around them.

Tormis (1930–2017) is one of the Estonian composers best known internationally. His considerable oeuvre, the lion's share of which consists of choral works, is based on Estonian runic singing and on the folklore of other Finno-Ugric peoples.

### Blomstedt and Berwald

**Herbert Blomstedt**, 95 years old, has prepared for performance **Franz Berwald's** *Sinfonie Capricieuse*, which he conducted for the very first time with the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra on 17 November. In December he will conduct the symphony together with Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, and in April-May performances are scheduled with the Oslo Philharmonic, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

### Sing along with Alfvén

**Hugo Alfvén's** 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated on 19 November with a sizable sing-along concert where more than 400 choristers sang some of Alfvén's most popular choral works, together with the Swedish Radio Choir. Moreover, five composers – **Anna-Karin Klockar**, **Ulrika Emanuelsson**, **Robert Sund**, **Karin Rehnqvist** and **Staffan Storm** – had composed new choral pieces inspired by Alfvén's works (See: New publications).

### Kari Tikka in memoriam

Composer and conductor **Kari Tikka** died on 17 October. He started his career as an oboist and later became a conductor at the Finnish National Opera, in the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm and the Vivo Symphony Orchestra founded by him.



Kari Tikka enriched the Finnish music scene with his works, many of which had religious themes. The texts of the Bible were a great source of inspiration and comfort for him, and his opera *Luther* 🎬 has been performed several times around the world. He also wrote some other stage works, music for the church, orchestral and chamber music and more than 150 songs, among them the popular *Armolaulu* (Grace Song).



Photo: Sung-Won Yang

### Mikko Heiniö premieres

**Mikko Heiniö's** *Koraaleja* (Chorales) will be world premiered by the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra on 11 February 2023 at the Katedraali soi Festival in Turku. Chorales will consist of an introduction and two overlapping works: a *Concerto for Kantele, Violin and String Orchestra*, and settings of three poems by **Lassi Nummi** for baritone, violin, kantele and string orchestra. The soloists will be **Eija Kankaanranta** (kantele), **Antti Tikkanen** (violin) and **Kristian Lindroos** (baritone). Other forthcoming commissions are a *Concerto for Guitar and Chamber Choir* for **Patrik Kleemola** and three choirs: the Key Ensemble, Kampin laulu and Tampere Cappella. Heiniö's *Allora* for solo cello and a new work for guitar and piano will also be premiered next year.

## NORDIC HIGHLIGHTS 4/2022

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Karin Rehnqvist



Mats Larsson-Gothe

### Awards for Rehnqvist and Larsson Gothe

On 1 November **Karin Rehnqvist** received the Nordic Council's Music Prize for her work *Silent Earth* 🎧, to a text by **Kerstin Perski**. According to the jury, *Silent Earth* is "an overwhelming and very urgent work. With the climate catastrophe as a background, a large musico-dramatic narrative for choir and orchestra emerges that leads the listener from ice to fire with an inexorable force. In this work Rehnqvist gives proof of her well-nigh total mastery of the craft of composition."

**Mats Larsson Gothe** won the Swedish Music Publisher's Award 2022 (Art Music Work of the Year – large ensemble/opera) with the opera *Löftet* (The Promise) 🎬, to a libretto by **Susanne Marko**. "Here we find languorous idylls, dissonant gloom and inspiration from Jewish music. The tragic subject notwithstanding, the music is at times indescribably beautiful and replete with variation", writes the jury in their motivation.



Photo: Ville Jaurakka

## Busy Damström

**Cecilia Damström** has had an eventful November with several national premieres. *Groove*, a duo for flute and accordion, had its German premiere during the festival Klangwerkstatt in Berlin. Her piano quintet, *Helene*, was performed for the first time in the USA by the Van Beuren Winds and pianist **Alexander Bernstein** in Winchester, Virginia, and *Celestial Beings* for violin and viola, was played during the Rusk Festival in Finland. Coming this spring, we can look forward to the German premiere of the orchestral work *ICE* with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra under the direction of **Ruth Reinhardt**.

Among Damström's recent commissions we find the *Violin Concerto "Earth Songs"* for **Pekka Kuusisto** and Tampere Raw and an orchestral work for the Finnish RSO planned for autumn 2023. In addition, a *Festive Cantata* for choir and orchestra celebrating the centenary of Helsinki University is scheduled for March 2023.



Photo: Esa-Juhani Pesti

## Kai Nieminen string quartets

Q Quartets has performed and commissioned works from **Kai Nieminen**. According to quartet member **Frederick Jones**, "Nieminen is a wonderful composer, and we are delighted to be performing his quartet *Near the Edge of Light* on 10 December 2022". Nieminen is also writing a new one, his fifth, *Dietro delle Maschere* for the Q Quartets, reflecting on the characters of the Venetian Carnival masks. The premiere is scheduled for 19 April 2023 in Liverpool, UK.



Nils Landgren and the Swedish Radio Choir

Photo: Anne Hydenberg

## Sandström in memoriam

**Sven-David Sandström**, who would have turned 80 on 30 October, was honored by the Swedish Radio Choir under the direction of their principal conductor **Kaspars Putnins** in a concert at Berwaldhallen in Stockholm. It was the Swedish premiere for *Sonnets of Darkness and Love*, with texts taken from the Song of Songs, Shakespeare, Lorca and Nietzsche, together with trombonist and vocalist **Nils Landgren**. The choir also premiered *An Inner Sky*, three poems by **E.E. Cummings** set to music by **Matthew Peterson** (winner of the Sven-David Sandström Choral Composition Award).

## Lotta Wennäkoski news

Online Records is releasing a new disc of three orchestral works by **Lotta Wennäkoski** in spring 2023: the Harp Concerto *Sigla*, *Sedecim* and *Flounce*. **Nicholas Collon** conducts the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, which featured Wennäkoski as one of its theme composers in the 2021/2022 season and commissioned *Sigla*. Lotta Wennäkoski is composing a work for clarinet and orchestra for **Lauri Sallinen** and the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra scheduled to be premiered next year. Other projects for 2023 include a string quartet for the Kamus Quartet.

## Johan Ullén at Rusk Festival

**Johan Ullén** was "Composer of the Year" at the Rusk Festival in Jakobstad, Finland 22-26 November. The festival program included, among other works, *The Deadly Sins*, seven tangos for piano trio with **Aleksander Koelbel**, violin, **Nick Shugaev**, cello and **Mårten Landström**, piano. In addition violinist **Christian Svarfvar** gave the Finnish premiere of the violin concerto suite *Infinite Bach* together with the Vaasa City Orchestra under **Anna-Maria Helsing**, and with Johan Ullén himself at the harpsichord/keyboards.



## Fennica Gehrman at 20

Fennica Gehrman celebrated its 20th anniversary in October with a concert of premieres of commissioned works for violin and piano. They were also published in a collection entitled *Stringendo – contemporary works for violin and piano* (See: *New publications*). The aim was to create a lasting tribute to the composer's art and to foster the classical music heritage. There are also two arrangements in the collection: **Einojuhani Rautavaara's** *The Song of my Heart* and **Lotta Wennäkoski's** *Vestige*.