



Benjamin Staern

Staern artistic partner

Benjamin Staern will be one of four artistic partners at the Västerås Sinfonietta 2023–2026. The others include conductor Jessica Cottis, jazz musician/arranger Magnus Lindgren and violinist/leader Lorenza Borrani. “It will be great fun to be able to work closely together with the orchestra, hear them play some more of my works and not least get to write entirely new works for this wonderful ensemble. I am also looking forward to getting to know the other musicians in this project”, says Benjamin Staern.

Choral highlights this spring

The King’s Singers will premiere **Per Gunnar Petersson’s** *Spring Has Now Unwrapped the Flowers* together with the Mogens Dahl Chamber Choir in Copenhagen on 29 March. Conductor **Bengt Ollén** and the Sofia Vocal Ensemble are invited to the World Symposium on Choral Music in Istanbul 25–30 April, where they will present an all-Swedish programme with music by **Hugo Alfvén**, **David Wikander**, **Oskar Lindberg**, **Sven-David Sandström**, **Jan Sandström**, **Karin Rehnqvist**, et al. **Sofie Jeannin** will conduct the Chamber Choir of Ireland at the Cork International Choir Festival on 28 April in a programme featuring **Carl Unander Scharin’s** *Mutations from Calligramme* and **Carin Malmlöf Forssling’s** *Ahimsa*. On 29 April in Stockholm Cathedral **Kaspar Putnins** and the Swedish Radio Choir will premiere **Mats Larsson Gothe’s** *The Pigeons*, set to a poem by **Håkan Sandell**.

NORDIC HIGHLIGHTS 1/2023
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Photo: Kati Tauberman

Kai Nieminen at 70

Composer and guitarist **Kai Nieminen** had a profile concert in his hometown Jyväskylä on 18 March. Members of the Jyväskylä City Orchestra performed chamber music by him at an event celebrating his 70th birthday. This included the world premiere of *Two Pieces for Wind Quintet*. Among the works performed was also the *Sonata from Shadows* 🎧 which was recently recorded on the CD *A Due* by Pilfink Records (See: Albums).

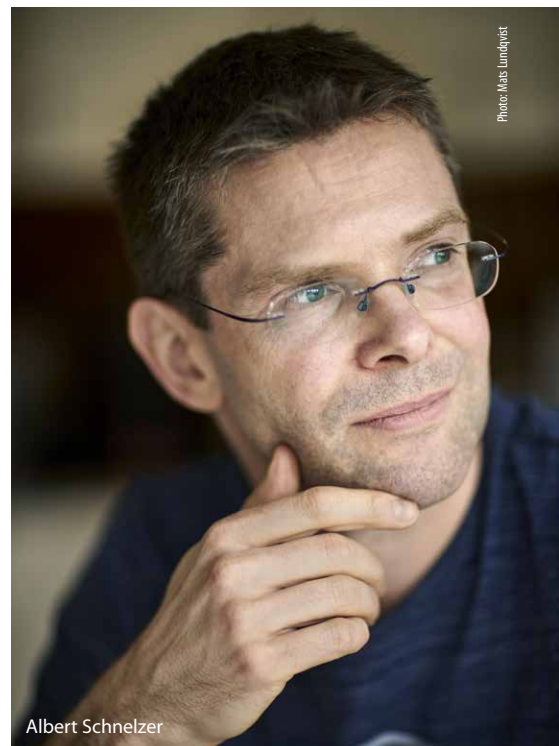


Ilkka Kuusisto

Photo: Maarit Kyöheju/Music Finland

Works by Ilkka Kuusisto

Fennica Gehrman acquired a catalogue of some 200 works by **Ilkka Kuusisto** from Tactus Oy at the beginning of 2023: 19 operas, two symphonies and numerous other orchestral and chamber works. Fennica had already been publishing his vocal works, which will now be supplemented by his choral and religious repertoire. A prolific composer, Ilkka Kuusisto (b. 1933) is also a conductor and arranger. He has served as General Director of the Finnish National Opera and Director of Fennica Gehrman’s predecessor Edition Fazer. The Finnish Music Publishers Association honoured him with its special lifetime achievement award in 2021.



Albert Schnelzer

Premiere for SALT in Gothenburg

Albert Schnelzer’s oratorio *SALT*, composed for the celebration of Gothenburg’s 400th anniversary, will be premiered on 20 April. Schnelzer has taken as his starting point the city’s proximity to water and the sea, and themes such as travelling and migration. The work is written for two soloists, mixed choir and orchestra, where the soprano is a symbol of the sea whereas the baritone symbolises mankind and the migrant. **Joana Carneiro** directs the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Symphonic Choir at the premiere and the soloists are **Mari Eriksmoen** and **Anders Larsson**.

Award for Martinaitytė

Brilliantly talented Lithuanian composer **Žibuoklė Martinaitytė** received Lithuania’s National Prize for Culture and Arts on 16 February 2023. According to Culture Minister **Simonas Kairys**, the prize is awarded for many years’ work, honouring significant achievements in the field of culture and the arts.

Martinaitytė’s recent CD *Ex tenebris lux* has been nominated for the Premiere Award by the BBC Music Magazine. The disc by Ondine Records includes works for string orchestra. The three pieces have been composed since the onset of the global pandemic. *Žibuoklė Martinaitytė’s* most popular orchestral work *Saudade* 🎧 was recently performed at the Musica Nova festival in Helsinki by the Helsinki Philharmonic, conducted by **Janne Nisonen**.



Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

Photo: Tomas Trekas

St. Luke Passion in German

On 25 March **Rolf Martinsson's** *St. Luke Passion* will be performed for the first time in German by the Bach Collegium Zürich, with soprano/evangelist **Lisa Larsson**, baritone **Samuel Zünd** and narrator **Andreas Müller-Crepon**, under the direction of **Bernhard Hunziker**. It is a contemporary passion with a duration of 90 minutes, set to texts from the Gospel of St. Luke and with commentary texts by the poet and journalist **Göran Greider**. It is intended to be accessible for the great majority of choirs. A work that can be sung by many for many. It was premiered in 2012 and is now part of the recurrent passion repertoire of Swedish choirs.



Martin Skafte

Photo: Jenny Blad

Skaftes 24 Preludes

Martin Skafte's *24 Preludes for piano* has now been released by Toccata Classics recorded by **Jonas Olsson**. Skafte's fascination with the 24 *Préludes* of **Claude Debussy** inspired him. Like Debussy, Skafte exploits the colours and sonories of the piano but also he requires Lisztian virtuosity and pulls in a range of further influences, among them ragtime and Ligeti – and a sly sense of humour can often be detected in the background. Pianist **Peter Jablonski** gave the Japanese premiere of a couple of the preludes at a piano recital at Oji Hall in Tokyo on 20 February.



Lotta Wennäkoski



Kalevi Aho

Photo: Hanna Salminen

New Lotta Wennäkoski & Kalevi Aho discs

Ondine Records has released a new disc of three orchestral works by **Lotta Wennäkoski**: the *Harp Concerto Sigla* (a recent RSO commission), *Sedecim* and *Flounce* (commissioned by the BBC for the 2017 Proms festival). **Nicholas Collon** conducts the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and **Sivan Magen** is the soloist in *Sigla*. Wennäkoski was the RSO's spotlight composer for the 2021/2022 season.

The Kymi Sinfonietta continues its fruitful collaboration with **Kalevi Aho**, who will be 75 in 2024. The latest example is a new disc featuring Aho's *second Violin and Cello Concertos*. The conductor on the BIS SACD is **Olari Elts**, and the soloists are **Elina Vähälä**, violin, and **Jonathan Roozeman**, cello (See: Reviews).

Kimmo Hakola news

Kimmo Hakola has a profile concert at the Sibelius Academy Concert Hall in Helsinki on 26 April. The programme will include two premieres: his *Piano Quintet Op. 111* and *Sinfonische Elegien Op. 112*. Both address symphonic mechanisms in chamber music and are part of Hakola's artistic assignment for a Doctorate in music which examines symphonic elements past and present. Kimmo Hakola is at present living in Paris and his next composition will be his second symphony. He is also an active pianist and conductor.



Kimmo Hakola

Photo: Kaapo Hakola

Urmas Sisask in memoriam

Estonian composer **Urmas Sisask** passed away at the age of 62 in December. He was a versatile composer who absorbed himself in his interest in astronomy, early music and shamanistic cultures. Rather than being a composer, he regarded himself as transcriber of music as his vision extended beyond the limits of our conscious world. Sisask received particular international recognition for his choral music. One of his best-loved works is *Gloria Patri* for mixed choir – a cycle of 24 unaccompanied hymns on Latin texts.



Urmas Sisask

Tebogo Monnakgotla at Tanglewood

Tebogo Monnakgotla is co-curator at Tanglewood's Festival of Contemporary Music 27–31 July. Among other works, the programme will feature her song cycle *Un clin d'oeil*, performed by the TMC Orchestra under **Stefan Asbury**. In addition, there will be a concert dedicated to her chamber music. During the season 2023–2024 Monnakgotla will also be Composer-in-Residence at the Wermland Opera.



Tebogo Monnakgotla

Photo: Elin/Made House Sweden