

Music for Planet Earth

To put music in a context that is relevant for the times we live in has become ever more vital for both composers and arrangers of concerts. Topical issues engage and inspire to new music. This applies especially to the urgent issues concerning the state of our earth – the climate, the environment and biological diversity.

Anders Paulsson



Photo: Eadelfa Convention Centre

Coral Guardians is also in on the commission of **Benjamin Staern**'s latest work, *Hymnus Aquarius – A Hymn to the Baltic Sea*, a concerto for soprano saxophone and symphonic brass band. It aims to focus on the condition of our seas. Anders Paulsson will be the soloist together with the Royal Swedish Navy Band at the premiere on 27 September in Karlskrona. Already in his first symphony *Polar Vortex* 🌀, Staern depicts the extreme weather conditions that prevail around the world. It is a sonorous voyage during which we get to experience icy cold as well as unbearable heat and whirlwinds.

Composer and soprano saxophonist **Anders Paulsson** is a devoted environmentalist and is happy to use his arena to spread knowledge. He has especially taken an interest in the coral reefs, and is the initiator of the project Coral Guardians, in which music and science go hand in hand. "My intention as a composer is to create music that can inspire audiences to strengthen their commitment to environmental stewardship, and also to create understanding and reconciliation between cultures", writes Paulsson in the preface to his symphonic poem *Coral Symphony – Kumulipo Reflections* 🌊, which was premiered in Honolulu in 2017 by the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra with **JoAnn Falletta** at the podium. "Of course I am also interested in art for art's sake, but if there are broader contexts where one can highlight these vital issues, then that is the best of all", says Paulsson.

Several works on the theme of oceans and climate have appeared, for instance his choral works *Rising Seas*, *Subterranean Wail* and *As Ice Was Melting*, *Oceans Rose*.

Benjamin Staern



Photo: Mats Backer

Karin Rehnqvist



Karin Rehnqvist felt that it was impossible not to bring up the climate crisis, that fateful issue for humanity, when she received a commission to write a large-scale work for choir and orchestra in 2019. In her *Silent Earth* 🌌, set to texts by **Kerstin Perski**, Rehnqvist takes us out among the planets, where we can see our exposed earth from a distance. It is an urgent, dramatic, overwhelming and deeply moving work with the climate catastrophe as its foundation. The premiere took place at the Concertgebouw in January 2022, with the Netherlands Radio Choir and Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by **Gijs Leenars**. The work was awarded the Nordic Council Music Prize in November 2022.

Cecilia Damström has been referred to as the "Greta Thunberg of music". She feels that she as an artist has a responsibility to try to make the world a better place by becoming involved in various societal issues. "As artists we can arouse emotional commitment and empathy for our planet and our fellowmen; then it is harder to



Photo: Ville Junttila

look the other way", says Cecilia in an interview in connection with her being awarded the TEOSTO Prize 2022 for the orchestral work *ICE (In Case of Emergency)* 🌨️. In *ICE* she depicts how the polar ice is melting and how winters are getting increasingly shorter, while the alarm signals are blaring. The piece was written when Lahti was designated the European Green Capital 2021 and premiered by Sinfonia Lahti under the direction of **Dalia Stasevska**, with a melting ice sculpture placed outside the concert hall.

In her latest orchestral work *Wasteland*, composed for the Norrlandsoperan Symphony Orchestra, Damström brings up the importance of recycling in the clothing industry. We can actually hear the recycling going on in the music, where brief fragments from well-known classical works and popular tunes pop up here and there in an ingenious way. Next year will see the premiere of yet another work that touches on the state of our planet: the violin concerto *Earth Songs*, composed for **Pekka Kuusisto** and the Tampere RAw ensemble.



Mats Larsson
Gothé

Photo: Maria Gothe

In February 2024 the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra's environmental project "Nordic – A Fragile Hope" will receive its world premiere. Here unique film projections by **Joakim**


Odelberg will be shown, from sea and coastal milieus in all the Nordic countries, combined with newly written music by five Nordic composers. Sweden is represented by **Mats Larsson Gothe's** *Submarea*. Other composers include **Daniel Bjarnasson** (Iceland), **Miho Hazama** (Denmark), **Maja S. K. Ratje** (Norway) and **Outi Tarkiainen** (Finland). Inspired by the Nordic natural scenery, they shine the light on the vulnerable resources that we must preserve for the future. **Christian Karlsen** leads the Gothenburg Symphony in the performances.



Marie Samuelsson

Photo: Mats Backer

Marie Samuelsson's *Five Seasons*  was commissioned by the string orchestra Musica Vitae in 2017 as an elegiac commentary on Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. The music is inspired by the effects of the ever-rising temperatures of the globe. Unlike in Vivaldi's works, the viola is in focus to provide a darker tone to her concern for the future of the seasons, with regard to the climate changes. Also included is a sound file, with electronically processed sounds associated with various types of weather phenomena, as well as poems by **Mimmi Palm** introducing each new movement and season, read by the author herself.

Samuelsson's double concerto *Brandnäva* (*The Crane's Beak*)  for guitar, violin and orchestra depicts both what is threatening and what is beautiful in nature: the increasingly common wildfires, but also what is cause for hope since there is always something that will grow even where the ground has been burnt.

"I often ponder about current issues, such as climate change, and try to transform these into music. This is not programme music, but we don't have a language for everything. Perhaps we need a musical language for the big issues and experiences, for all the things that we share as human beings", says Marie Samuelsson.

Kristina Fryklöf