

# Five questions for Emmy Lindström & Matthew Peterson

Get to know composers Emmy Lindström and Matthew Peterson, with whom we are now expanding our collaboration.



## What is the sound of Emmy Lindström?

My music is emotional and relatively tonal with a predilection for lovely harmonies. But I am a postmodernist in the sense that I don't get caught up in structures. I want to entice the listener to enter into a space of her/his own. I have a lifelong relationship with **Wilhelm Stenhammar** as a soul mate and a mentor, and this is something I think has been considered old-fashioned. But I see a trend now that several musical stylistic tendencies can exist side by side, just as with people – you can look like however you want and love whoever you want.

## What are you working on just now?

*Rösaring*, a concerto for the Swedish RSO that is set to premiere in spring 2025. *Rösaring* is a cult center from the Viking Age located in the municipality where I live. The ancient processional road leads up towards a fantastic view over Lake Mälaren, with large burial mounds and a stone labyrinth. During winter solstice you will find that the Milky Way Galaxy is exactly parallel to the road! It is a powerful place that fires your imagination.

## What do you have in the pipeline?

I get a great many requests now – a luxury problem for a composer. I am the profile composer of the Rusk Festival in Finland this November. I also intend to write a violin concerto for **Malin Broman**, which will be so much fun as I am a violinist myself. After that there will be a trumpet concerto in two versions – one for the Swedish Wind Ensemble and one for the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra – and a string quintet commissioned by the Swedish Radio P2: *Song from the Caves*. Just as with *Rösaring*, this latter work also has an archeological theme, but in this case it's about caves in France with inscriptions and paintings that are no less than 30,000 years old.

## Which three works do you want to highlight?

*The Lost Clown* 🎧 – a mirror work to Schoenberg's 'Pierrot lunaire', which I wrote as composer-in-residence with the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra 2018/19. I like the blend of free-tonal and tonal sections in the work, and the humorous nods to the original text. This is really me!

The clarinet concerto *At the Hills of Hampstead Heath* 🎧 from 2017 was my breakthrough as an orchestral composer. It captures the melancholic wisdom and strength that pervades this mythical London park and heath that has captivated me forever. And it is frequently performed.

*Song about Em* 🎧 (2006) for clarinet and string orchestra/string quartet is an early work in my career. When I was younger, I was inspired very much by the film composers **Björn Isfält** and **Stefan Nilsson**, and in this work it is clearly manifest. With a background as a theatre musician, I dream of writing music for film and theatre, where I believe I would really be able to express myself fully.

## You are pursuing double professional careers. How does this affect you as a composer

As a nurse, including psychiatric care, I encounter people in their most fragile states, fostering a humility towards life. This perspective forces me to think beyond myself and focus on alleviating others' suffering. It becomes both a rest and an energy injection. After intense nursing work, I can often go straight to composing – the music just flows. My two professions enrich each other in an exciting way. While I long to deepen my nursing skills, my current focus is on music. Economically, knowing I can secure a permanent nursing job anytime gives me security and freedom as a composer.



## What is the sound of Matthew Peterson?

On the one hand there's an extroverted side, raw with pounding rhythms and colorful and muscular scorings – like life's big beating heart. This is contrasted with an introverted, intimate side. In that way, it reflects my personality. I am an opera composer, a vocal composer, so even in my instrumental music there's a storytelling aspect. I want to go all the way – to compose bravely, and I think my music has an expressive clarity.

## What are you working on right now?

I am putting the finishing touches on two pieces. *Vagabond* is an overture for Dalasinfoniettan to open next season 24/25. It's a wild journey that both punches you in the mouth and caresses you. As I was writing it, I realized it was about myself and my musical journey. The second piece is a tenor saxophone solo for **Theo Hillborg** called *Creatures Wild and Lonely*, to be premiered in July. It unleashes Theo's musicianship and creative personality. His way of singing and calling out through his instrument made me think of big lonely animals in vast landscapes.

## What do you have in the pipeline?

I will be composer-in-residence with Dalasinfoniettan for the next two years, which is meaningful in many ways. We are all part of the musical family here in the province Dalarna, and the artistic collaboration goes beyond composing as I am involved in the overall programming and

planning. Among the highlights from eight or nine different concerts with them are a performance and recording of my *Högalidsmässan* and the world premiere of a large-scale work commissioned for Dalasinfoniettan and the Swedish Radio Choir. Apart from that, there are discussions with several opera houses about my opera *Voir Dire*. I've been commissioned for a dance score, a percussion concerto, another piece for the Radio Choir and a new opera... a very busy couple years are coming hard at me.

### **Which three works do you want to highlight?**

*An Inner Sky* 🎧 (2022): an a cappella setting of three E. E. Cummings poems, which recently received the Swedish Music Publishers Award. It was premiered by the Swedish Radio Choir and has been performed by many great choirs. The final setting, *brIght*, is one of my best works. *An Inner Sky* was commissioned for the inaugural Sven-David Sandström Choral Composition Award, in honor of my late teacher. I feel that I composed a really impactful and beautiful work where I was both myself and very new.

*And all the trees of the field will clap their hands* 🎧 (2013) for chamber orchestra, the piece that put me on the map when I won the Uppsala Composition Award. A shimmering and dancing work, inspired by a verse from Isaiah about natural cycles.

*Voir Dire* 🎧 (2010): a true crime chamber opera that brought me to Sweden on a Fulbright grant and took seven years to get on stage. It's my seminal early work, based on and adapted from the librettist's experiences as a court reporter in Wisconsin.

### **How does your rural life affect and form your life as a composer?**

I grew up in North Dakota hunting, fishing and spending a lot of time outdoors and have chosen a similar life for my family, only in Dalarna, Sweden. Before that I was six years in Stockholm, the only city I've ever lived in. I do miss singing in great chamber choirs there and being able to go to concerts more often. But cities ultimately exhaust my senses. I like visiting them for the intense social experience of a premiere performance, participating in a festival, or preparing an opera with the cast. In everyday life, I want to follow slower rhythms: the seasons, the weather, the living world's cycles of birth, death and renewal. As for how this affects me as a composer, I do deal with these subjects, but perhaps more importantly it keeps me grounded in myself, and focused on my art.

Janna Vettergren