

## New composer: Matei Gheorghiu

Fennica Gehrman has signed a publishing agreement with **Matei Gheorghiu**, a Romanian-Finnish composer born in 1984. He studied at the National Music University in Bucharest and later with **Tapio Tuomela** and **Veli-Matti Puumala** at the Sibelius Academy. Gheorghiu gained awareness with his piano concerto *From the Village of Nowhere*, which won the International Uno Klami Composition Competition in 2024. The piece was most recently performed under **Elisar Riddelin** with **Joonas Ahonen** as soloist at a concert of the Kymi Sinfonietta on 4 March.



Fennica Gehrman has also published Gheorghiu's piano trio *War Nocturne*, commissioned by the Ilmari Hannikainen Piano Competition in 2026




Matei Gheorghiu


## NORDIC HIGHLIGHTS 1/2026

NEWSLETTER FROM GEHRMANS MUSIKFÖRLAG & FENNICA GEHRMAN


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## More award-winning Aho albums

**Kalevi Aho's** latest album has won the prestigious International Classical Music Award in the contemporary music category. It features the *Moonlight Concerto* for viola and percussion and the *Alto Flute Concerto*,  performed by the orchestras of Mikkeli and Lahti, respectively. The soloists are **Hiyoli Togawa**, **Alexej Gerassimez** and **Sharon Bezaly**. The awards were presented on 18 March in Bamberg, Germany. Last year, an album featuring Aho's string quartets was honoured with the Deutscher Schallplattenpreis 2025 as one of the year's finest recordings. Both recordings were released by BIS Records.

Meanwhile, a CD by English clarinetist **Julian Bliss** – featuring Clarinet Concertos by Kalevi Aho  and **Magnus Lindberg** – is one of three finalists for the BBC Music Magazine Award in the Concerto category. The winner will be announced on 22 April.

## Daniel Nelson news

**Daniel Nelson's** *Steampunk Blizzard*  captivated New York audiences in three February performances at David Geffen Hall. This July, the New York Philharmonic and **Santtu-Matias Rouvali** will present the highenergy piece at Colorado's Bravo! Vail Festival. Rouvali will also give the UK premiere with Philharmonia Orchestra London on 22 April.

Accordianist **Martynas Levickis** returns to Nelson's 2023 concerto *The Ghost Machine Treatise*, written specifically for him. There will be performances at Theater St. Gallen on May 29 and 31, followed by appearances at Lithuania's Vilnius and Pažaislis Music Festivals, performed with the St. Gallen Symphony Orchestra under **Modestas Pitrenas**.

## Prestigious awards to Jennefelt and Skaftø

**Thomas Jennefelt** is awarded the 'Preis der Europäischen Kirchenmusik 2026', presented by the city of Schwäbisch Gmünd as part of the Festival of European Church Music in July. He is commended for "his distinctive musical language, uniting contemporary social themes with traditional sacred texts and genres." Previous laureates include **Arvo Pärt**, **Sofia Gubaidulina**, **John Rutter**, and **Eric Ericson**. It is a great honour to be included among such distinguished artists," Jennefelt says.



**Martin Skaftø** has been awarded the 2025 Järnäker Scholarship, Sweden's most prestigious chamber music prize, for *12 Preludes – Book 2*, the concluding part of his *24 Preludes for Piano* . The work, written in dialogue with Debussy's piano preludes and dedicated to pianist **Jonas Olsson**, is praised by the jury as "a unique journey through a musical universe with unexpected side streets and paths leading to both familiar and unexplored places."

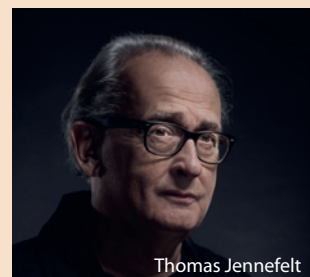
Photo: Jonas Persson



Lintro (Joseph Mossop) and Trini (Kristine Nowlain)

## World premiere for *The Way to Arareko*

**Karin Rehnqvist's** new children's opera *The Way to Arareko*  was premiered on 7 February at Bastionen in Malmö, where it was met with great enthusiasm from its young audience. Aimed at children aged six and up, the production is specially designed to engage kids with special needs. The story follows the lizard Trini on a mission to save the parched Sonora Desert, helped by a group of friends. Three singers in imaginative costumes lead the narrative through music, movement, and interactive moments that invite the audience to participate. The score is performed by an ensemble of harp, flute, clarinet and viola. The libretto, by Mexican author and harpist **Mercedes Gomez**, is translated and adapted by **Lisbeth Hagerman**.



Thomas Jennefelt

Photo: Markus Gäster



Martin Skaftø

Photo: Jenny Blad



Photo: Marja Vuollejoki

Lotta Wennäkoski

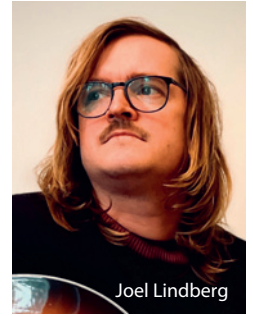
### Wennäkoski premieres

Lotta Wennäkoski has been busy writing new works. Her latest commission, *Zelo*, was performed for the first time by the London Philharmonic under Robin Ticciati in London on 25 March. The commission involved a suggestion to compose a piece inspired by Sibelius. Having written *Verdigris* with allusions to Sibelius's *En Saga* in 2015, in writing *Zelo* Wennäkoski was inspired by the energy and roughness of the *Kullervo Symphony*.

Her new works also include *Blended Notes*, commissioned by the Sitkovetsky Trio. Scored for vocal ensemble of eight singers and piano trio, it was given its world premiere by the Soma Ensemble and the Sitkovetsky Trio at the Oulu Music Festival in Finland on 13 March. The texts are poems by William Wordsworth.

### Jan Sandström Competition

Joel Lindberg, a master's composition student at the Piteå School of Music, has been named the first winner of the newly-instituted 'Jan Sandström Competition'. His winning piece, *Oknos* for string orchestra, will be published by Gehrman's Musikförlag.



Joel Lindberg

Lindberg describes the work as a musical portrayal of mental illness, marked by sharp contrasts and prolonged anguish. The title refers to the mythological figure Oknos, condemned to weave a rope endlessly eaten by a donkey. *Oknos* will receive its world premiere on 22 April, performed by the Norrbotten Chamber Orchestra under Isabelle van Keulen, and will then accompany the orchestra on its spring tour.

### Staern's string quartet on tour

In spring 2026, the London-based Marmen Quartet launches a tour featuring Benjamin Staern's first string quartet *Fight – Union – Clinch*. Following its world premiere in Växjö on 13 March, the quartet now takes the work to audiences in Lund (Sweden), Meister & Kammerkonzerte Innsbruck (Austria), and Darlington Music Society (UK). Synesthete Benjamin Staern describes the quartet as a "black comedy" – a dramatic yet humorous journey moving through a palette of dark glowing red, misty blue, and magnetic purple.

### Seppo Pohjola in Gramophone

Seppo Pohjola was prominently featured in the January issue of Gramophone magazine. Andrew Mellor writes that his music is universal, characterised by its humbling sincerity and strength. Pohjola is an exceptionally prolific composer who has written several symphonies as well as critically acclaimed string quartets, 🎧 which have been published by Fennica Gehrman and which are available on CDs by Alba Records. A recent work by Pohjola is *Roots*, 🎬 commissioned by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra for the Helsinki Variation series of orchestral pieces. At the moment he is working on his Eighth Symphony, his largest project to date.



Seppo Pohjola

Ari Nieminen



### Ari Nieminen in memoriam

Publishing Manager Ari Nieminen passed away on 14 February 2026 at the age of 73. A respected figure in the field of Finnish music publishing, he began his career at Fazer Music as an editor and later continued at Warner/Chappell Music Finland as Publishing Manager. When Warner discontinued its Nordic art music publishing, Nieminen played a key role in securing continuity at the newly founded Fennica Gehrman in 2002.

Throughout his career, Nieminen contributed to the development of the field through various positions of trust, including serving on the boards of Teosto and the Finnish Music Publishers Association. He combined deep musical knowledge, thorough publishing expertise and a strong ethical commitment to the rights and position of composers. For him, music was simultaneously culture, craft and long-term responsibility.

As a colleague, he was widely appreciated. His integrity, fairness and warm-hearted presence created an atmosphere of trust around him. Analytical thinking and thoughtful consideration were among his strengths, and with his gentle humour he fostered a safe and relaxed workplace atmosphere.

Ari Nieminen leaves a lasting and profound legacy. He will be deeply missed by his family, colleagues and friends and by the music community at large, for which he worked quietly, steadily and with unwavering dedication.