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NORDIC SOUND

The magazine of NOMUS,
the NORDIC MUSIC COMMITTEE

Anders Beyer
Editor

On a cold winter evening in 1999 you could see a queue standing outside the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. People were lining up to get into the premiere of Thomas Adès' opera *Powder Her Face*. But it wasn't only the opera that was the object of so much attention, it was also a young Finnish woman's debut as a conductor that got people to brave the bitter cold. The production was a success and was the starting-shot for a meteoric career for the conductor Susanna Mälkki. She has just been appointed Music Director of Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris. When she takes up her post in the autumn of 2006, this versatile young conductor with an already-outstanding career will meet one of the most highly esteemed contemporary orchestras in Europe. We paint a portrait of the artist in this issue.

Susanna Mälkki isn't the only woman in this issue, which presents important living women composers from the Nordic countries. One of them, the Swede Karin Rehnqvist is the key name at a festival in Stockholm in April and is singled out for an individual portrait.

Several of the arts committees under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers have joined forces in an ambitious project entitled Connection Barents, which is taking place in June and July. The project consists of two parts: the Laboratory and the Symposium. In the Laboratory 22 local and visiting artists and experts will be brought together in Kirkenes for a ten-day 'research laboratory' where they will develop a number of collaborative strategies in presentations, discussions, provocations,

collaborations and trips into the region. The participants will draft working proposals, 'dream proposals' and just plain fantastic proposals for museums of everyday life in the Barents region. The Symposium follows the Laboratory. An additional 26 artists, experts and international keynote speakers will then meet in Kirkenes to broaden the discussion of cultural encounters across traditional national and artistic boundaries.

Nordic Sounds was also visible at the Nordic Jazz Symposium in New York in January. The last issue of the magazine presented the symposium and the Nordic participants. Read more about the event in this issue.

In April Gothenburg will be invaded by some of the best percussionists in the Nordic countries for a whole festival in the Swedish city. The ambition of the festival is to present a selection of the exciting percussion music from the North played by musicians from all over the region. Check off your calendar if you're interested in this area – read more inside the magazine. And keep up with developments on the CD front. As usual we give you a guided tour of the new releases.

2006 is the year for big structural changes in the cultural field in the Nordic Council of Ministers. In the course of the autumn it will become clear which areas will continue in the new system. The Secretary-General of NOMUS, Bo Rydberg, wants to keep our readers informed of developments. In this issue he offers an appraisal of the present situation and hopes that the central functions of NOMUS will also be preserved after 2006. ■

NOMUS, the Nordic Music Committee, is the subcommittee of the Nordic Council of Ministers for musical matters, and one of several Nordic subcommittees, institutions and steering groups.

NOMUS consists of one delegate from each of the five Nordic countries and observers from the three areas with home rule. Its members are nominated by each country's Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

The Committee meets three or four times a year and its activities are administered through a General Secretariat, located in Stockholm.

NOMUS is financed by an annual grant in the budget of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

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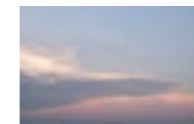
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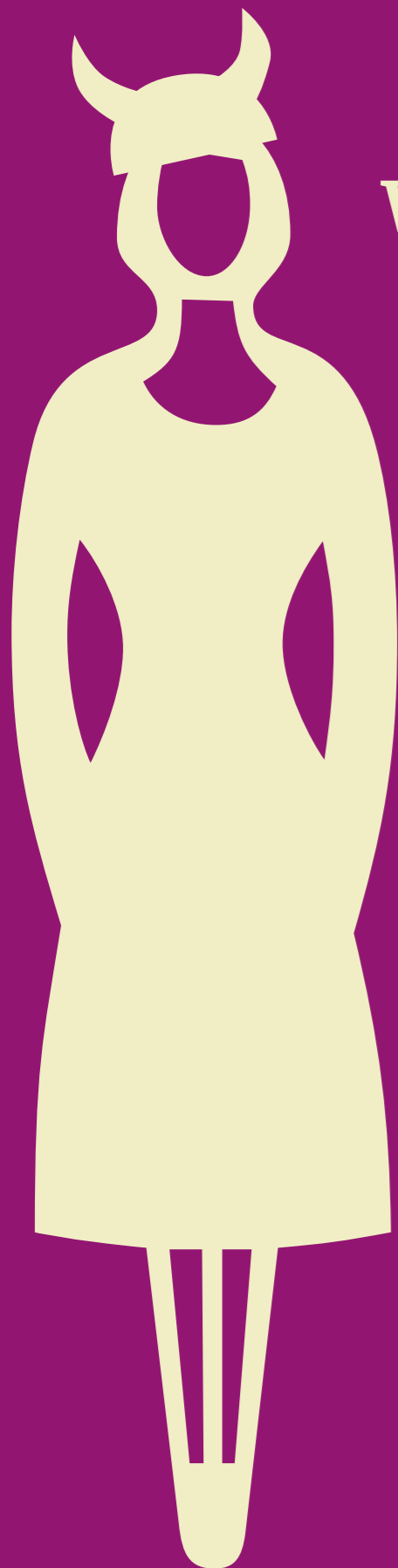
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NORDIC Women Composers:

Part 1, Finland and Sweden

The stereotype of a composer struggling with *his* art in a drafty garret, as clichéd as the notion that all Vikings wore helmets with horns, remains surprisingly prevalent.

by Guy Rickards

Modern-day Clara Schumanns no longer give up composing to tend to greater husbands and have babies. The Irish-born Elizabeth Maconchy was one of many to mix careers and her daughter Nicola Lefanu is also a highly respected composer. In fact, hundreds of women are successfully writing music all over the world. In **Finland**, the dominant figure is **Kaija Saariaho** (b 1951) who has – alone of any of the composers I will be discussing – achieved major international standing. As she has deservedly received much attention, I will concentrate on others less well-known, omitting expatriates like **Paolo Livorsi** and **Victoria Borisova-Ollas**.

If Saariaho is undeniably one of the most respected living composers of either sex, she was not the first female one to have emerged in Finland. **HELVI LEIVISKÄ** (1902-82) – whose music is well overdue for revival – emerged in the 1920s, primarily with chamber and instrumental works, not least her Piano Concerto, about which one critic wrote that her “serious artistic approach, perhaps closest akin to that of Brahms and Bruckner, is here manifest in an already notably mature and technically lucid idiom.”

The appearance of her Violin Sonata in 1945 cemented her reputation further, but it was with her three symphonies and the single-span *Sinfonia brevis* that she emerged as a composer of real stature. These charted a move from late Romanticism through Neoclassicism to a decidedly modern, but tonal language in her later works. The splendid Third Symphony, perhaps her masterpiece, deserves to be far more widely known. That none are available on disc, when so much mediocrity is, is little short of scandalous.

LEIVISKÄ, Principal works:

Orchestral:

3 Symphonies (B flat, 1947; D minor, 1954; 1971)

Sinfonia brevis (1962 rev 1972)

Piano Concerto in D minor (1935)

Triple Fugue (1935)

Chamber:

Piano Quartet (1926-35)

Piano Sonatina in F major (1935)

Violin Sonata in G minor (1945)

Suite antique for piano (1929)



Both **Pauliina Isomäki** (b 1964) and jazz pianist **Anna-Mari Kähärä** (b 1963) have followed different paths. Kähärä founded the vocal ensemble How Many Sisters and has worked with Karl Jenkins and Adiemus, the crossover ensemble Zetaboo and violinist Pekka Kuusisto. Jazz is her main interest, for which she has won high recognition (she won the Yrjö prize of the Finnish Jazz Federation and the Suomi Art Prize in 2002). Her debut album, *Anna-Mari Kähärä Orchestra*, was released by EMI Finland in 2005. Although **Isomäki** studied in the USA (Catawba College) and piano at Åbo Academy, she later took up the recorder as performer and teacher. She has composed music in many genres, from stage works to recorder solos.

RIIKKA TALVITIE (b. 1970) has found success as oboist and composer, not unlike Melinda Maxwell in Britain. As oboist, she has premiered many new works and helped found the Uusinta Chamber Orchestra. Like Saariaho she studied with Heininen at the Sibelius Academy and later with Leroux at IRCAM, and Grisey at the Paris Conservatoire.

She has written much for the voice, with solo and part songs, motets and a small comic opera, *Maestro vie*. In 2001 her choral works *Kuvan kuva* (The image of an image) and *Ihmisen määvä* (Measure for Man) took 1st and 3rd Prizes at Tampere’s Vocal Music Festival. *Tulen värinä* (The Flicker of Fire, 2002) is also fine, a serious-minded, compact cantata for tenor, 3 soli and male choir setting Mikko Rimminen’s apocalyptic poem. The music shows her flair for texture and colour, not least in handling the text’s word games and wry humour. For her own instrument she has written the vivacious 5-minute *Perspectives* and a concerto *Tululuikku* – one of her largest works. Microintervals and multiphonics feature as does, in the concerto, the luminous orchestration evident in much of her work. (In 2000, her first orchestral work *Keppihevostellen* – ‘Hobby-horsing around’ for strings – won 3rd Prize in the Kuopio Composition Competition.) *Kivi, sakset, paper* takes the famous children’s game Rock, Paper, Scissors as starting point, moving “smoothly towards a toccata – an oompah effect. Since the game did not provide any example of how to end the piece, I decided to cut the oompah band off short...”

Following her IRCAM period Talvitie has used electronics in her works, sometimes as noise effects for expressive impact. Works like *Luonnonoikku* for violin & electronics (2002) and *Matches* for piano & tape (2004) should be seen in light of her interest in unusual duos and trios, evidenced lately by *Bit by Bit* for clarinet, accordion and cello, *Veden huoneet* for 2 organs and *Beyond the web* for guitar & cello.

TALVITIE, Principal works:**Opera:***Maestro vie* (2001)**Orchestral:***Keppihevostellen* (1999 rev 2002)*Tululuikku* (2002)*Trilemma* (2003)**Chamber:***Perspectives* (1997)*Kivi, sakset, paper* (2002)*Bit by Bit* (2004)*Veden huoneet* (2004)*Beyond the web* (2005)**Vocal:***Kuvan kuva* (2000)*Ihmisen määvä* (2000)*Tulen värinä* (2002)*Kuun kirje* (2003)**Publisher:** Uusinta Publishing Company**Selected recordings:***Korunkaarros* (Uusinta UUCD101)*Metsä ja Meri* (Korvat Auki KACD2001-2)*Tulen värinä* (Ondine ODE1045-2)

LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI (b 1970) also studied with Heininen, and with Hämeenniemi and Saariaho, too, plus – at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague – Louis Andriessen. Her musical education began with a year studying theory, folk music and violin at Budapest's Bartók Conservatory. These early interests later combined in a striking apprentice piece, *Ärva* (Orphan), based on a Hungarian folksong stated only at the close.

Wennäkoski's profile really rose with the premieres of *Sakara*, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, and *Naisen rakkautta ja elämää* (Love and life of a woman) in 2003. Her music follows a modernist aesthetic, tending to brief timespans, suiting her aphoristic style. Instrumental and chamber music is her main area, with three works for bass clarinet, husband Heikki Nikula's instrument: *Sade avaa* (Rain opens) – like many of her works deriving from a poem – *Sateen avaama* (Opened by the Rain) and *Limn*. For her, poetry is "an inspiring muse ... my dream was that the music would tell the poem in a sort of secret language – it would express something, which we still wouldn't exhaustively understand." A more direct approach to words is heard in vocal works such as *Ennen vettä* (Before the water) for mixed choir.

Wennäkoski's chamber output confirms her delight in unusual sonorities, for example *Hymni ja salaisuus* (Hymn and Secret) for the unlikely trio of trombone, double bass and percussion, *Dans le conte c'est ma voix* for guitar, percussion & tape and *Veno* (Boat) for flute, saxophone, guitar, percussion and viola. In *Veno* she had "a sort of barcarole in mind ... the sounds of water against the boat's sides, recalling the feeling of lying in the bows and hearing the rushing water just next to one's ear." Orchestral music is increasingly prominent in her output, notably a series of short, 15'-long concertante works: *Dalaim*, dedicated to violinist John Storgårds, who premiered it last May; *Puun syy*, commissioned by the Crusell Week's International Oboe Competition; and *Kuule* for cello, winds and strings, to be performed in February by Roi Ruottunen and the Chamber Orchestra of Lapland with Storgårds as conductor.

WENNÄKOSKI, Principal works:**Orchestral:***Sakara* (2003)*Dalaim* (2005)*Puun syy* (2005)*Kuule* (2005)

RIIKKA TALVITIE

Maant Kyöherä/Finnic

Chamber:*Hymni ja salaisuus* (1996)*Ärva* (1997)*Meeli for recorder quartet* (1998)*Dans le conte c'est ma voix* (1998)*Sade avaa* (1999)*Sateen avaama* (2000)*Veno* (2000)*Sydänkuu* ("Heartmonth") for cello & piano (2000)*Limn* (2002 rev 2004)*Cull d'aria* for string quartet (2003-4)**Vocal:***Kolme runoa for mezzo-soprano & ensemble* (1996)*Ennen vettä* (2002)*Naisen rakkautta ja elämää* for 3 female voices & ensemble (2003)**Publisher:**

Uusinta Publishing Company

Recordings:*Ennen vettä* (plus *Kuka nukkuu tuutussani* by **Anna-Mari Kähärä**. NCD26)*Meeli* (Caprice CAP21687)*Sydänkuu* (Uusinta UUCD101)*Tarmo* (Simax PSC1163)

LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI

Finnish Music Information Centre

In **Sweden**, women composers have been active since the 1800s, though few achieved international renown. **Elfrida Andrée** (1841-1929), **Helena Munktel** (1852-1919; subject of a recent Sterling issue) and **Sara Wennerberg-Reuter** (1875-1959) were early pioneers. Pianist and teacher, **Dorcas Norre** (1911-85) composed mainly small-scale pieces (her 35-minute Piano Concerto is an exception) but her musical horizons expanded greatly in 1970 following a scholarship to Italy to study with Augusti and Petrassi, taking in electronic music along the way. Her later sonatas (1977-85) and 2-Piano Concerto (1980-1) use larger, more expressive forms, and show her aware of newer trends.

CARIN MALMLÖF-FORSSLING (1916-2005) also taught, was active as organist, choral director and for a time the sole woman member of the Society of Swedish Composers (Marie Samuelsson, of whom more below, is now vice-chairman). Her output ranges from songs and unaccompanied instrumentals to the epic choral *Biblia Dalecarlia* (her largest work), *Ecce Jubile* – setting her own text and featuring a tape – and the full-orchestral *Flowings*, with its shimmering orchestration and quadruple woodwind. Active as a composer into the 1990s, her death last year deprived Sweden of a senior figure.

MALMLÖF-FORSSLING, Principal works:**Orchestral:***Flowings* (1986)*Shanti, shanti* for orch & soprano (1990)*Release* for string orch (1992)**Chamber:***Sonata Sveckel* for flute (1964)*Lalendo* for cello (1970)*Orizzonte* for horn (1981)String Quartet *Silverkvartetten* (1988)**Vocal:***Biblia Dalecarlia* for soli, choir & clarinet (1971)*6 Sångar om ljus och mörker* ("Songs of Light & Darkness") for soprano & piano (1975)*Ecce jubile* for tenor, male chorus & tape (1975)*Vollmond* (Full Moon): *3 Haiku* for soprano

& piano (1979)

Ahimsa for chorus (1992)*Albero* for chorus (1994)

Recordings:

Litania; Sångers om ljus och mörker; Lalendo; Sonata Svickel; Orizzonte; 3 upplevelser; Vollmond (Bluebell Records ABCD029)
Flowings; Aum; Ahimsa; String Quartet No.1; Albero; Release; Shanti shanti (Bluebell Records ABCD069)

Both **Margareta Hallin** (b 1931), who only turned to serious composition in her fifties, and **Inger Wikström** (b 1939), who likewise turned late to writing music (in the 1970s), also made their reputations as performers, Hallin as a singer – at the Swedish Royal Court – and Wikström as a pianist. Both have set Strindberg texts for opera, Wikström with *Den Fredlöse* (1982) and Hallin with *Miss Julie* (1990). **KERSTIN JEPPSSON** (b 1948) concentrated on composition, having studied with Maurice Karkoff (Stockholm), Penderecki, Meyer (Krakow) and Mel Powell (California). Vocal and choral music are significant in her output, reflecting interests in social anthropology and religion, for instance her song cycles *Impossibile* (a striking delve into darkness and light) and *Jäg vill möta*, the latter setting texts by Karin Boye for lyric-dramatic soprano and piano. (Jeppsson has also set her own texts.) However, she is equally prolific for instrumental forces with solos like *Vocazione* for guitar or *Fantasia appassionata* for piano and a variety of ensemble works, but few for orchestra. *Crisis* for strings and percussion is one of her better known works; the orchestral song-set *Embrio* was hailed at its recording as “a high watermark in her career”.

JEPPSSON, Principal works:**Orchestral:**

Crisis (1977)

Chamber:

String Quartet no 1 (1974)

Vocazione (1982)

Fantasia appassionata for piano (1984)

Arabesque for 2 cellos (1989)

String Quartet no 2 (2000)

Canto chromatico for 2 violins (2003)

Vocal:

Kvinnosånger (Women's Songs) for soprano & piano (1973)

Impossibile for low female voice & ensemble (1977)

Jäg vill möta (1985)

De mörka änglarna (The Dark Angels) (1988)

Embrio for mezzo-soprano & orch (1990)
Mater mea (1996), *Polarbilder* (2004) for soprano, flute, accordion & cello

Recordings:

Impossibile; Embrio; String Quartet No.2; Kvinnosånger; De mörka änglarna (Phono Suecia PSCD141)
Kärleksvisa; Mater mea Danacord DACOCD532

The most striking music being written by women composers in Sweden currently, however, comes from a triumvirate born in the mid-1950s, **MARIE SAMUELSSON, MADELEINE ISAKSSON** (both b 1956) and **KARIN REHNQVIST** (b 1957). All three studied in Stockholm, not least with Pär Lindgren for electro-acoustic composition. Like Saariaho and Talvitie, **Samuelsson** went to IRCAM and sought out George Benjamin as tutor. During her student years, she dabbled in rock music and free improvisation, composing nine dance scores, including *Från Indien till Mars* for string quartet and improvised guitar. (Collaborations with artists in other fields – dance, literature or film – remain an important aspect of her creative life.) In 1991 she scored an early triumph with the brilliant saxophone quartet-with-electronics *Signal*, written for the Stockholm Quartet who have toured it widely. A second, *Siren*, followed in 1996. Of her expressive mission she has said:

“Classical music has long been an academic art form, where the intellect is highly esteemed. I find it interesting to work more holistically, where the music describes different states in which intellect and compositional reworking is set against the more primitive and physical. That is where I find my nerve.”



MARIE SAMUELSSON

Kenneth Schleich

Samuelsson has taken these disparate strands, forging a vibrant, original personal voice. The idiom is decidedly modernist, yet direct and immediate in appeal, mostly due to its strong rhythmic verve. As others have noted, her music often has an irresistible beat. The cascading sonorities at the start of *Lufttrumma III* (Air Drum III – Nos I & II are a trio and quintet) are a particularly fine example of her music's exhilarating vitality and there is much to delight in her brass quintet *Krom* (Chrome). One can gauge more of her artistry from the earlier *Rotationer* (Rotations) for strings with its thrilling compositional rigour or *Flow*, a brilliant small-orchestral tone poem. While her music up to 2003 had tended – as often with female composers – to the concise and compact, her Violin Concerto is more sizeable, running to 20'. Whether her Orkester Norden commission, to be premiered this summer, continues this trend remains to be heard.

SAMUELSSON, Principal works:**Ballet:**

Från Indien till Mars (1991)

Orchestral:

Troll (1993)

Lufttrumma III (1999)

Flow (2000)

Rotationer (1997 rev 2003)

Violin Concerto *Bastet solgudinnan* (2004)

Chamber:

Signal (1991)

Lufttrumma for alto sax, piano & perc (1993)

Lufttrumma II for flute, clarinet, perc, harp & bass (1994)

Krom (1994)

Siren (1996)

I vargans öga (In the Wolf's Eye) for alto-sax & tape (1997)

I Am – Are You? for horn & tape (2001)

Ö (Island) for violin (2002)

Vocal:

Den natten for chorus (1992)

Onomatopoeic cycle *Dig Speglad–7 planeter, 7 positioner* (You Reflected – 7 planets, 7 positions) for chorus, perc, strings & electronics (1995)

Publisher: Gehrman, SMIC, Tons

Recordings:

Lufttrumma III; I vargans öga; Krom; I Am – Are You?; Flow; Ö; Rotationer; Den natten (Phono Suecia PSCD147)

Signal (Caprice CAP21517)

Troll (Info 030; Info 032)

Isaksson's output is less varied by genre than Samuelsson's, primarily chamber & instrumental music. Like Wennäkoski she spent a year in the Netherlands with Louis Andriessen, before moving to France (permanently since 1988) to study with Emmanuel Nuñez and Brian Ferneyhough. She first attracted attention in 1990 with a brief single-span string quartet *Stråkvåg* (String Wave), following this up with two further chamber works, *Tillstånd* – *Avstånd* for 15 instruments and the nonet *Inné* (Innate). These works encapsulate the main features of her style, with delicately conceived sonorities laid out in relatively brief timespans. Yet her music becomes stronger when more extended, as in the song cycle *Å svävare* (O Hoverer) – see my review later in this issue – along with *Stråkvåg*, *Inné*, the saxophone quartet *Andelek* (Spirit Game) and two of her most recent pieces, the quartet for alto flute, bass clarinet, percussion and cello *Rum* (Rooms) and *Failles* (Gap), another unconventional trombone trio (partnered by recorder & cello). But as her early *Lillemunkens flykt* for viola da gamba showed, Isaksson's muse has always been nothing if not unconventional.

ISAKSSON, Principal works:

Orchestral:

Fästen o Fall (1996)

Chamber:

Lillemunkens flykt (1989)
Stråkvåg (1990)
Tillstånd – Avstånd (1992)
Inné (1993)
Andelek (1997)
Rum (2000)
Ici est ailleurs (2000)
Failles (2003)

Vocal:

Å svävare (1995)

Publisher: SMIC, Tons

Recordings:

Failles; *Rum*; *Å svävare*; *Stråkvåg*; *Som om*; *Inné*;
Andelek (Phono Suecia PSCD134)
Stråkvåg; *Tillstånd – Avstånd* (Info 035)



for “audience with warm mittens”. Awards tumble in her direction almost as fast as commissions; long may it remain so. While Rehnqvist represents the current high-watermark for women composers in Sweden, and is now following Saariaho’s path to wider recognition, there are still more at work. I will resume with some of these in the next issue. (See also portrait of Rehnqvist on page 20 of this issue, ed.). ■

REHNQVIST, Principal works:

Stage:

Passionsspel, (Passion Play, 1999)
Sötskolan (A Beauty School, 1999)
When the earth sings (2004)

Orchestral:

Kast for strings (1987)
Taromirs tid (1987)
Lamento – Rytmen av en röst (1993)
Arktis, Arktis! (2000)
Clarinet Concerto On a Distant Shore (2002)

Chamber:

Dådra – an exploding chorale (1992)
Strömmar (Streams) for cimbalom (1992)
Beginnings (2003)

Vocal:

Davids nimm for 3 female singers (2 versions, with/without chorus, 1984)
Här är jag. Vär är du? for vigorous girls’ choir & bongos (1989)
Puksånger–lockrop for 2 sopranos & perc (1989)
Triumf att finnas till for female chorus (1990)
Andrum for 2 choirs, trombone & perc (1992)
Sånger ur jorden (Songs from the Earth) for male chorus (1992)
Solsången (Sun Song) for female voice, speakers & orch (1994)
Bara du går över markerna for chorus (1995)
I Himmelen (In Heaven’s Hall) for treble voices (1998)
Ock av törnen (And also thorns) for women’s chorus & saxophone quartet (2001-2)
Teile dich Nacht: 6 songs for female voice & choir (2002)
Ice Music Fantasy (2003)
Ljus av ljus (Light of light) for chorus & orch (2003)
När jorden sjunger: saga for voices & orch (2004)



Rehnqvist is the senior figure of this group, whose music has made the leap into wider international awareness, as Svend Brown’s profile in this issue amply confirms. Like Isaksson, Ferneyhough featured among her teachers. However, Rehnqvist’s creative spirit is quite unique and in combining ultra-modernism with the ages-old tradition of kulning, the keening cries of Dalecarlia herdsfolk, she has created one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary music since Ligeti and Penderecki first emerged in the early 1960s.

I well remember the shock I experienced on hearing *Davids nimm* and the truly extraordinary *Puksånger–lockrop* (Timpanum songs–Herding Calls). In the latter especially kulning is the dominant stylistic trait but as remarkable are the orchestral works that emerged at the same time, such as *Taromirs tid* (The Time of Taromir) and *Lamento – Rytmen av en röst*, translating the vocal lines into compelling instrumental terms. Rehnqvist has developed and refined her language into something more plastic, a fusion of folk and modernist idioms unlike anything else currently being written, evident in the recent piano trio *Beginnings*, orchestral *Arktis, Arktis!* and *Clarinet Concerto*. Her penchant for the quirky continues unabated, from a *Passion Play as 4 sports*, to an ‘exploding chorale’ *Dådra* for trombone & percussion, and *Ice Music Fantasy*, partly ‘scored’

Publishers:

Edition Reimers; SMIC; Edition Suecia; Gehrmans; Sveriges Körförbund

Selected recordings:

Arktis Arktis!; *Beginning*; *I Himmelen* BIS CD1396
Davids nimm; *Kast*; *Lamento*; *Puksånger–lockrop*;
Taromirs tid Phono Suecia PSCD 85
Bara du går över markerna; *Puksånger–lockrop*;
Solsången BIS CD996
Sånger ur jorden; *Triumf att finnas till* Caprice
CAP 21641
Teile dich Nacht Col legno WWE3 CD 20229

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Nordic Music Days 2006 - in Iceland. Festival of - Nordic contemporary music. • The festival is -
organized for the - Nordic Council - of Composers - by the Society of - Icelandic Composers.

Nordic Music Days
2006 in Iceland
5th – 14th of October

Further information:
Society of Icelandic Composers
www.listir.is



CONNECTION BARENTS

A Trans-Artistic Expedition

This summer the Midnight Sun in Norway provides the setting for a large-scale arts project: musicians, writers, visual and performing artists will rendezvous for a workshop arranged by the arts institutions of the Nordic Council of Ministers and an encounter with the Barents region, an area where borderlines are crossed.

By Mette Bender

THE HEART OF THE BARENTS REGION

Despite its population of just 4,500, Kirkenes is the largest town in the northernmost part of Norway.

It has the midnight sun in the summer and darkness all day in the winter.

The Russian city of Murmansk, with its 350,000 residents, is the nearest large city.

50 different nationalities and about 25 bears live in the area round Kirkenes.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES. Physical as well as mental. An encounter between local wisdom and modern international art. A meeting of music, the performing arts, literature and visual art. And selected artists.

It's happening in June this year, when the four Nordic arts institutions under the Nordic Council of Ministers will be mounting a major artistic project with the title *Connection Barents* – a practical arts laboratory followed by a symposium, to be held in the northernmost part of Norway, in the small town of Kirkenes, situated centrally in the Barents region, north of the Arctic Circle.

In the Barents Region the sun shines at night. The light is simply on around the clock when it's summer. On the other hand the darkness reigns supreme in the winter – day and night.

The light, the people and the many cultural encounters in the Barents region will form the setting for two weeks of intensive workshop activity where the participating artists will be exploring boundary lines along with local artists and guides.

The artists come from the five Nordic countries Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland. Others are coming from the east: from Russia or the Baltic states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The aim is to develop cooperation among the arts and to leave a footprint in Kirkenes that will benefit the local population.

MUSEUM WITH A PULSE

The outcome of the workshop will be that artists will together generate ideas for a living, pulsating museum of everyday life in the local area. How this will look no one knows yet.

The workshop and the subsequent symposium are to be a laboratory for cultural work. And in a laboratory, as we know, we don't know in advance what happens when we mix the elements.

During the workshop *Connection Barents*, local experts will share their knowledge of life in the region with artists who will among other things be immersing themselves in the identity and subcultures of nomadic peoples like the Nordic Sámi and other minorities in the local community.

Other themes will include important historical events in the region: on the one hand the opening of the

border with Russia and on the other the demise of the local iron mine, which until its closure in 1997 employed large parts of the population; two major, socially significant changes that have taken place within the last twenty years and which the area has not yet fully absorbed. Larger contexts like political border issues and the exploitation of natural resources will also be on the drawing-board in the artistic laboratory.

Historically, the Barents Region and Kirkenes have been greatly influenced by borders and wars. Many different groups live there, modern urban and rural populations as well as indigenous peoples. Cultural boundaries between east and west and between new and old dominate the culture and geography. And there are national boundaries too, between Norway, Russia, Sweden and Finland.

Anne-Sofie Ericsson is the Secretary-General of NordScen, the institution for the performing arts under the Nordic Council of Ministers. She sees the boundaries as an important focus for the project *Connection Barents* – boundaries between countries and peoples, but also between artists from the different sectors of the artistic scene. Because artists have traditionally been grouped in terms of the particular art they practice, they rarely move in the same circles, so they often lack the dimensions that arise in encounters between the arts.

WHEN FAR AWAY IS CLOSE UP

The collaboration requires great courage and willpower from the participants, Anne-Sofie Ericsson thinks.

"After all, it's risky to cross boundaries. You expose yourself and your way of working to outsiders, and see yourself with their eyes. But that makes you strong – perhaps you also notice the elements that don't work so well."

Finally, there is a breaking-down of the boundaries between the visitors and those who live and work in Kirkenes and the Barents region.

"You could also talk about giving and getting back – as we hope will happen between the locals and the visitors. We couldn't have located this project just anywhere. The Barents region is an important element in the totality that will give the project colour," says Anne-Sofie Ericsson.

With the project the four arts institutions will also be turning the focus on the concepts of centre and periphery – far away and close up.

“People in New York or Beijing probably see Kirkenes as a town that lies out on the periphery of the world, where Europe ends. But for those who live here the town is of course the centre. Moreover, the big new finds of oil and gas in the area probably mean that within a few years the area will experience a considerable economic boom, and this will transform the region and the town into an important financial player globally,” explains Anne-Sofie Ericsson from NordScen.

Bo Rydberg is the Secretary-General of NOMUS, the Nordic Council of Ministers’ arts institution for music. He formulates his perspective on the project as follows: “Besides creating networks across national boundaries and across the boundaries of the arts, we hope that the project will be a model for the way future projects of this kind can be implemented.”

PIONEERING NORDIC PROJECT

The collaboration of the four arts institutions is the first in the history of the Council of Ministers. It might seem paradoxical that it is succeeding at this point in time in involving all the arts in the same project, inasmuch as the Council of Ministers, as part of a major organizational restructuring, is closing down the separate institutions at the end of 2006.

“The type of collaboration that we are looking for in this project has no natural meeting-places in the existing Nordic arts scene. So it feels natural that the four arts institutions are now, as a last hurrah, demonstrating the strength that lies in a project for all the arts,” thinks Bo Rydberg of NOMUS.

Anne-Sofie Ericsson personally entertained the idea of a big inter-arts collaboration in the Nordic countries long before she became Secretary-General of NordScen in 2003. That is why she is really pleased that the institutions are now – a hair’s-breadth from the finishing-line – achieving the coveted goal of gathering artists from all sectors of artistic life.

Last year NordScen implemented the project *Break the ICE*, which took place in Iceland, and there it became clear to the participants what networks can accomplish.

“In that project, performance artists and visual artists with different backgrounds and interests went out in pairs in a jeep and gathered material for new,

stimulating projects. Many of them are still using the contacts they managed to establish on Iceland, and many feel they have expanded their horizons both outwardly and inwardly,” says Anne-Sofie Ericsson.

LINKING ART AND EVERYDAY LIFE

The artistic director behind *Connection Barents* is the international director and curator Ong Keng Sen from Singapore. He leads the theatre company TheatreWorks in Singapore and was behind the far-reaching pan-Asiatic artistic laboratory *The Flying Circus Project*. Ong Keng Sen is active in Europe, and in parts of the USA and Asia.

Ong Keng Sen’s ambition for *Connection Barents* is to link aesthetics and everyday life. “One is no more important than the other, and the one doesn’t exclude the other either. We artists have to realize that the world is changing before our eyes and that we have to tie our activities in with this eternally mutable reality. Not that we need to produce social realism. In fact I believe the more fantastic and the more conceptual art is, the more it enriches and rejuvenates dialogue,” explains Ong Keng Sen.

He hopes that the participating artists will see the value of local wisdom and research as an integral part of the artist’s work. He also attaches great importance to consideration for the local environment and insight into how the artists themselves influence the place where they work.

About his own role Ong Keng Sen says: “I’m the one who brings the best possible people into the project. And I’m the one who gives the participants a push, and then they react to my provocations. And then I ask them again and again why, how and for whom we create our art.”

Looking at the overall aim of *Connection Barents*, Anne-Sofie Ericsson talks about the wish to develop the artistic milieu and raise its quality: “... and then to find the international voice of the Nordic region. By opening up the artistic environment so that the Swedish musician meets the Finnish visual artist, we create an opportunity for the participants to find new partners and think up Nordic projects that none of us knew were possible. Globally, the North is a small region. It’s harder for us to make an impact as individual countries; together we can do more. If we want to develop art in the North, we have to open up our borders to one another.” ■

Mette Bender is a Danish freelance journalist from the agency Redaktionen.dk.



Ong Keng Sen

CONNECTION BARENTS

The arts project *Connection Barents* has as its goal the creation of a meeting-place for collaboration among the literary, musical, visual and performing arts in the Nordic countries. This takes the form of a workshop and symposium for 50 artists within the four arts.

Artists will travel to the region from the Nordic countries, from Russia and from the three Baltic countries.

Visiting artists will collaborate with local artists and other experts on sociocultural themes relevant to the everyday life of the area.

Connection Barents takes place in Kirkenes, a small town in the northeasternmost part of Norway.

The project runs from 19th June to 2nd July 2006.

The *initiators* are the four Nordic arts institutions under the Nordic Council of Ministers:

- * NIFCA – Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art
- * Nordbok – Nordic Literature and Library Committee
- * NOMUS – Nordic Music Committee
- * NordScen – Nordic Centre for Performing Arts

The artistic director of *Connection Barents* is Ong Keng Sen, the director of TheatreWorks in Singapore.

The *Laboratory* is a workshop that takes place over the first ten days – and where 22 artists cooperate to create strategies and ideas for a future museum of everyday life in the Barents region.

The international Cuban/American artist Coco Fusco is contributing artistic input to the laboratory along with the Chinese film director and documentarist Wu Weguang.

The *Symposium* is a discussion that takes place over the last four days. It will be attended by a further 24 artists who will discuss and exchange ideas across geographical, artistic and traditional boundaries.

Three international speakers will be contributing their knowledge and experience – the video artist Akram Zaatari from the Lebanon, the multi-artist Tadashi Kawamata from Japan and the writer Ayu Utami from Indonesia.

The arts institutions are collaborating with the local cultural institution *Pikene på Broen* (‘The Girls on the Bridge’). The group is named after a famous woodcut by the Norwegian painter Edward Munch and works to support Kirkenes with artistic projects.

Read more at www.connectionbarents.org

Susanna Mälkki Conductor in Paris

Finnish conductor Susanna Mälkki is the new Music Director of Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris. When she takes up her post in the autumn of 2006, this young, versatile conductor, who already has an outstanding career, will meet one of the most highly appreciated contemporary music ensembles in Europe.

By Anu Konttinen



Susanna Mälkki conducted Ensemble Intercontemporain for the first time with great success in August 2004 at the Lucerne Festival. The entire programme was dedicated to the music of Harrison Birtwistle. The next year Mälkki was appointed Music Director of the orchestra. She has taken a keen interest in contemporary music throughout her career, first as a professional cellist, then as a conductor.

Apart from conducting many European symphony orchestras and all of the most important Finnish orchestras, Mälkki has worked regularly with contemporary ensembles like the Finnish chamber orchestra *Avanti!*, the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and the ASKO Ensemble. Her repertoire is wide and her interests range from ensembles of all sizes to opera – her most recent conducting engagements have been the Morton Feldman opera *Neither* in Copenhagen, Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*, and Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Finnish National Opera. However, rather than merely concentrating on the music of one specific era, Mälkki takes the view that contemporary music should not be confined to its own territory, but should be seen as a natural part of the repertoires of the orchestras.

"Generally orchestras today play composers like Stravinsky and Bartók creditably often, but there are great differences among orchestras in this respect. The radio orchestras are often the ones that assume the responsibility for staying up to date musically. But too often contemporary music is separated from other repertoire and played in its own concerts instead of being a natural part of the totality. Of course this is a matter that requires knowledge, curiosity and open-mindedness from those who plan the seasons. Ensemble Intercontemporain, on the other hand, was founded thirty years ago specifically to perform the music of our time."

Susanna Mälkki belongs to a musically versatile and contemporary-orientated generation of Finnish musicians who have played an active part in shaping the concert scene and repertoires. She did her conducting studies with Professor Jorma Panula and Leif Segerstam in the Sibelius Academy Conducting Class, starting in 1995, and took her conducting diploma in 2000. She also did a master class with Esa-Pekka Salonen, whose mentorship has been of great importance to her. Mälkki worked as a principal cellist in the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in Sweden before her successful career as a cellist gave way to conducting. Mälkki has quickly carved out a busy, versatile career in Finland and abroad, having recently conducted the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the

Oslo Philharmonic, the Hallé, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic and l'Orchestre National de Belgique among many others.

One of the important moments in Mälkki's career was at the Helsinki Festival in 1999, where she conducted Thomas Adès' opera *Powder Her Face*. She was invited to London by the composer to conduct the opera at the Almeida Festival. In 2002 Mälkki was appointed Artistic Director of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra. She continued with the orchestra until the end of 2005. At the time of this interview, Mälkki has just returned from making her debut with the Bremen Philharmonic, conducting Debussy, Britten and Shostakovich.

CONDUCTOR IN PARIS

Ensemble Intercontemporain was founded in 1976 by the composer and conductor Pierre Boulez. When Susanna Mälkki takes up her post at the beginning of the 2006-2007 season, the Ensemble will be celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. The orchestra began as a group of soloists dedicated to contemporary music, and has become known not only for its active collaboration with composers, but also for experimental projects with the other arts, for example dance, theatre and cinema. In Mälkki's opinion "EIC is a group of fantastic musicians whose virtuosity and ability to react is quite exceptional. It's a kind of a 'Ferrari' of the orchestral world."

Like Mälkki herself, Ensemble Intercontemporain has a wide-ranging repertoire. Collaboration with new, interesting composers is constantly being sought and their music is actively performed. Mälkki feels that her new task with EIC is about constantly keeping up with what is going on in music. Even though the orchestra has a certain profile, like any conductor she naturally wants to give its repertoire a new and personal look.

"The aim is to be in the front line when it comes to modern music, to find out what is going on in the field, and to keep an eye on new, interesting composers with whom we can build long-term working relationships. Repertoire will take shape with time – there are so many composers, and I don't want to name anyone just yet. There will be commissions and first performances, but the classics of the twentieth century, say Webern and Stravinsky, will be included too."

In addition to the prospect of working with her new orchestra, there is Parisian music life to explore and to take part in.

"I haven't yet had the chance to experience a whole season in Paris. It looks very interesting, and I'm very much looking forward to it. The role of opera is central, and the musical life of the city attracts brilliant conductors and soloists. I understand that there is a lot of expertise among the concertgoers there, and large audiences for both Baroque and contemporary music."

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Ensemble Intercontemporain is based in Paris, but tours actively. The orchestra already has projects planned – tours, festivals, and recordings – with the new Music Director Susanna Mälkki. "There are plans for recording a series of composer profiles. We will also tour and perform at festivals, for example in Lucerne and Aix-en-Provence, in the near future."

In general, the role of a conductor changes in a long-term relationship with an orchestra. Susanna Mälkki agrees that a conductor's personal way of working has an impact on the character of his or her own orchestra. The benefits and effects of a long-term relationship, however, can only be heard and seen over time, and with long-term work. Another interesting and much-discussed question concerns the personal and recognizable sound of an orchestra. For Mälkki the orchestra as an instrument is the sum of many musical

and psychological aspects. She admits having her own concept of an ideal sound which is always more or less under negotiation when she works with different orchestras, especially as a guest conductor. The better the orchestra one is working with, the more one enjoys oneself – simply because there are more dimensions to the way it can sound, and one gets closer to one's own ideas. Does Susanna Mälkki think that the conductor in a long-term relationship affects how the orchestra sounds?

"Absolutely. And only a long-term working relationship makes it possible for a certain characteristic culture of working and playing to be created. The choices of repertoire made by a Chief Conductor or a Music Director make a great difference too. All this hidden groundwork with an orchestra is challenging and takes time, but is very rewarding."

In addition to her other engagements Susanna Mälkki will be making debuts with the Dresden Philharmonic and SWR Stuttgart during the 2005-2006 season. She will also conduct Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin* again at the Finnish National Opera in the spring of 2006. ■

Anu Konttinen is a musicologist living in Helsinki. She works at the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE), and is currently writing her doctoral thesis on Finnish conductors.



Anu Halli

NORDIC JAZZ IN NEW YORK

33rd Annual IAJE International Conference in New York, January 11-14 2006.

By Anders Beyer

"Jazz isn't dead, it just smells funny" – so it was said for many years when the jazz milieu was accused of lagging behind the rock scene. That's no longer the case. The Hilton and Sheraton hotels in Manhattan are bursting at the seams with jazz and jazz people. There's a jazzy fug seeping out of every nook and cranny, and you're soon quite convinced that it isn't dead and doesn't even smell all that funny either. Living legends like Chick Corea do the rounds among the young musicians, people are playing in almost every room, and where they aren't playing we find the merchants, the promoters, the discussion panels, the workshops, the exhibitions, the seminars and God only knows what else.

It's a mega-event. The MIDEM fair in Cannes? Eat your heart out, this is just big! IAJE stands for the International Association for Jazz Education. In other words we're talking about educational and informative work. And education, teacher-training and networking were certainly firmly at the heart of the conference agenda, combined with an impressive performance schedule.

Of special note was a conference emphasis on jazz from Scandinavia. Entitled Nordic Now, the focus included eight performance ensembles, a business panel, a feature article in the printed programme of the conference and a significant presence in the conference trade show.

Issue 4 from 2005 of this magazine was printed in an extra impression and handed out free to conference participants. The conference featured a 75,000 square-foot industry fair, premieres of commissioned works, technology presentations,

research papers, award ceremonies, and top school groups from Europe, Australia, Croatia, Peru, Israel, Canada and the United States.

Highlights included a performance by the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra with Chick Corea and the presentation of the International Jazz Festival Organization Jazz Award for New Talent to saxophonist Kjetil Møster. He is a graduate of the Trondheim Music Conservatory, and has been a member of many groups in Norway, from the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra with Chick Corea and Pat Metheny to free-jazz explorations with Paal Nilssen-Love and Maja Ratkje. Yes, Nordic music was certainly alive and kicking in this monster event with music people from all over the world. You can read about the Nordic participants in the last issue of *Nordic Sounds*.

At the conference journalists and colleagues had the opportunity to meet Nordic industry people and musicians at a reception in the New York Hilton hosted by the Swedish, Danish, Finnish and Norwegian Consulates.

It's hard to say anything about what quite specifically will come out of the Nordic effort. It's probably important to be where it's all happening, and to mark our interest in an international network with jazz in focus. It isn't always easy for the Nordic countries to get into the same groove, but in this case it looks as though the difficult art of cooperation will end up being a success for Nordic jazz. ■

Further information: www.iaje.org



Chick Corea and Trondheim Jazz Orchestra played in New York.

Photo: Jan Granlie



A Composer of Fiery Inspiration

Svend Brown looks forward to a major retrospective of Karin Rehnqvist's music this April in Stockholm

by Svend Brown

On December 2, 2005, Swedish composer Karin Rehnqvist was awarded the Rosenberg Prize. The jury's citation introduces her well – and briefly:

"With her feet deeply planted in the musical soil, the 2006 Rosenberg Award winner has created a personal tonal language that speaks to all the world with a mixture of genuine musicality, Småland tenacity and musical creativity."

To explain her work to someone who has never heard a note of it, I would say look at the titles first. She finds inspiration in potent ideas expressed in language that rings out like magical spells. Just thinking of her words gives you a strong sense of her. Then I would want to use other words like strong, pure, unique, spiritual, forceful, earthy, dramatic, primitive, warm, sophisticated, violent, poetic, moving, unsentimental, visceral, gripping, accessible, mythic, humane ...

In April 2006 you have an opportunity to explore Rehnqvist's music for yourself as the Stockholm

Konserthus hosts a weekend-long retrospective of her work. Any composer would be justified in longing for this kind of thing – and dreading it. It is a huge compliment – but also a test. Not all composers benefit from intensive exposure – and that's no criticism: plenty of fine musicians are best heard in small measures. But Rehnqvist is too great and varied a voice for that to be a problem.

The programme holds a rich array of genres and sound-worlds to keep the ears, hearts and minds of audiences engaged. Many of her favourite performers will participate: folk and classical players will rub shoulders, as will amateurs and professionals, solo instruments and a symphony orchestra. New work will be heard as well as the earlier works that made her name internationally. As ever, critical questions will be in the air. Where have the past 22 years taken Karin Rehnqvist? How did she acquit herself along the way? This article offers no answers, only food for thought.

Rehnqvist has followed her own path over the years and has rarely written music in conventional genres.

No symphony, no sonatas. Only two concertos. True to form, the two new works in the programme are utterly different. A new piece for the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra – *Preludes for Large Orchestra* (premiered on 20 April, and heard again on 22 April) – and a thank-you gift from Rehnqvist to the Konserthus in the form of the latest vocal work to draw inspiration from her beloved *kulning*. This ancient Swedish vocal technique is used by cowherds to call across the wide valleys. In this case it will be a kind of fanfare to be sung from the Stockholm rooftops, calling to crowds instead of herds.

The inspiration of Swedish traditional music has never faltered in her work – it is there in the earliest piece included this weekend and the newest. But she can never be accused of exploiting traditional music as Romantic composers did – plucking out fine traditional tunes or dance rhythms to add to their own music without respecting the traditions themselves. Instead, she has always absorbed the inspiration of this music into the roots of her own language, then forged something new. A sign of her success is that *Puksångerlockrop* was commissioned for the Falun Folk Music Festival, yet sits quite comfortably in a 'new music' concert too.

The fierce, wild quality of *kulning* filters into much of Rehnqvist's work. In vocal works it is right on the surface, and the quality of the voices themselves sends a shiver down your spine. A piece like the piano trio *Beginning* conceals it behind the timbres of strings and piano, but cannot hide its raw, passionate, primitive edge. It gives her writing for winds a special thrill, and also offers an insight into her favoured instrumental colours. Her preferred quartet consists of saxophones, not strings. She creates her own ensembles, which usually have a strong tonal identity. Saxophone (both solo and in a quartet) and soprano (solo or more). Brass and percussion, with or without voices. Solo instruments with traditional links – cimbalom and kantele.

There have been more works for orchestra in recent years, especially since she became Composer in Residence with the Swedish and Scottish Chamber Orchestras (2000-2003). For them she created the work that features on her recent – acclaimed – BIS CD, *Arktis Arktis!* In 2004 came two more critical successes in the shape of *Ljus av Ljus* (composed for the *Présences* festival in Paris, and scored for symphony orchestra and youth choir) and her fairytale for children – *When the Earth Sings*. Now we have the premiere of *Preludes...* All of these recent works reveal a delicate ear for orchestral nuance that is quite at one with the kind of steely strength she draws from so many of her own ensembles.

Rehnqvist is passionate about amateur music-making. She often leads composing projects for children, and her own music for children never patronizes its performers. It is realistic – she knows the limits – but it challenges. That sounds heavy, but these works can also bring out the informal and funny side of Rehnqvist – *I'm here. And you?* requires a 'vigorous girl's choir and congas'. *Sourdough* for women's choir speaks for itself. During the April weekend, one of Rehnqvist's most ambitious projects to bring amateur and professional musicians together will be seen in Stockholm for the first time. *The Angel with the Fiery Hands* is a staged piece for choir, solo singer and instrumentalists. It was premiered in Västerås last October, and that performance left her full of admiration for the performers, of whom the piece demanded a great deal. It is with special pleasure that she sees it included here.

So where does Rehnqvist go from here? That is for her to know, but one short answer is that she heads towards her fiftieth birthday in 2007 with a diary full of plans for a nice mixture of commissions from some prestigious ensembles, including the London Sinfonietta, the Nieuw Ensemble and the Netherlands Chamber Choir as well as some old friends such as the Nordic Chamber Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. ■

See also article and fact box on Rehnqvist in Guy Rickards' article on Nordic women composers in this issue.

Svend Brown is an English writer and promoter



BOOOOMMM!

Nordic Percussion Festival 2006 in Gothenburg. Commissioned works with support from NOMUS.

By Martin Steisner

On 21st-23rd April Gothenburg will be invaded by the very best percussionists from the Nordic countries. Things will be jumping at the concert venue Storan, which will be the central stage of the festival. There will be concerts and seminars in all the Storan localities, with a wealth of variations.

First out on Friday afternoon will be one of the world's leading sports psychologists, **Willi Railo**, in a seminar on mental preparation for musicians and artistes: "Best when it counts". This will be followed by the big opening concert with one of the world's top ensembles, **Kroumata**, the soloist prizewinner **Johan Bridger** and the marimba masters **MalleusIncus**.

For three days there will be a long succession of performances at several venues in Gothenburg, including streets and squares, ending on the Sunday on the square Götaplatsen with a world premiere for over a hundred young percussionists and a concert in Konserthuset with four grand pianos, ten percussionists and the **Gothenburg Symphony Chorus**.

This is the starting-shot for a Nordic percussion festival that will return every year to Gothenburg:

"It'll be wonderful to get going at last now, after over a year of preparations," says **Bosse Persson**, the project director. "We are expecting great support from percussionists and many, many others who love musical experiences and who will make the discovery that percussion is far more than just drum kits."

The ambition of the **Percussion Festival 2006** is to present a selection of exciting music from the North and percussionists who are active in the Nordic countries. It will be a powerhouse that will enable the public to get acquainted with percussion music in the broader perspective. We think a recurring festival of this kind will spread wider knowledge of the instrumental group and the fantastic music that has been written for it despite its relatively brief existence. It's only about seventy years since **John Cage** formed the first percussion ensemble. Several of his works now belong to the 'standards' of the genre and are frequently played all over the world.

The Nordic area is one of the great strongholds of percussion music, and that guarantees breadth and quality in the programme. Young people are attracted by the activity and movement, and the spectacular stage performances. In comparison with other musical instruments, the classic repertoire for percussion is

very young. There is therefore great interest among performers and composers. It is not so long since the percussion courses at the music academies were new – today there are courses at all the Nordic academies. So percussion history is being written now.

Besides the pure percussion music the festival also reflects music where percussion plays a prominent role, for example in chamber ensembles, jazz trios and symphonic works. There is a very large repertoire of Nordic music where percussion accounts for a significant part of the work's feel and dynamics. Examples of major works where percussion plays a central role can be heard in the concluding concert in Konserthuset. Apart from this concert and the big youth orchestra on Götaplatsen on the Sunday afternoon all concerts are held at Storan, in the middle of the city by Gothenburg's well known main street Avenyn.

Storan, with a long past as Gothenburg's opera stage, is owned nowadays by the musicians' organization SAMI, which hold a wide range of concerts of various kinds in the building. SAMI is also the main organizer of the percussion festival.

Two new works are being specially written for the Percussion Festival. One is being composed by **Jerker Johansson** and will result in a concert on Götaplatsen on Sunday 23rd April. Over a hundred young people will converge to form "the world's biggest percussion ensemble". The Cultural Council has made it possible to commission this from Jerker Johansson via Musik i Väst.

The Danish composer Wayne Siegel is writing a work for **Malmö Percussion Edition (MPE)** commissioned by NOMUS. This premiere too will be held on the Sunday.

To take charge of the artistic side the festival has linked up with some of the most experienced percussionists in Gothenburg: **Hans Hernqvist** is the solo timpanist in the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, **Roger Carlsson** is the leader of the percussion in the same orchestra, **Daniel Berg** is the country's only diploma-carrying marimba soloist and the jazz aspect is the responsibility of **Michael Andersson**, an established and highly-trained percussionist with jazz as his specialty. ■

Martin Steisner is a Swedish producer and writer
The festival website is at www.slagverksfestival.se

NOMUS KATALOGEN 2006 MUSIKADRESSER I NORDEN OCH BALTIKUM

The NOMUS Catalogue 2006 (the essential guide to music and musicians) lists 1,700 music addresses, phone and fax numbers of authorities, schools, orchestras, institutions, organisations, etc. in the five Nordic countries and the Baltic states.

The catalogue is published by NOMUS in collaboration with the national music information centres and music organisations in the Baltic countries.

Price: Dkr 190 inc. postage

You can purchase the catalogue online at www.nomuskatalogen.org

or order the catalogue by sending an email to:

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NOMUS update

by Bo Rydberg

Since the Nordic ministers of culture reached their final decision on 26th October 2005 to implement a major reform of Nordic cultural cooperation and at the same time decided to close down the Nordic arts committees, including the Nordic music committee NOMUS, the ambitious prospects raised by NOMUS have instead been transformed into finishing up and packing our bags. Evidently a number of the initiatives that NOMUS has successfully supported for many years will have no place in the new structure.

It is still not clear how the Nordic Council of Ministers intends to implement the new dispensation. It is clear, however, that the reform will include a mobility scheme for artists and their work. And we can hope that one of NOMUS's central functions – commissioning new music – will be fulfilled as part of that. Thanks to the NOMUS support scheme, an average of one new Nordic commissioned work is premiered every other week throughout the year!

A further important task for which NOMUS has been responsible is the Nordic touring activities that normally have difficulty getting national support. A good year ago NOMUS decided to introduce a special touring scheme for the jazz area, broadly involving the creation, in dialogue with the major jazz organizers in the Nordic countries, of attractive tour proposals partly funded by NOMUS and with a standard rate for the organizers – ensuring that the travel expenses for jazz musicians from the peripheral Nordic areas, for example, would not deter them from touring. It is now our hope that this scheme, which never reached the implementation stage because of the decision of the ministers of culture, can instead have a future in the new structure.

At the beginning of this last year of the Nordic Music Committee, we could count a good ninety ongoing projects wholly or partly funded by NOMUS. Of these, almost forty concern new works by among other composers Bent Sørensen, Marie Samuelsson (for Orkester Norden), Jukka Tiensuu, Rolf Wallin and Thuridur Jónsdóttir, as well as a further three electroacoustic works in collaboration with the Visby International Centre for Composers on Gotland and the Dark Music Days festival in Reykjavík.

And the festival Young Nordic Music has received support from NOMUS for the last time. This festival for young composers and musicians with its related networks – so important to Nordic art music – faces an uncertain fate. The Nordic music colleges and academies, which most of the festival participants attend, have so far shown a rather lukewarm interest in more active support. And it is precisely these recurrent, network-creating activities that the Nordic cultural reform may hit hardest. The stability and continuity that the Nordic arts committees have guaranteed do not seem to have any prospect of continuing in the foreseeable future.

At the time of writing a wealth of activities are ongoing to try to ensure, in the eleventh hour, that the new structure will be filled with content. It now only remains to see what the final result will be, and what the Nordic ministers of culture have intended with their new reform. ■

Bo Rydberg is secretary general of NOMUS.

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New Releases

by Guy Rickards

THE SWEDISH COMPOSER John Fernström (1897-1961), responding to claims that Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto was a psychological portrait of the instrument, suggested that his own of 1937 was also "a psychological study of the clarinet ... about a soul that has at least in part gone through wholly different stages of development". If that seems a touch grand for a work that runs for less than 11 minutes, Fernström's work is no concertino, but a compact score that seems rather weightier than its modest dimensions alone suggest.

Admirers of this admittedly minor composer (and I count myself one) will need no recommendation from me to invest in this splendidly produced disc. Although not the most advanced in style it is the novelty item since Jouni Kaipainen's *Carpe diem* (1990) attracted much attention on its appearance and is otherwise available (on Ondine). Indeed, the Finnish concerto is something of a modern classic, its two large spans covering a wider textural and expressive landscape, making for a compellingly modernist work (though one that does not alienate listeners). Karin Dornbusch is alive to its vibrancy and exuberance of invention and the Gävle players, less comfortable with the style than in the couplings, give a thrilling, edge-of-the-seat account.

Nielsen's concerto will be the major item for most collectors and it's done superbly. I would like to hear soloist and orchestra in other Nordic fare, the Holmboe concerto perhaps. Caprice's sound is a joy in itself.

Nielsen: Clarinet Concerto, Op 57; Fernström: Clarinet Concerto, Op 30; Kaipainen: Clarinet Concerto 'Carpe Diem', Op 38; Karin Dornbusch (clarinet) Gävle Symphony Orchestra/Petri Sakari (Caprice CAP21649)

MUSIC FROM SCANDINAVIA adorns Caprice's second release, a fascinating programme

performed by Gunnar Eriksson's well-drilled Rilke Ensemble. The music ranges from tiny, almost aphoristic sketches by Bo Nilsson (in his later neo-Romantic idiom), Nørgård and Eskil Hemberg – some lasting under a minute – to Karl-Erik Welin's extended, dream-like motet *Maxi-Min* (1987), which obsessively repeats snatches of a Stefan Georg text over thirteen minutes. Nørgård is represented by two miniature suites, the student *Aftonland* (1954) and 'choral sonata' *Vänskap* (1996), plus a shortened version of the Rilke centrepiece from *Wie ein Kind*: the choir's calling-card.

The strongest items are those by Sven-Erik Bäck, Alfred Janson and Karin Rehnqvist. Bäck's gentle *Goddag himmel, goddag sol* (1991) is another composer-arrangement from a larger work and its haunting beauty is matched by Rehnqvist's *När natten skänker frid* (2003). Janson's *Sonnet No 76* (2000) sets – like Fredrik Österling's *Sonnet XVII* (1991-3) – Shakespeare in English as a poetic and dramatic mini-cantata for narrator and chorus, expressively the most modern work here. By comparison, Österling's technically more advanced setting seems less striking.

There is much to enjoy in the other works, not least the two by ensemble-member Nina Åkerblom Nielsen, both of which have connections to Israel. The part songs by Janson, Erland von Koch and Allgén are presented here as a lyrical triptych and it's good to have one of Pettersson's *Barefoot Songs* in Eriksson's arrangement.

Bo Nilsson: 3 songs from Vi kommer att träffas I morgon; Der Glückliche; Åkerblom Nielsen: arr of Bezalel Aloni's Bär mig vid ditt hjärta; Shir hashirim – Sångernas sång; Bäck: Goddag himmel, goddag sol; Nørgård: Vänskap; Die Erde ist wie ein Kind; Aftonland, Op 10; Welin: Maxi-Min; Lamento; Hemberg: Life; Österling: Sonnet XVII; Alfred Janson: Sonnet 76; Vi som är

födda vid havet; Erland von Koch: Den första vårdagen; Allgén: Caelestis urbs Jerusalem; Pettersson: Vintervisa; Rehnqvist: När natten skänker frid; Rilke Ensemble/Gunnar Eriksson (Caprice CAP21738)

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES are rich in choirs but it is always good to make the acquaintance of a new one. The Barents International Chamber Choir draws its 24 members from the countries bordering the Barents Sea, i.e. Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. For their second recording they have produced a rich and challenging melange of new music from the three Nordic member states but not Russia (curious given the choir's relationship with Swedish-resident Sergei Dmitriev), but including Dane Bo Holten's *La douce Nuit* ("The Gentle Night", 1976).

Erik Westberg has clearly produced a nicely balanced ensemble from his disparate members, capable of delicacy as well as volume of tone. The seven works on offer highlight their skills very well, although on occasion – as in Rautavaara's multi-faceted cantata *Katedralen* (1983) and Bjørn Andor Drage's *Klag-Lied* ("Song of Complaint", 2004) – there is a certain shrillness in the upper voices in the more exposed, high writing. The recordings, made in Bodo, Luleå and Stockholm, are spacious and warm.

Not all the works are equally convincing: Sven Ahlin's *I Have a Dream* (1988-9) is enjoyable but the music lacks Martin Luther King's rhetorical passion. Pick of the bunch are *La douce Nuit* and Jan Sandström's *Solsönerna* ("Sons of the Sun", 2003), a rich treatment of part of the Sami creation-myth. There's much to enjoy throughout, though, not least in Mäntyjärvi's stylistically polyglot *Canticum Calamitatis Maritimae* (1997) and Sven-David Sandström's bright motet *Lobet der Herrn* ("Praise ye the Lord", 2003).

Mäntyjärvi: Canticum Calamitatis Maritimae; Sven-David Sandström: Lobet der Herrn; Rautavaara: Katedralen; Jan Sandström: Solsönerna; Holten: La douce Nuit; Drage: Klag-Lied; Ahlin: I Have a Dream; Barents Chamber Choir/Erik Westberg Anders Åstrand Markus Leoson (percussion) (Caprice CAP21752)

CHORAL MUSIC by Sven-David Sandström (b 1942) fills another recent Caprice release,

centred on two unconventional Mass settings. The *Freedom Mass* (1996) is only loosely connected to the liturgy with just the movement headings (Kyrie – Gloria – Credo – Sanctus – Agnus Dei) taken from the traditional text, the whole topped and tailed by an Opening and Conclusion. Each movement features verses by Tomas Tranströmer, collated by commissioning soprano Margareta Jonth into a libretto more humanist than spiritual.

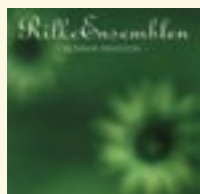
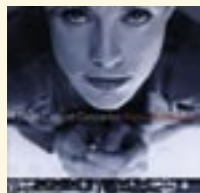
The *Freedom Mass's* scoring is unusual – solo soprano, clarinet, brass quintet, organ and chorus – but this developed out of the earlier *Ordinary Mass with Psalm* (1992) which required brass, 2 organs, reciter and chorus. The earlier mass also dispensed, unusually for one intended for liturgical performance (in which the congregation can take part and a reciter is required for scriptural readings – omitted here), with the Credo. However, it opens not with the usual Kyrie, which follows as the third span but with an Opening Hallelujah and Psalm. Only the text for the *Freedom Mass* is included, which is a rather poor show on Caprice's part; I can confirm that the psalm is *O Guds lamm*. The whole is preceded by *Procession Music* for brass quintet which can be played separately (and is published by a different house).

The programme is opened by the beautiful hymn *Ave Maris Stella* (1994), one of Sandström's loveliest choral creations. Performances and sound are excellent.

Sven-David Sandström: Ave Maris Stella; Freedom Mass; Procession Music; Ordinary Mass and Psalm; Linné Brass Quintet Allmänna Singers/Cecilia Rydinger Alin (Caprice CAP21721)

INGVAR LIDHOLM fares even better as subject of a sumptuous BIS twofer celebrating his sixty-year relationship with choral master Eric Ericson and his choir. *Laudi* (1947), a strongly composed trilogy indebted to Stravinsky, was an early fruit, the start of a steady stream of pieces over the years, from shorter, beautifully written gems to grander canvasses, all benefiting from the composer's knowing what kind of ensemble he was writing for, and how to write for them.

One heftier example is the vibrant setting of Ezra Pound's *Canto LXXXI* (1956) for unaccompanied chorus, the performance of which here typifies the depth of response



between composer, conductor and choir. The 3 *Strindberg Songs* (1959) use a more rarefied palette, as do the later Choruses from the opera *A Dream Play* (1979-92). There is a wider technical and expressive range in *The Persians* (1978), a multi-layered retelling of the Battle of Salamis in 480BC from the perspective of the Persian king, Xerxes.

There are telling solos (from Per Myrberg and Lars Arvidsson) here but it is for their full ensemble singing that Ericson's choir are justly renowned and nowhere better can this be heard than in ...*a riveder le stele*, Lidholm's choral classic from 1973, probably his most recorded composition, a tour-de-force setting words from Dante's *Inferno*. The best available version, it forms a terrific climax to BIS' Swedish Grammy-winning survey which also includes Lidholm's moving *Libera me* (1994), based on the Requiem text but far more wide-ranging and no easy listen in itself. Yet even here the choir's beauty of tone is beguiling. The best sung choral set I have encountered for some time.

Lidholm: Khoros; Laudi; Four Choruses; 3 Songs; Canto LXXXI; The Persians; Libera me; Motto; Two Greek Epigrams; Greek Gravestone; 3 songs from A Dream Play; Three Strindberg Songs; ... a riveder le stelle; Eric Ericson Chamber Choir/Eric Ericson (BIS-CD-1549/50)

MADELEINE ISAKSSON (b 1956) was previously unknown to me until Phono Suecia's well-produced portrait disc dropped through my mailbox. She is one of a clutch of women composers at work in Sweden, the best known being Karin Rehnqvist and Marie Samuelsson, both subjects of earlier Phono Suecia discs. The seven works here give, I imagine, a good cross-section of her creative concerns over the past 15 years ranging from relatively brief inspirations like *Stråkvåg* ("String Wave", 1990) for string quartet and *Som om* ("As if", 1991) to the larger designs of the *Rum* ("Rooms", 1999) for 4 players, the sextet *Inné* ("Innate") and, the largest work on offer, the 7-part cantata *Å svävare* ("O hoverer", 1993-5) for 3 voices, viola and cello.

Isaksson's music is full of interesting ideas and the most successful works on this disc are those where they have room to develop more fully. *Å svävare* is my particular favourite, setting words by Celan, Juan de la Cruz, Rilke, Susanne

Marten and Katarina Frostenson with great delicacy and skill. Both larger ensemble works, *Rum* and *Inné* prove to be convincing designs, though they benefit from repeated sympathetic hearings to unlock their secrets. Isaksson, who studied with some eminent thinkers in sound – not least Gunnar Bucht, Sven-David Sandström, Pär Lindgren, Arne Mellnäs and Louis Andriessen – is less sure as a miniaturist. Both *Stråkvåg* as well as the saxophone quintet *Andelek* ("Spirit Game", 1997) run out of steam well before they should, and seem like fragments of larger wholes. The title track, *Failles* – "Gaps" – of 2003, works better, but is a diptych for the unlikely trio of recorder, trombone and cello.

Overall, though, this is a fascinating programme of works by a thoughtful composer whose voice needs to be heard. Excellent sound, as always.

Isaksson: Failles; Rum; Å svävare; Stråkvåg; Som om; Inné; Andelek; Various performers (Phono Suecia PSCD 134)

THE ACCORDION AS chamber music instrument is a relatively recent phenomenon, though it is becoming increasing common thanks to the new generation of electric-fingered virtuosi – such as Geir Draugsvoll here – and its new-found fashionability, partly the legacy of Astor Piazzolla. Although there is no music by the tango king on this new Intim Musik release, his ghost hovers in and out of view in several of these pieces.

Not that there is a direct influence here, even in Gunnar Valkare's benign *Taang*, which purposefully nods towards the tango sound. Valkare, at one time a radical composer (and who has featured on several Phono Suecia discs), has more recently become interested in African music and ethnology and there are clear traces of this in *Taang* and its "sister composition", the less engaging *eX* – designed as a concert 'exit piece'. In between come three very contrasted items, the most beguiling of which I found to be Jörgen Dafgård's String Quartet 1.

Daniel Nelson described his *My Inner Disco* as "a compilation of those musical components that might make [his] own inner clock tick." It is a lively if necessarily bitty work but Nelson holds the threads together. Staffan Mossenmark's *Kraftspiel* (1991) is perhaps the most advanced in style and the toughest listen but provides a fine contrast of style in these winning perform-

ances by Draugsvoll and the atmospherically named Aniara Quartet. Swedish composer Kent Olofsson co-produced and recorded the disc.

Valkare: Taang; eX; Nelson: My Inner Disco; Dafgård: String Quartet I; Mossenmark: Kraftspiel; Geir Draugsvoll (accordion) Aniara Quartet (Intim Musik IMCD088)

RUSTLE OF SPRING aside, Christian Sinding's music has come in and out of fashion over the years. Although that perennial miniature and all four symphonies are currently available, his presence in record stores is marginal, so Simax's project in recording his songs, here reaching volume 3, is of great interest. Largely an unknown area outside of the Nordic countries, Sinding's songs show their composer to have been a highly gifted, natural word-setter and little wonder that Grieg and a poet like Ivar Mortensson (fourteen of whose poems are set here) thought very highly of them.

As with the first volume, this third is built around one large cycle – here *Stringplay*, Op 40, using Mortensson's delicate verses describing a boy's eventually successful first love – with a wealth of individual items from other song sets. The collection starts with a group of 7 lieder from the early part of his career (extracted from opp 1, 11 and 26) followed by ten on poems of Holger Drachmann, from opp 4, 8, 13 and 19. The three op 4 songs, *I'll wear any hat I like*, *On familiar paths* and *Sakuntala*, are amongst Sinding's finest, as is *Rav* ("Amber", Op 19/2). Nine songs to a mix of Nordic poets complete the disc.

The songs are so consistently lovely or engaging or involving that it seems invidious to single out individual examples, but in addition to those mentioned above listen to *Siehst du den Stern* (Op 11/2) or *O mother, dear old mother* (Op 13/1) or *There were roses in the dale* (Op 39/3) and prepare to be enchanted. Affectingly sung by Per Vollestad, accompanied impeccably by Sigmund Hjelset. Very fine.

Sinding: Songs, Volume 3; Per Vollestad (baritone) Sigmund Hjelset (piano) (Simax PSC1196)

HERMAN DAVID KOPPEL'S music has been enjoying a richly deserved renaissance on disc over the past few years, led by Dacapo. Their

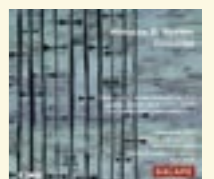
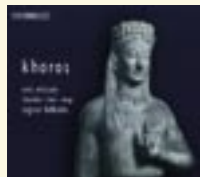
latest release concentrates on three concertos from his early, middle and late periods, together forming a quite spell-binding introduction to his music. The three are presented in reverse sequence, with the briefest, the Flute Concerto of 1971, opening the programme. It is a wonderfully balanced work, beautifully written for the solo instrument, alternating lyricism with a litheness of line that is energetic without being exhausting. As the couplings later confirm, it shows that Koppel never stopped learning and adapting as a composer. The style is rooted in Neo-Classicism but there is a definite late-twentieth-century refinement to the orchestral sound.

For all its bustle, the Cello Concerto (written for Erling Bløndal Bengtsson in 1952) inhabits a tonal world of muted colours and subtle shades. The orchestration is light and airy and there are points in the outer movements that reminded me, albeit fleetingly, of some British composers of the period, such as Rawsthorne. The concerto is cast in the traditional three movements, each of which possess cadenzas that are the focus musically as well as dramatically. Both works are played with great sensitivity.

By contrast, the Second Piano Concerto (1936-7) seems almost like the work of a different composer. A big, bold statement at the time, on first hearing now – especially following its two younger brethren – it lacks his usual structural acumen and seems a touch outdated, a false impression dispelled by deeper acquaintance. It seems odd that a work so exuberant and full of life and ideas should have been banned by its creator for 58 years. Thank goodness he relented in 1994; Ulrich Stærk provides a barnstorming account.

Koppel: Flute Concerto; Cello Concerto; Piano Concerto No 2; Rune Most (flute) Michaela Fukacova (cello) Ulrich Stærk (piano) Odense Symphony Orchestra/Paul Mann (Dacapo 8.226032)

THERE ARE NO Koppel works, alas, on Morten Zeuthen's virtuosic tour of late twentieth-century Danish cello music, but there is plenty here to delight and edify nonetheless. The disc's title, *L'Homme Armé*, refers to the musical subject of the first and largest work, Poul Ruders' early set of *Bravour Studies over "L'Homme Armé"* (1976) which uses the ubiquitous medieval melody as



the basis for a riveting set of part-variations, part-studies.

There are historical associations from the following groups of works also: indeed the disc could have been entitled ‘Siciliano’ since five of the works – those by Rasmussen, Pape, Rosing-Schow, Svend Nielsen and the third movement of Abrahamsen’s Sonata – deliberately use the Baroque dance’s lilting rhythm as a starting-point (as part of Zeuthen’s commissions). They provide fascinating modern insights into the nature of the dance though it is interesting to note that all of the composers deconstruct, metamorphose or bury the dance itself within the fabric of their brief pieces.

The three sonatas that conclude the programme (*pace* the overlap in Abrahamsen’s) add a further dimension to its expressive range. Nørgård’s *Sonata Breve* “What – is the word!” brings back the bravura element with its arsenal of effects, while in Abrahamsen’s Sonata (1988-99), violence and quietude are juxtaposed, especially in the central span, “Storm and Still”. Capping the whole is Holmboe’s wonderful Sonata (1969 – which plays its own games with the Baroque), the most cogent and integrated, yet most relaxed, work on the disc. Excellent sound and performances.



‘L’Homme Armé’: Ruders: Bravour Studies over “L’Homme Armé”; **K A Rasmussen: Silhouette;** **Pape: Siciliano Sconfortevole;** **Rosing-Schow: Siciliana;** **Svend Nielsen: Siciliano;** **Nørgård: Sonata No 3, ‘Sonata breve’;** **Abrahamsen: Sonata;** **Holmboe: Sonata, Op 101;** *Morten Zeuthen (cello) (Dacapo 8.226007)*



REGULAR READERS may recall the disc of 14 Finnish hymns in orchestral arrangements reviewed last year (BIS CD1369; NS 2005/2). Now Ondine have issued 20 hymns for voice and keyboard, originating in a Finnish Broadcasting Company project to record the entire Finnish Hymnal. For this, star soprano Soile Isokoski, a minister’s daughter and church organist, recorded some 40 hymns with her regular accompanist, Marita Viitasalo, and half of what they set down in 2002-4 is on this new disc.

As I said of BIS’ issue, a disc of Finnish hymnody is unlikely to be of great interest outset Finland, even when some pieces are closer to variations

or mini-tone poems based on the tunes. Even more so here, then, where the hymns are sung straight, without embellishment. In the booklet, Soile Isokoski states how much of a challenge this was for her as a performer. As a listener I have to say that the essentially simple format of the hymns, with each stanza sung to the same melody and accompaniment, makes for a lot of repetition, a strain not all the tunes bear well. The great *Sinuhun turvaan Jumala* (which underpins Kokkonen’s *The Last Temptations*), one of the finest melodies on the planet, here lasts 6’ 35” with all the verses included, though most are around the 3’ mark.

Finns I am sure will love to hear these familiar melodies delivered by so radiant an instrument as Isokoski’s voice, impeccably accompanied by Viitasalo and recorded. Non-Finns may find an entire hour too much of a good thing.

Hymns in Finnish; Soile Isokoski (soprano) Marita Viitasalo (piano, harmonium) (Ondine ODE 1070-2)

SOME OF THE HYMNS have roots extending back several centuries and – judging by its title alone – Rautavaara’s *Book of Visions* (2003/2005) might seem to spring from even older, medieval soil. In fact its origins are much newer, being an extended essay in four large spans or ‘Tales’ on the subjects of Night, Fire, Love and Fate, each of which possesses certain autobiographical associations for the composer. The titles hint at the expressive character of each tale, the whole work (which lasts 40 minutes) evolving its unique structure from its musical material. In this it differs from a traditional symphonic groundplan so this is no Ninth Symphony in disguise, following the example, perhaps, of Lutoslawski’s *Livre pour orchestre*, though in a radically different idiom.

Mikko Franck’s account with the National Orchestra of Belgium is warm and radiant, clearly benefiting from his close knowledge of the score (he commissioned it). *Book of Visions* is undoubtedly one of the strongest of this composer’s recent works that I have heard. Next to it the atmospheric *Adagio Celeste* (1997/2000), a languorous tone poem based on a twelve-note row inspired by romantic verses of Lassi Nummi, seems a mere interlude.

The disc opens with the second CD recording of the First Symphony but is paradoxically also a premiere. This is because the version used is that of 2003, adding a new slow movement, *Poetico*, to the heavily truncated diptych Rautavaara culled in 1988 from the four-movement 1955 original. Confused? Well, the music is not, nor is it unbalanced as that middle version was. It and the *Adagio Celeste* receive committed performances, splendidly recorded.

Rautavaara: Symphony No 1; Adagio Celeste; Book of Visions; *National Orchestra of Belgium/ Mikko Franck (Ondine ODE 1064-5)*

FINALLY, in the wake of his Bassoon and Double Bass Concertos, both unveiled last autumn, and in preparation for the premieres of the concertos for Contrabassoon in February and Clarinet in April, come a highly useful short guide to Kalevi Aho’s Orchestral Music and two promotional CDs. Fennica Gehrman’s illustrated booklet has brief texts on all thirteen symphonies, the three Chamber Symphonies, the concertos (including those above) and selected orchestral and vocal pieces, edited by Henna Salmela. There is a good worklist listing over one hundred compositions and several arrangements, plus a useful introductory essay by Mats Liljeroos. The illustrations feature the composer, leading interpreters, pages from some of the scores and some related stage works.

The BIS sampler trawls through their extensive Aho discography providing sizeable excerpts or movements from those Aho works currently available, giving a thumbnail guide to the music’s range. The BBT disc, by contrast, is both sampler and advertisement for the forthcoming Clarinet Concerto, presenting brief profiles of Aho and clarinetist Martin Fröst plus a short (8’) CD-Rom film if played on pc. For those to whom Aho is still an unfamiliar figure, these are undoubtedly useful.

Aho: Orchestral Works: Book (published by Fennica Gehrman, Lönnrotink) with CD sampler; *Various performers Lahti Symphony Orchestra/Osmo Vänskä (BIS CD9014)*
Martin Fröst/Kalevi Aho Clarinet Concerto Promotional CD/CD-Rom (BBT)

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