

Fagerlund - Isola □ Clarinet Concerto □ Partita (2011)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 15 January 2019 15:18 -

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Clarinet Concerto 1. *I. Entrata* 02:17 2. *II. Rituale - Intermezzo I* 05:24 3. *III. L'ombra muta - Intermezzo II (Cadenza)* 10:57 4. *IV. Urbana* 04:40 Partita for Percussion and String Orchestra

5. *I. Cerimonia: Misterioso* 03:59 6. *II. Risonanza: Furioso* 06:40 7. *III. Preghiera: Intenso* 07:33

Isola for symphony orchestra

8. *I. Introduzione* 09:48 9. *II. Agitato capriccioso* 06:02

Christoffer Sundqvist - clarinet Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra Dmitri Slobodeniouk - conductor

This is a solid presentation of very good contemporary music written in a conservative manner. Sebastian Fagerlund is a young Finnish composer (b.1972) with a natural ease in the manipulation of large orchestral forces. The three works presented here are each concerto-like in form, although only the Clarinet Concerto is labeled as such. The Partita sets a percussion battery against the orchestra, while the two-movement Isola features a prominent solo line for cello. Fagerlund writes in a postmodern tonal style, with an essential Romanticism at his core. There is also a touch of jazz in the Clarinet Concerto, reminiscent of the Copland concerto for the same instrument. He loves to make the orchestra roar, but is also capable of poetic effects as well, notably in the lovely slow movement of the Clarinet Concerto. I'm not struck by anything significantly original in this work, but it is good solid craft, presented in the fine sound and excellent performances we have come to expect from this label. ---FANFARE: Peter Burwasser, arkivmusic.com

What a great pleasure it is to befriend an interesting person ... to visit a beautiful city for the first

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time ... to discover for yourself a new and strong composing voice! Sebastian Fagerlund writes music every minute of which is fascinating. It is modern and unorthodox, opulent and strange, masterfully composed and orchestrated. He has his own voice and is skilled and inspired. His music is very evocative, and often seems suitable for a modern ballet. I hear the wild rhythmic foundation of Stravinsky, the thrilling ostinato patterns of John Adams, and the angelic terror of Einojuhani Rautavaara. Still, Fagerlund's style is completely independent and original. This is real 21st century music: standing on the shoulders of those who came before yet reaching higher than ever. This music is not easy to describe: changes so much and so often that describing it will take as much time as listening to it. Nothing is pleasant, soothing, lyrical here. The emotions are different: sinister, traumatic, tempestuous.

The structure of the Clarinet concerto is based on the classical model: introduction, Allegro, slow movement, cadenza and fast finale - all without clearly defined borders. That said, there is nothing classical about the music. It bursts with dark energy, with busy rhythms and mesmerizing depths. The textures are dense and daring, and, without having any "tunes", it is still very approachable and fully "digestible". The composer knows how to employ ostinato to a great effect. He knows how to hypnotize you into a mysterious cotton-wool trance. The clarinet part is very demanding, but the soloist Christoffer Sundqvist shows truly Paganinian devilry on the clarinet and extracts from of his instrument each color and every shade. There isn't a single note that he does not make interesting. The elaborate cadenza is impressive, and the sparkling, explosive finale is totally fascinating.

The Partita for strings and percussion is dark and Bartókian. It starts with a slow, moaning movement entitled "Cerimonia. Misterioso". It is steadily charged with power, and can be seen as a prolonged introduction to the fast and manic second movement, "Risonanza. Furioso". It is rhythmically rich, like a new Rite of Spring. I want to praise the Gothenburg percussionists for their excellent, resonant drums. The fury stops and we enter a suspenseful, mysterious episode. The music seems to fade away, but then the storm and stress gradually return, like a volcano that continues to erupt after a pause. The music reaches complete frenzy and suddenly stops, as we enter the last movement, "Preghiera. Intenso", full of lonely wailing sirens over gong and xylophone. The atmosphere remains sombre, but with an added scent of magic. Slow moving layers of sound are suspended in the air - grandiose and mysterious like the pictures from deep outer space made by the Hubble telescope: the vast nebulas, the lighted gas clouds, the majestic swirl of galaxies.

Isola is a gloomy symphonic poem - deeply disturbing. It also cannot be described briefly. It is such a mixture of madness and despair, and beauty, and fear. The beginning is like entering Dante's Underworld. Over the echoing steps of the descending bass, the tension grows, and the nervous brass bring us to the fast second part. This music is like insurrection in an insane asylum, a terrifying bacchanal, which sucks us into the blizzard of the black ostinato. Suddenly

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the madness is cut off. The last couple of minutes are like catching the breath after a wild dance; they are quiet and misty, but tense and underpinned with sinister drum rolls.

The recording is very clear and vivid, with great feeling of presence and volume, even if you use a regular, non-SACD player. All instruments of the orchestra are heard in high definition. Gone are the days when a good recording gave us the true concert experience. Now a good recording is more than we could get in a concert: our brain is connected directly to the music. This can only happen when the performance is good, and the Gothenburg Symphony under Dima Slobodeniouk do an excellent job. Their playing is precise and colourful. Fagerlund's dense textures are presented with graphic clarity. The striking effects are performed with verve, and the conducting is inspired.

Listening to the entire disc leaves me completely squeezed out like a lemon, and devastated, but awed, and wanting to hear this music again and again. ---Oleg Ledeniov,
musicweb-international.com

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