

UGIS PRAULINS**The Nightingale** (2010)(b.1957) *(After Hans Christian Andersen)*

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Introduction: Emperor's Garden | 03:10 |
| 2 | Nightingale Theme | 01:47 |
| 3 | Emperor and Gentleman-in-waiting | 02:13 |
| 4 | In the Quest | 01:22 |
| 5 | "There she is..." | 01:16 |
| 6 | At the Palace | 04:59 |
| 7 | The Artificial Bird | 04:11 |
| 8 | The Emperor and The Death | 06:30 |
| 9 | Reprise | 02:16 |

DANIEL BÖRTZ(b.1939) **Nemesis divina** (2006)

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-------|
| 10 | <i>(Text: Carl von Linné)</i> | 13:55 |
|----|-------------------------------|-------|

SUNLEIF RASMUSSEN(b.1961) **"I"** (2011)

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-------|
| 11 | <i>(Text: Inger Christensen)</i> | 09:05 |
|----|----------------------------------|-------|

PETER BRUUN(b.1968) **2 scenes with Skylark** (2011)*(Text: Gerard Manley Hopkins)*

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|----|-------------------------|-------|
| 12 | The Sea and the Skylark | 04:48 |
| 13 | The Caged Skylark | 03:42 |

Total: 59:22

Michala Petri recorders**DANISH NATIONAL
VOCAL ENSEMBLE**conducted by **Stephen Layton**

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About this recording...

By Lars Hannibal

For Michala Petri, music is a journey, an adventure, both a pilgrimage to time-honoured traditions and an odyssey to discover new forms of expression.

This album was the result of one such journey, gradually evolving over several years from a confluence of serendipitous meetings, enthusiastic colleagues and the desire to try something different.

The idea of combining the recorder with a choir is certainly nothing new; the recorder has joined the human voice in song for almost as long as the instrument has existed. The recorder is close to the human voice, producing a pure sound without mechanisms, reeds or elaborate mouthpieces to alter the tone. However, until recently, few contemporary composers have explored the expressive potential that this combination can deliver. One musician who did see the possibilities of this coupling was the Swedish composer Daniel Börtz.

When Michala came back from her premiere of Börtz's "Nemesis divina" in Stockholm, she was very excited about the sound of the recorder and choir together, and while not the first time she collaborated with a choir, performing a contemporary composition was an exciting experience.

A year later in 2008 while at Midem in Cannes, my friend Joshua Cheek from USA introduced me to the Latvian composer Ugis Praulins. After hearing some of his choral music, the idea of doing a project exclusively of contemporary works for recorder and choir gradually took form. Ugis loved the idea of working with Hans Christian Andersen's masterpiece "The Nightingale", and when he told conductor Stephen Layton about our plans, Stephen suggested that we should make it together with the newly established Danish National Vocal Ensemble. As we approached the Vocal Ensemble with our proposal, the director Ivar Munk shared with us that he had also wanted to work with Michala for a long time, and gave his full support to making this possible.

No sooner had these preliminary arrangements been made, two recent recipients of the distinguished Nordic Council of Music award - the Faroese Sunleif Rasmussen and the young Dane Peter Bruun - expressed interest in writing works for us. I am extremely proud of the results – a joyous journey that both honours tradition and creates a new tradition, universal in its appeal but distinctively Nordic in its philosophic and aesthetic outlook. We invite you to join us on our continuing journey and discover for yourself the possibilities of this new Nordic music for choir and recorder.

Michala Petri

Born in Copenhagen 7th of July 1958, Michala Petri began playing the recorder at the age of three and was first heard on Danish Radio when she was five. Her concert debut took place at the Tivoli Concert Hall in 1969, the year she began her studies with Professor Ferdinand Conrad at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hannover. Since then she has toured extensively throughout the world, performing with musicians such as Pinchas Zukerman, James Galway, Joshua Bell, Maurice André, Keith Jarrett, Gidon Kremer and Claudio Abbado and as soloist with many of the world's major chamber and symphony orchestras.

In addition to maintaining a vigorous performing schedule, Michala Petri has produced a large and eclectic catalogue of award winning recordings, including two Deutscher Schallplattenpreis winning discs of Vivaldi Concerti, with Vladimir Spivakov and the Moscow Virtuosi (1997), and *Kreisler Inspirations* with Lars Hannibal (2002), the Grammy® nominated *Movements*, two discs of Bach and Handel Sonatas with Keith Jarrett and the critically acclaimed *Los Angeles Street Concerto*: Michala Petri plays Thomas Koppel, which received the Danish Music Award as Best Classical Album in 2006.

In 1992 she formed a duo with Danish guitarist and lute player Lars Hannibal, with whom she tours all over the world. In 2006 the two musicians launched the record label OUR Recordings. The new label was established with the purpose of providing the artists with an independent platform for their continuing artistic explorations, free from stylistic or commercial constraints. With more than a dozen releases to date, the OUR Recordings catalogue has embraced World Music (*Siesta* and *Spirits*), the standard repertoire (*Virtuoso Baroque*; *Mozart Flute Quartets*;

Melodies; *Giuliani works for Violin and Guitar* and *Lalo's Symphonie Espagnole*), classical rarities (*Café Vienna*), contemporary concertos, including the Grammy® nominated *Movements* and the on-going *East meets West* series (*Dialogue* and *Chinese Recorder Concertos*).

Through her distinguished career Michala Petri has received many honors, including the *Wilhelm Hansen Music Prize* (1998) and the *H.C. Lumbye Prize* (1998) for her achievement in bringing classical music to a wider audience. In 2000 Michala Petri received the prestigious *Sonning Music Prize*, (previous recipients included Stravinsky, Bernstein, Britten, Shostakovich, Menuhin and Miles Davis). Michala is Vice-president of the Danish Cancer Society and an Ambassador for UNICEF, Denmark.

www.michalapetri.com





Stephen Layton

Conductor Stephen Layton was born 1966, the son of a church organist. As a child, he was a chorister at Winchester Cathedral, and received scholarships to Eton College and later King's College, Cambridge as an organ scholar. In 1986, while still a student, Layton founded the mixed-voice choir *Polyphony* and in 1993 he was appointed the musical director of the *Holst Singers*. Layton's subsequent appointments include principal guest conductor of the *Danish National Choir* (1999), chief conductor of the *Netherlands Chamber Choir* (2002), Fellow and Director of Music of Trinity College, Cambridge (2006) and Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the *City of London Sinfonia* (2010).

Layton guest conducts widely and has worked with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Academy of Ancient Music, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Irish Chamber Orchestra and the Australian Chamber Orchestra. A champion of new music, Layton has premiered new repertoire by many composers, including Arvo Pärt, Thomas Ades, James Macmillan, John Tavener, Colin Matthews, Morten Lauridsen and Ugis Pralins.

Stephen Layton's eclectic discography encompasses a vast range of repertoire, composers and genres, and has received numerous awards, including *Gramophone Award* and the *Diapason d'Or* in France for best choral disc, two Grammy nominations and the *Spanish CD Compact Award*.



The Danish National Vocal Ensemble

In January 2007 the choral landscape in Denmark was radically changed when DR (Danmarks Radio) unveiled an ambitious project: the launch of the newly established *Danish National Vocal Ensemble*. The new ensemble consists of a core membership of 18 singers, however when the music so requires, they are joined by their colleagues in the *Danish National Choir/DR*.

The *Danish National Vocal Ensemble* is fast establishing themselves as one of the world's most innovative choral groups, offering creative, thematic programming. The unique philosophy of having a flexible membership has opened up a wide range of repertoire and performing possibilities, focusing increasingly on the masterworks of the Baroque and contemporary works by Danish and Nordic composers.

The choir has sung opera at the Royal Opera as well as sacred music from the Baroque with *Concerto Copenhagen*, and has toured Europe performing with several continental orchestras, including the *NDR Orchestra* in Hamburg, the *Malmö Symphony Orchestra* and the *Bergen Philharmonic*. While their primary base of operation is Copenhagen, the choir has toured extensively throughout Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Poland, as well as giving concerts in London and St. Petersburg. Prior to their recent restructuring, the *Danish National Vocal Ensemble* performed under the direction of Stephen Layton from 1999-2011 and as of May 2011, Olof Boman has assumed leadership as the ensemble's principle conductor.

Soprano:

Malene Nordtorp (*solo in The Nightingale*)

Nina Fischer

Klaudia Kidon

Anne Aaen

Hjørdis Jakobsen

Alto:

Ulla Munch (*solo in The Nightingale*)

Rikke Lender (*solo in "I"*)

Hanna-Maria Strand

Linnéa Lomholt

Tobias Nilsson (*solo in The Nightingale*)

Tenor:

Emil Lykke (*solo in The Nightingale and "I"*)

Adam Riis

Poul Emborg

Palle Skovlund Jensen

Lars Pedersen

Bass:

Torsten Nielsen (*solo in The Nightingale*)

Hans-Henrik Raaholt

Daniel Åberg

Steffen Bruun

Johan Karlström





Ugis Praulins: The Nightingale

In contrast to some contemporary composers who have chosen to pursue a difficult and narrow artistic path, struggling over arcane theories and systems, Latvian composer Ugis Praulins has embraced virtually every style of music as a potential resource for creative exploration. Praulins grew up listening to the music of progressive-rock groups such as *Gentle Giant* and *King Crimson* as well as Scandinavian Heavy Metal and as a student, performed as keyboardist in his own progressive-rock group *Salve* and later in the folk-fusion rock band *Vecas Majas*. Inspired by the surge of Latvian cultural nationalism that preceded independence from the Soviet Union on August 21, 1991, Praulins began delving deep into the music, rituals and traditions of Pre-Christian Latvia, all of which would profoundly influence his work. While eschewing formalism, Praulins never abandons the craft of composition, seamlessly melding folk song, Renaissance polyphony, the unerring sense of timing of a good Rock song and a confident theatricality, to create music that entertains and uplifts.

Ugis Praulins was born June 17, 1957, in Riga. Upon graduating from the Emils Darzins Music, he entered the Academy of Music in Riga where he studied conducting and pedagogy. He began his composition studies with the great Latvian composer Janis Ivanovs in 1982, continuing with Gederts Ramans from 1984–89. Throughout his career, Praulins has displayed tremendous versatility, working as a sound engineer at Latvian Radio from 1981–86, where he introduced multi-track recordings of folk music, resident composer for Latvian Independent Television 1996–1997, producer for the London record company AMI International (Red Bus Recording Studios) and the film studio Cinevilla in Jumala.

Hans Christian Andersen's beloved tale of the emperor and the nightingale has delighted generations, inspiring countless adaptations, including Stravinsky's opera and symphonic poem, *Le chant du rossignol (The Song of the Nightingale)*. Written in Copenhagen in 1843, and no doubt influenced by a colorful exhibition of chinoiserie at Tivoli Gardens, it is widely believed that *The Nightingale* (in Danish: "*Nattergalen*") was Andersen's literary love letter to the famous Swedish singer, Jenny Lind.

For his setting of *The Nightingale*, Praulins selected portions of Andersen's original text, rearranging them into a series of eight tableaux and a reprise, creating a 30 minute concerto for recorder and 20 solo voices. Throughout, Praulins' choral writing calls for virtuosity of the highest order, and exceptional vocal ranges - from a deep, basso profundo cello "D" to a shimmering high soprano "D" four octaves above. From the opening "misterioso", with its rising glissandi, fragments of sung and spoken text, to the work's climax with the return of the Nightingale, singing in her full glory, Praulins has seamlessly woven a colorful sequence of episodes, in a variety of moods, styles and textures, that perfectly convey the feeling of "Once upon a time..." and "Long, long ago..."

*First performed by Michala Petri and The Danish National Vocal Ensemble,
March 30th 2011 at Sankt Pauls Church, Århus, Denmark*

*Ugis Praulins
The Nightingale
After Hans Christian Andersen*

1. Introduction: Emperor's Garden

*"My word! That's lovely!"
These books went all over the world
and so in course of time
some of them reached the Emperor
there he sat in his golden chair reading:
"But the nightingale is really the best of all."*

2. Nightingale Theme

*Here lived a nightingale
that sang so beatifully*

3. Emperor & Gentleman in-waiting

*"What's this?" thought the Emperor.
"Is there such a bird in my Empire?
Why, I've never heard of her! –
and what's more: in my own GARDEN!?"
"... she's never been presented at COURT.
It's the first I've ever heard of her!"
"If she fails to appear
then every courtier shall be punched
in the stomach directly after supper!"*

4. In the Quest

*So then they all set out for the wood
where the nightingale used to sing;
half the Court joined in the quest.
As they were going along
a cow began to moo...*

*"Ah, there she is!" said the courtiers.
"No, that's a cow mooing!
We've still got a long way to go!"
Then some frogs started croaking in the pond.
"Delightful," said the Emperor's chaplain,
"now I can hear her,
just like little church bells!"
"No, those are frogs!
But I expect we shall soon hear her now."*

5. "There she is ..."

*"There she is! Listen! " said the little girl,
"up there! Little nightingale!"
called out the small kitchen maid quite boldly.
"Our gracious Emperor would like you
to sing to him."*

6. At the Palace

*At the palace every thing had been polished up,
until the china walls and floors glittered
in the light of thousands of gold lamps.
The loveliest flowers hung ready for tinkling,
their bells were all set ringing.
At the palace, at the Court
every one was dressed in their finest clothes,
and you couldn't hear a word that was spoken
In the middle of the great hall
in which the Emperor sat was a golden perch
for the nightingale:*

the entire Court was present
 and the little kitchen maid was allowed
 to stand behind the door,
 as she now ranked as a regular
 palace kitchen maid!
 And the nightingale sang so beautifully
 that tears came into the Emperor's eyes,
 and then the nightingale's singing
 became even lovelier.
 and then it went straight to his heart.
 "Who ever saw such airs and graces!"
 said the ladies around;
 and they went and filled their mouths
 with water so as to gurgle
 when anyone spoke to them.
 They thought they could be nightingales too!
 Yes, even the lackeys and ladies' maids
 expressed their approval;
 and that's saying a good deal,
 for they are the most difficult of all to satisfy.
 There's no doubt whatever,
 the nightingale made a great hit.

7. The Artificial Bird

"Zee-zee-zee, kloo-kloo-klook"
 ... and all the while it's tail went up and down,
 glittering with silver and gold.
 The street boys sang
 "Zee-zee-zee, kloo-kloo-klook"
 and the Emperor sang it too!
 It really was a tremendous fun!
 Over and over it sang it's one and only song
 thirty three times without tiring.

"How delightful!" they all said.
 Nightingale, the Artificial bird,
 with diamonds, rubies and sapphires.
 "Snap", "Whirr" – what's this? –
 and the music stopped. But where ever was she?
 No one had noticed her fly
 out of the open window
 away to her own green woods.
 The real nightingale was sent into exile,
 banished from land and realm.

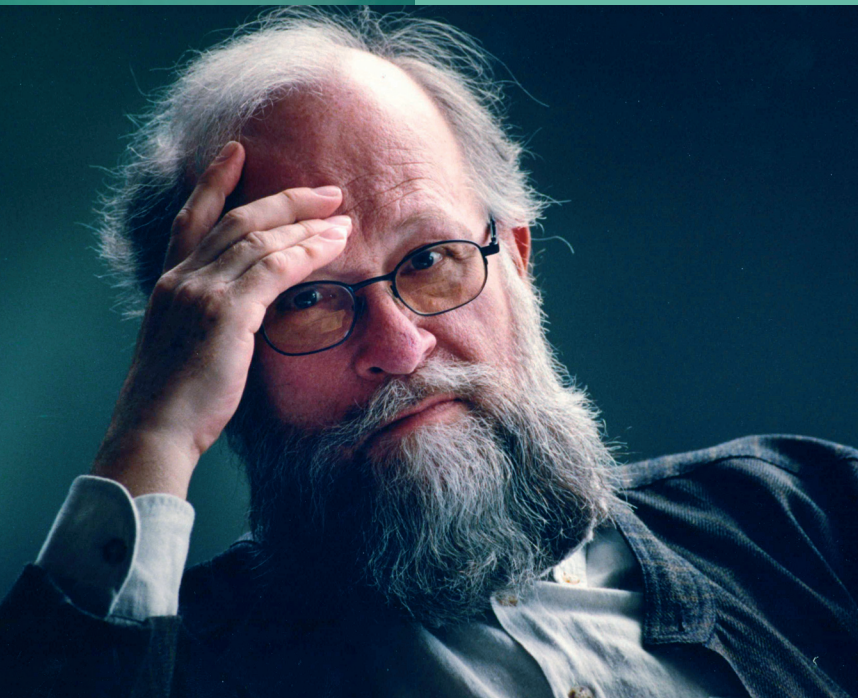
8. The Emperor & the Death

Five years had now gone by and presently
 the whole country was filled with sorrow.
 Cold and pale lay the Emperor
 in his magnificent great bed.
 The whole Court believed him to be dead.
 Stiff and pale he lay.
 Everywhere, in all the rooms and corridors,
 heavy cloth had been laid down
 in order to deaden the sound of footsteps,
 the whole palace was still as still could be.
 But the Emperor was NOT dead yet.
 Through an open window high up the wall
 the moon was shining down on the Emperor
 and the Artificial bird.
 The poor Emperor could scarcely breathe.
 It was just as if
 something was sitting on his chest.
 It was DEATH, ...
 the Emperor's good and evil deeds,
 sitting on his heart gazing down on him now
 and had put on his head a gold crown

and was holding the Emperor's sword
 in one hand and his splendid banner in the other.
 Strange faces were peering:
 "Do you remember that?"
 And the nightingale sang so beautifully
 that tears came into the Emperor's eyes,
 and then the nightingale's singing
 became even lovelier,
 and then it went straight to his heart.
 – they whispered one after the other:
 "Do you remember?"
 Close to the window came out
 a burst of most beautiful singing.
 It was the little live nightingale
 perched in a tree;
 the shapes grew fainter and fainter.

9. Reprise

... but the nightingale is really the best of all
 said the book he was reading.
 There he sat in his golden chair reading:
 "But the nightingale is really the best of all."
 Oh, nightingale!



Daniel Börtz: Nemesis divina

The music of Daniel Börtz finds its artistic doppelganger in the films of fellow countryman, Ingmar Bergman. As with Bergman, there is an extraordinary intuitive and modernistic approach to matters of structure and form. Similarly, Börtz also has engaged the metaphysical darkness found in many of Bergman's films, responding with his own sonic philosophic meditations on the human condition. This shared aesthetic vision would inevitably lead the composer and auteur to collaborate, the result being Börtz's first opera *Bacchanterna* (*The Bacchae*) (1991).

Daniel Börtz was born in Osby, southern Sweden in 1943. He began his musical studies learning violin with John Fernström and composition with Hilding Rosenberg. Upon being accepted to the Royal College of Music in Stockholm he continued composition studies with Karl-Birger Blomdahl (1962-65), Ingvar Lidholm (1965-68) and electronic music with Gottfried Michael Koenig (1967).

Börtz's early works were heavily influenced by the "sonorism" and textural music of the Polish avant garde. During the '80s, he would embrace a linear style with a greater focus on melodic development and would later reexamine the possibilities of the symphonic form. This new direction would lead to Börtz's mature style and the composition of his masterworks, the operas *Bacchanterna* (1991), *Marie Antoniette* (1998), *Svall* (2005), *Goya* (2009), the oratorio *And his Name was Orestes* (2001-02) and the solo concertos for trumpet, violin, clarinet, piano and recorder.

For his composition *Nemesis divina*, the composer selected two texts from the writings of the 18th century botanist and physician, *Carl Linnaeus* (1707-1778): *Respiratio diaetetica* (*The Dietetics of Respiration*) 1772 and *Nemesis divina* (1758-1765), a lengthy meditation on theodicy, written for the moral instruction of Linnaeus' son.

While lasting a mere 14 minutes, every aspect of *Nemesis divina* exhibits Börtz's mastery of structure and form, expressed with precision and passion. The setting of Linnaeus' words are largely episodic, with the recorder functioning almost as if it were theatrical lighting, progressing from the dark hues of the tenor recorder, to the piercing brilliance of the sopranino. The piece begins with a slowly unfolding introduction, the words of the title, "Nemesis divina" broken into neutral syllables. The full choir enters triple fortissimo on the words "You have come to a world you do not know of..." This is followed by a densely scored passage, chromatically wriggling up the scale, finally erupting in a percussive setting of the words "Eyes are like a Camera obscura." A brief passage for male voices and recorder brings us to the heart of Börtz's piece - a glorious A Major chord on the word "God" followed by a mini-cadenza from the recorder, resembling one of Messiaen's angelic birdsongs. The choir divides into eight parts, performing a rhythmically complex racket-like additive process at the words "A child who is about to die..." The work closes with a reminiscence of the opening material, slowly unfolding chromatic lines, spiked with tritones, gradually taking shape as a sequence of three chords. The recorder chirrup its angel-bird song one last time, as Börtz concludes his musical/metaphysical mediation on the word "man" set to a diminished A Minor triad.

First performed by Michala Petri and the Swedish Radio Chamber Choir as part of the 2007 Carl von Linné Tercentennial celebration in Stockholm, Sweden.

Daniel Börtz: Nemesis divina

Text: Carl von Linné

Translation: Kettil Skarby

Nemesis divina ...

You have come to a world you do not know of.

You do not see the host,

but you wonder at his splendour..

You see the prettiest lillies be choked by weeds.

Nemesis divina ...

The question is: What is God?

Who sees, hears, knows. I don't see God!

What is it that I feel inside? I do not see it.

Eyes are like a Camera obscura.

The eyes depict the objects,

but of the affected nerve nothing can be seen,

I can't judge, what is right.

Nerves are led to the brain,

where I see nothing

Yet there is something

that perceives and reasons, that figures out

what I do not investigate.

No wonder that I do not see God

when I do not see the ego living in me.

*In domeshaped church rooms,
where the stuffy air has been filled with
the congregation's exhalations,
many are affected by shivers.*

All of nature cowers back from all that stinks..

*Nons confined in narrow cloister cells,
often become in the noisome air
pale, cheerless, wasted.*

*A child who is about to die at it's birth
may be brought back from the jaws of death
simply through air beeing inflated, mere inflated.
What is life? A flame as long as the oil is lasting.
I regard each human being as a wax candle.*

*Our God lights us and every soul with fire.
Thus all men beam with their human wisdom
when in this theatre.*

I regard every man ... man ... yet?



Sunleif Rasmussen: "I"

Sunleif Rasmussen belongs to the new generation of Nordic composers and is the first conservatory-trained Faroese composer. Born on Sandoy, ("the sand island") Faroe Islands in 1961, Rasmussen received his preliminary musical training in Norway. Upon returning home, he supported himself teaching music and playing in various jazz and experimental rock bands. From 1990 to 1995, he studied composition at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen with Ib Nørholm and electronic music with Ivar Frounberg. At this time he discovered the music of the French composer Tristan Murail. This encounter with spectralism would influence a number of Rasmussen's subsequent works. Rasmussen has composed in numerous idioms, including orchestral music, solo concertos, chamber music, solo pieces, electroacoustic compositions for tape and live electronics as well as a great deal of choral music. His approach to orchestration and performance is highly personal, frequently calling for specific spatial placements of musicians throughout the performing space as well as singing and vocal effects. Rasmussen's Faroese origins are central to his self-definition as an artist. The composer cites both the natural setting of his homeland and traditional Faroese songs and hymnody as providing the musical building blocks for his works, utilizing spectral and serial techniques to transform the original folk materials to generate new sonic possibilities. In addition to being a composer, Rasmussen is founder and director of the "*Tarira*" choir, composer of the first Faroese language opera *The Madman's Garden* and has received numerous international awards, including the *Nordic Council Music Prize* for his Symphony no. 1, *Oceanic Days*, and the *Faroese Cultural Prize of Honour*, the youngest individual to receive this distinction.

"I" (in danish *Jeg*) is Rasmussen's setting of the Danish modernist poet Inger Christensen's deconstructed, confessional response to Wallace Steven's Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird. Rasmussen has interpreted Christensen's elliptical verse as a meditation on the human condition, intimacy, ultimately freedom and creativity, utilizing the poem's numerological imagery to provide a coherent structure.

The composer writes, "I have used the numbers 1, 2, and 3 to characterize the words *A man and a woman are one*, and *the blackbird*. In the first strophe I use the word *You* three times, followed by the phrase *You and a blackbird's wing*. In the second strophe, every line repeats twice while in the third strophe, every line is repeated three times. Throughout, I have arranged the text so that the last line of each strophe can be read as the first line in the following strophe.

For example, *I am the one who is watching - Twilight of bliss*. The soloists define the formal structure, highlighting the text by singing only the first line in each strophe and the word "I". I diverged from this pattern only twice - in the first strophe the soloists also sing the text *I am the one*, and in the last strophe the soloists join the choir in singing the last line, *I am the one who is open*".

A lonely melody on the Bass Recorder slowly unfolds as semitones and minor thirds mark its ascent. The voices of the Woman and the Man (alto and tenor soloists) enter, weaving sinuous, intertwining lines of dissonant melodies, their ambiguous roles emphasized by frequent overlaps and crossing of vocal ranges. Throughout, Rasmussen places the soprano voices in opposition to the rest of the choir, sometimes in call and response patterns, but often in densely scored imitative passages, while the recorder plays a continuously unfolding melody. The work reaches its climax at the words: *Grasping the bird's speech / Calling Am I a woman* over which the music of the opening prelude reappears, now sounding frantic and shrill when played on the soprano recorder.

The choral texture briefly thins out before one last wave of passion, with all the voices singing together (for the only time) on the word "*Open*" before fragmenting, and dissolving into silence, as the broken shards of the Blackbird's plaintive song fades from memory.

Sunleif Rasmussen: "I"
Text: Inger Christensen
Translation: Susanna Nied

"A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one."

*Feather-wrapped union
You and a blackbird's wing
Singing eveningtree jewel
The man's camouflage in the bird
The bird's clear vision in him
Natural flight Consciousness*

*I
I am the one who is watching*

*Twilight of bliss
Man and blackbird defeated
The drive at rest in both
Drinking with one heart
Singing with one beak
Closeup of entrenchment*

*I
I am the one who is outside*

*Unreal pain
Blackbird's play and your voice
Relationship's echo and evening
Listening to the man's song
Grasping the bird's speech
Calling Am I a woman*

*I
I am the one who is open*



Peter Bruun: Two Scenes with Skylark

Peter Bruun was born in Århus, Denmark in 1968 where his first musical influences were British pop-rock groups like *Duran Duran*, *Simple Minds* and *Spandau Ballet*. Even though music was still an avocation at this time, the young Bruun took an interest in composition, writing his first choral work when he was 20. Bruun attended Århus University from 1989 to 1991, majoring in philosophy all the while his musical interests continued to grow. After taking private lessons in theory and composition with Niels Marthinsen, he later attended the Royal Academy of Music in Århus where he studied with Karl Aage Rasmussen, Per Nørgård, Hans Abrahamsen and Bent Lorentzen.

Early on, Bruun distinguished himself as one of his generation's most promising composers, receiving the Wilhelm Hansen's Composer Prize in 2000. The eclectic nature of Bruun's music characterizes the experiences of many "forty-some-things", where the influences of popular culture jostle and take their place alongside classical concert music. This stylistic fluidity defines much of Bruun's work, whether in terms of direct stylistic quotation, as in his early composition from 1993, *4 Pieces in 3 Stages*, which utilizes typical Danish schlager as its point of departure, or as it is often the case, creative collaborations with other artists and musicians. Bruun has composed in many genres, including orchestral works, concerti, chamber and solo pieces and a considerable amount of choral music in addition to three highly successful music theater production, including his collaboration with poet and writer Ursula Andkjær Olsen, *Miki Alone* for which Bruun received the *Nordic Council Music Prize* in 2008.

For the Victorian poet-priest, Gerard Manley Hopkins birds, especially song-birds, were a life-long fascination. Many of his best-known poems and sonnets refer to birds, their music, movement or strength. Rising above the earth and soaring through the skies, Hopkins' birds are metaphors for the soul, supreme symbols as the natural order and harbingers of transcendence, leading mortals to contemplate supernatural realms that lie beyond ordinary experience. From this corpus of work, Bruun has selected two of Hopkins' "skylark"-poems.

The first poem, *The Sea and the Skylark*, opens with a series of over-lapping pentatonic melodies, invoking the primal power of the sea. No sooner has this image been established in our minds, the rhapsodic song of the skylark appears, its rippling arpeggios and bright appoggiaturas providing gentle dissonances, creating an ecstatic song. As the poet's mediation turns to humanity's lack when confronting nature's beauty, Bruun's textures become more dissonant, eventually contracting to an extended pedal point on the note "D" that continues through to the song's concluding measure.

Bruun's setting of Hopkins' sombre, sorrowful image of man's futility, *The Caged Skylark*, opens in close harmony, accompanied by the breathy, human tessitura of the tenor recorder. Stuttering rhythms, and fragmented textures depict the caged bird's / soul's plight. Another pentatonic passage on the words "Not that the sweetest song fowl needs to rest..." returns us to a harmonious vision of nature over another pedal point, this time on the note "A", before coming to rest on an unresolved major ninth chord.

Peter Bruun: 2 Scenes with Skylark

Text: Gerard Manley Hopkins

The Sea and the Skylark

ON ear and ear two noises too old to end
Trench-right, the tide that ramps against the shore;
With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar,
Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.
Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend.
How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown,
Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
Our make and making break, are breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.

The Caged Skylark

AS a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage
Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, dwells
That bird beyond the remembering his free fells;
This in drudgery, day-labouring-out life's age.
Though aloft on turf or perch or poor low stage
Both sing sometimes the sweetest, sweetest spells,
Yet both droop deadly sometimes in their cells
Or wring their barriers in bursts of fear or rage.
Not that the sweet-fowl, song-fowl, needs no rest
Why, hear him, hear him babble and drop down to his nest,
But his own nest, wild nest, no prison.
Man's spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best,
But uncumbered: meadow-down is not distressed
For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones risen.

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