



ROLF WALLIN  
under city skin  
appearances

PETER HERRETHAL  
violin

ARCTIC PHILHARMONIC  
ØYVIND BJORÅ





ROLF WALLIN

Photo: © Benjamin Elovesga

# WALLIN, ROLF (b. 1957)

## UNDER CITY SKIN (2009/2017)

for solo violin, string orchestra and surround sound *(Chester Music)*

28'44

- |     |                       |       |
|-----|-----------------------|-------|
| [1] | I. High-heeled Shoes  | 5'58  |
| [2] | II. The Park at Night | 7'13  |
| [3] | III. Locomotive       | 10'08 |
| [4] | IV. Pastorale         | 5'24  |

ARCTIC PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER ORCHESTRA YUKO KAWAMI *leader*

## [5] APPEARANCES (2003/2007) 23'37

Version for 15 instruments *(Chester Music)*

ARCTIC PHILHARMONIC SINFONIETTA OGANES GIRUNYAN *leader*

PETER HERRESTHAL *violin*

ØYVIND BJORÅ *conductor*

TT: 52'48

### INSTRUMENTARIUM:

Violin: G.B. Guadagnini, Milan 1753. Bow: Eugène Sartory

**R**olf Wallin (b. 1957) is one of Scandinavia's leading composers, widely performed and commissioned worldwide. His musical background spans from avantgarde rock, jazz and early music to traditional classical training. This versatility is reflected in a many-faceted list of compositions, and in collaborations with prominent artists from other art forms and different musical genres. His constantly curious mind has helped him extract music from unusual sources; from intricate fractal mathematic algorithms creating the uncannily organic patterns of pieces like *Stonewave* (1990), or from a balloon, soap water and a knife in *Scratch* (1991). Many of his works connect directly with the world around him, such as *Act* (2004), a celebration of the power of cooperation, *Strange News* (2007), which tells the story of the rehabilitation of child soldiers, and the opera *Elysium* (2016), projecting the long struggle for Human Rights into a possibly transhuman future.

[www.rolfwallin.org](http://www.rolfwallin.org)

**T**wo pieces in which nothing is as it seems – and in which everything is at is seems: under the skin of the sounds of the city, a violinist becomes a bird, or a locomotive, and follows a pair of high heels through a cinematic soundscape; and despite appearances, a chamber orchestra creates a Darwinian meditation on the survival, regeneration, and evolution of life-forms, a musical Burgess Shale of teeming weirdness and wonder. And yet, through the power of Rolf Wallin's imagination – and these performances – these multidimensional phenomenologies are conjured through the immediacy of this music, so that the listening experiences of these works are at once richly metaphorical, and grounded in the physicality of the sounds we're hearing.

Such are the paradoxical sleights of the listening imagination that Wallin's music inspires. Our invitation to begin the heightened poetic and sonic journey of *Under*

***City Skin*** is immediately signalled by the first sounds we hear in this work, a concerto grosso for violinist, string orchestra and surround sound: a bell tolls, there's a hiss and scream of train tracks – and those high heels melt into the first acoustic sounds we hear; percussive twitchings from the strings that are on the threshold of instrumental sound and the electro-acoustic track, the real-life soundscape of the city. ‘Real-life’? When they’re projected through the textures of *Under City Skin*, these sounds take on a heightened, mythic existence: they are interrogated, mimicked, explored, and exploded by the instruments, just as surely as the sounds the instruments produce are made and re-made, fixed and unfixed by the interaction with the recordings. So when the violins are led by Peter Herresthal’s solo part into the stratospheric realm of radiantly suspended time where the birds reside (in the final Pastorale movement especially), the transformation is an uncanny one. Our perception as listeners is altered, so that we’re not sure whether what we’re hearing is the players, the tape, or a hybrid of both. The ‘real’ sounds of the city have become mythic catalysts for our imagination, the instrumental sounds have become embedded in a new physicality of connection with the soundtrack of city life.

Or as Rolf Wallin says: ‘the revving of a Mercedes-Benz’ – the first of the electroacoustic interludes in *Under City Skin* – ‘has a stronger resonance than just the idea that it’s a combustion engine starting up: it has a power of mythic suggestion. I call the surround sound track an ‘urban bestiary’. That’s because I looked back to the bestiaries of the middle ages, and there are scientifically detailed descriptions of unicorns and mermaids and the most bizarre things. But they also say really strange things about real animals as well. We look back and think: we have come so much further, we know so much more than they did. We like to feel we are not inhabiting that mythical swamp of the medieval imagination’. But that’s an illusion, Wallin says – as *Under City Skin* wants to prove: ‘science might have developed, but I think we are still triggered into this mythical plane, this way of

feeling, through the way we react to the world around us, so that the sounds of the city can become mythic experiences'. And if the soloist is on a journey through the city in *Under City Skin*, the destination isn't the fulfilment of a quest, but a state of being, so that Peter Herresthal's violin takes the rest of the strings into a place where they have become one with the city. As Wallin says, 'In Berlioz's famous viola concerto [*Harold in Italy*], young Harold goes to Italy to broaden his mind. Here our protagonist goes under the skin of the city sounds, in a quest to find out what forces are hiding within'. Herresthal's playing has inspired a new vision of *Under City Skin*, recomposed from its original version for solo viola and ensemble, so that the violin floats over as well as resounding under the city – new planes, new myths, new sounds.

*Apearances*, in its version for 15 instruments, is a piece that Wallin describes, on one hand, with disarming simplicity: 'it's about this feeling of appearance and reappearance – there's not very much more than that in the piece!' That means that layers of material subside under one another before returning in a dizzying, spiralling interplay between different ideas, from a feverish, teeming *moto perpetuo* to strange, swooping glissandos and music of motoric rhythmic drive. Wallin says that *Apearances* marks a departure from the fractal principles that defined his compositional approach in earlier works, in which every detail was dependent on every other: here, the process 'was more like the way a painter would work on canvas: making sketches and placing the ideas on a bigger plane, and then slowly, the piece emerged. It's much freer, so I'm just asking: "what do I want to hear from the ensemble?", and putting those ideas down. That's also Darwinistic'. That nod to the father of evolutionary science points to the mythic dimension of *Apearances*. 'It's like the Burgess Shale' – fossils from a period in which the evolutionary process went wild, over 500 million years ago, experimenting with crazy forms of sea-life before they were rejected and the tree of life seemed to find a more focused

trajectory – ‘so I was just throwing in a lot of ideas’. But music can operate according to less deterministic laws of evolution, so that ideas return and recur in *Appearances*, rather than being thrown out by time’s evolutionary arrow. ‘Everything is ephemeral’, Wallin says, ‘including our own species. Maybe the cockroaches that we look down on will live longer than we will. It’s the feeling that things can be there for a longer or a shorter time – but everything will disappear’. Appearances turn into disappearances – just another of the existential transformations of Rolf Wallin’s imaginative world.

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**Peter Herresthal** is recognized as a brilliant and inspired interpreter of contemporary violin music, strongly associated both in concert and recordings with works by composers including Per Nørgård, Arne Nordheim, Henri Dutilleux, Thomas Adès and Kaija Saariaho. He has appeared with orchestras and ensembles including the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Oslo, Bergen and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestras, Remix Ensemble Porto, Tapiola Sinfonietta, the symphony orchestras of Melbourne, Navarra, Stavanger, Trondheim and Helsingborg, Oslo Sinfonietta, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Asko|Schönberg and London Sinfonietta, with conductors such as Andrew Manze, Anu Tali and Sakari Oramo. Peter Herresthal has given the Austrian, Norwegian, Spanish and Australian premières of Thomas Adès’s violin concerto *Concentric Paths*, the last of these conducted by the composer at the 2010 Melbourne Festival. His previous recordings for BIS include acclaimed discs with works by Nordheim (Spellemannprisen [‘Norwegian Grammy’]), Olav Anton Thommessen, Ørjan Matre, Henrik Hellstenius and Nørgård (shortlisted for a *Gramophone Award*). Released digitally in 2014, his recording of Adès’s violin concerto *Concentric Paths* has received a warm welcome, with

reviewers finding ‘an objective intelligence and sonic beauty’ (BBC Radio 3 *CD Review*) and ‘great subtlety and refinement’ (*MusicWeb International*) in Herresthal’s performance. Peter Herresthal is a professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music and visiting professor at the Royal College of Music, London, and at the NYU Steinhardt School in New York.

[www.peterherresthal.com](http://www.peterherresthal.com)

Based well north of the Arctic Circle, the **Arctic Philharmonic** is the world’s northernmost orchestra. Since its founding in 2009, the critically acclaimed orchestra has become one of northern Norway’s largest and most active cultural institutions, performing around 150 opera and concert productions in various formats each year. The orchestra’s home base is northern Norway and the Arctic High North, but it has also made its presence felt internationally. The orchestra has toured China and Russia, and has played at famous concert halls such as the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, Beethovenhalle in Bonn, Großes Festspielhaus in Salzburg and Musikverein in Vienna. The orchestra also performs opera productions and alternates on a regular basis between different ensemble formats, from smaller groups to sinfonietta and chamber orchestra, or – when all the musicians are gathered – as symphony orchestra.

[www.arcticphilharmonic.com](http://www.arcticphilharmonic.com)

**Øyvind Bjorå** was principal conductor and artistic director of the Arctic Sinfonietta, one of the ensembles of the Arctic Philharmonic, from 2014 to 2016. Since completing studies at the Norwegian Academy of Music under Ole Kristian Ruud in 2011, he has enjoyed a rising career as a conductor. He has conducted the symphony orchestras in Trondheim, Stavanger and Kristiansand, the Arctic Philharmonic, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and the Military

Bands in Oslo and Trondheim. In December 2015 he made his début at the Norwegian National Opera. Øyvind Bjorå is also a versatile violinist. Formerly leader of the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra and Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, he has led the Norwegian National Opera Orchestra since 2005 and has performed as a guest all over Europe.

[www.oyvindbjora.no](http://www.oyvindbjora.no)





ØYVIND BJORÅ

Photo: © Nikolaj Lund

Innspillingen er utgitt med bidrag fra Norsk Kulturråd,  
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The present recording is currently (September 2017) available only for downloading / streaming.  
For information about our physical products (CDs and Super Audio CDs), please visit [www.bis.se](http://www.bis.se).

RECORDING DATA

Recording: March–April 2016 at the Stormen Concert Hall, Bodø, Norway (*Appearances*)  
December 2016 at the Concert Hall of the Music Conservatory of the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø (*Under City Skin*)  
Producer: Hans Kipfer (Take5 Music Production)  
Sound engineers: Matthias Spitzbarth (*Appearances*); Jens Braun (Take5 Music Production) (*Under City Skin*)  
Equipment: BIS's recording teams use microphones from Neumann and Schoeps, audio electronics from RME,  
Lake People and DirectOut, MADI optical cabling technology, monitoring equipment from B&W,  
STAX and Sennheiser, and Sequoia and Pyramix digital audio workstations.  
Original format: 24-bit / 96 kHz

Post-production: Editing and surround mixing: Hans Kipfer  
Executive producer: Robert Suff

BOOKLET AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

Cover text: © Tom Service 2017  
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BIS Records AB, Stationsvägen 20, SE-184 50 Åkersberga, Sweden  
Tel.: +46 8 544 102 30  
[info@bis.se](mailto:info@bis.se) [www.bis.se](http://www.bis.se)

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PETER HERRESTHAL

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