



Einojuhani
RAUTAVAARA

DDD

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Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3

Laura Mikkola, Piano

Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra • Eri Klas



Einojuhani Rautavaara (b. 1928)

Isle of Bliss • Piano Concerto No. 3 ('Gift of Dreams') • Piano Concerto No. 2

Einojuhani Rautavaara was born in Helsinki on 9th October, 1928. Graduating from Helsinki University in 1952, he studied at the Sibelius Academy with Aarre Merikanto and, after winning a Koussevitzky Foundation fellowship in 1955, with Vincent Persichetti at the Juilliard School, and with Aaron Copland and Roger Sessions at Tanglewood. He furthered his studies in Ascona with Vladimir Vogel and in Cologne with Rudolf Petzold. A lecturer at the Sibelius Academy from 1966 to 1971, he was then appointed to the state position of Professor in Arts.

Rautavaara's early pieces, typified by the prize-winning *A Requiem in Our Time* (1953), drew on the Nordic classicism of Sibelius and Nielsen, as well as the influences of Bartók, Shostakovich and folk-music. His *Fourth Symphony* (1962) was among the first Finnish works to employ serial techniques, while the subsequent widening of his stylistic range gave rise, in 1972, to two of his most enduring works: *Vigilia*, drawing on Orthodox liturgical chant, and *Cantus Arcticus* (Naxos 8.554147), employing taped birdsong alongside modal and aleatoric (chance-derived) elements. Greater tonal orientation is evident in his more recent music, such as the last four symphonies (*Symphony No. 7*, Naxos 8.555814) and the operas *Thomas* (1985), *Vincent* (1990) and *Aleksis Kivi* (1997). Meanwhile the growing recognition accorded his music can be gauged from the number of recordings and international commissions received over the last decade.

Composed in 1995 for the orchestra of Espoo Music Institute, *Isle of Bliss* was inspired by *Home of the Birds*, a poem of Aleksis Kivi (1834-72) depicting the mythical concept of the island paradise. Rautavaara's piece broadly follows the overall form of the poem: a lively opening, passing into a reflective section, marked by contributions from numerous solo wind instruments, which evokes time standing still; at length, the emergence of an expressive string threnody denoting the arrival of dawn, then a recall of the

opening pages which precedes the music's swift passing into silence.

Rautavaara's *First Piano Concerto*, written in 1969, was among the first works in which he turned away from an outwardly modernist aesthetic, seeking, in his own words, to evoke "the entire rich grandeur of the instrument". Twenty years later and the *Second Piano Concerto*, written at the request of Ralf Gothoin, finds an intriguing accommodation between traditional and more radical elements. Serial technique is employed, but the re-orderings of a twelve-note row do not determine the substance of the composition as mediate between the diatonic and chromatic facets of the melodic and harmonic writing. There are three movements, played without a break, with the duration of the outer two together equaling that of the inner one.

In Viaggio opens with rippling piano figuration against fragmentary orchestral writing, a passionate melody moving upwards through the strings before the soloist comes fully into its own. Percussive interjections heighten tension, as the strings drive the movement to a dramatic conclusion. The plaintive piano writing which begins *Sognando e libero* is echoed by strings and woodwind in tranquil repose. Towards mid-point the music unexpectedly gathers pace in a lively toccata, soloist and orchestra chasing each other up to a brutal climax, which ricochets into silence. The initial ideas are recalled, transformed in a way that suggests innocence lost and irrecoverable. Piano and percussion begin the finale, *Uccelli sulle passioni*, in uncertainty, strings and brass entering to swell the music dynamically and expressively. As in the first movement, strings soar upward, now against washes of 'bird sound' from the piano and the rest of the orchestra. The work does not so much end as recede out of earshot, as its very opening is fleetingly recalled.

Rautavaara composed his *Third Piano Concerto*, subtitled 'Gift of Dreams', for Vladimir Ashkenazy, who played and directed the première with the Helsinki

Philharmonic in 1999. Again there are three movements, though the opening movement almost equals the length of its successor. Gently expressive string writing is complemented by that for the soloist, then the latter moves the discourse onto a higher emotional plateau. Brass and bells imperiously sound out the basic melodic motif, before the close in a mood of distanced calm. The second movement, marked *Adagio assai*, opens with ruminative piano writing, the orchestra providing an expressive backdrop. Piano, strings and timpani engage in a more rhetorical discourse, brass injecting an ominous note, then the

piano continues in a tranquil dialogue with solo wind. The initial mood is at length regained, leading to an ending of rapt inwardness. The finale, *Energico*, opens brusquely, proceeding, by way of several alternately lively and reflective episodes, to a heightened apotheosis in which ideas from earlier in the work are recalled and transformed. The ending is again inconclusive, the soloist fading into the distance against gently ambiguous harmonies from brass and strings.

Richard Whitehouse

Laura Mikkola

The Finnish pianist Laura Mikkola was born in 1974 and studied at the Sibelius Academy of Helsinki, the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and the University School of Music in Bloomington, Indiana. She has studied with Murray Perahia, Menahem Pressler, Gary Graffman, Dmitry Baskirov, Tapani Valsta and Ferenc Rados, and has been the recipient of many awards, including second prize in the prestigious Queen Elisabeth International Piano Competition in Brussels, as well as the audience prize in 1995, first prize in the International Unisa Transnet Piano Competition in Pretoria in 1994, first prize in the Maj Lind Competition in Helsinki in 1992, and first prize in the International M. Ravel Piano Competition in France in 1988. She was awarded the Finland prize for Young Artists in 1995. Laura Mikkola has been a soloist with the Helsinki Philharmonic, Radio Symphony Orchestra of Helsinki, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra of St Petersburg, The Residentie Orkest, Stuttgart Staatsoper Orchestra, St John's Smith Square Orchestra, London, Royal Philharmonic of Flanders, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège, Orchestre National de Belgique, Prague Chamber Orchestra, Virtuosi di Kuhmo, Essen Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Czech Philharmonic, among others. She has given recitals throughout Europe, in Japan, and in the Americas, and appeared at leading festivals. She has collaborated with the most distinguished conductors and with colleagues in chamber music recitals. She has a repertoire of some forty concertos.

Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra

The Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1985 as a merger of the Promenade Orchestra and the Radio Orchestra (Omroep Orkest). Within a short time it attained a high artistic standard, one of its great strengths being its versatility. As well as performing the main orchestral repertoire it also specialises in less-known works. It has also taken part in various operatic productions and in special musical projects as well as international competitions. It is the regular accompanying orchestra of the Kyrill Kondrashin Conductors' Masterclasses, the Oscar Back Concours and the International Vocalists' Competition. The orchestra has also appeared at the Holland Festival, the Gaudeamus Week and in several educational projects. Since 1996 the Estonian-born Eri Klas has been Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra. Guest conductors have included Juri Kow, Janos Fürst, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Jaap van Zweden, and Alexander Lazarev. Within the large repertoire of the orchestra one of the main focuses is on French music where its wide spectrum of tone-colours and subtle nuances of ensemble playing are shown to great advantage. Specialist conductors in this repertoire have included Marc Soustrot, Armin Jordan and Jean-Bernard Pommier. In the field of opera the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra has appeared in an impressive number of productions, including Rachmaninov's *Aleko*, Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* and several operas of Donizetti. It has also played in the Dutch première of *Tri Sestri* (Three Sisters) by Peter Eötvös, a co-production with the Netherlands Touring Opera Company. Artists of national and international importance have appeared with the orchestra including Isabelle van Keulen, Pieter Wispelwey, Montserrat Caballé, Kiri Te Kanawa, Sumi Jo, Jean-Jacques Kantarov and Maxim Vengerov.

Eri Klas

The Estonian conductor Eri Klas's greatest musical influence came from David Oistrakh, a great friend of his family. He began his conducting studies at the Tallinn Conservatory and upon graduation went to St Petersburg (then Leningrad) to work with Nikolai Rabinovich. In 1969, he was appointed assistant conductor at the Bolshoy Theatre in Moscow and for the next twelve years appeared regularly on the podium to conduct the famed Bolshoy orchestra, taking part in numerous opera, ballet and orchestral productions in Moscow and on tours throughout Europe. In 1995, he made his début at Severance Hall in Cleveland, and at Orchestra Hall in Chicago, after successful appearances at Blossom Center and Ravinia. He has been a regular guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic as well as at the Hollywood Bowl since his début there in 1991, which also marked his first appearance in the United States. Since then, he has appeared with most of the major North American orchestras. He is equally in demand throughout Europe and Asia, where he conducted a most successful tour of the Asian Youth Orchestra with the violinist Gidon Kremer as soloist. He has conducted orchestras throughout Australia and Mexico. In 1989 he conducted the Berlin Philharmonic, followed by appearances in Munich and Hamburg, and has collaborated with major orchestras throughout Europe. In Scandinavia his name is closely associated with the Stockholm and Helsinki Philharmonic, and the Swedish and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestras. In 1964 Eri Klas made his conducting début at the Estonian National Opera in Tallinn, where he was appointed music director in 1975 and is now conductor laureate. Between 1985 and 1990, he was music director of the Royal Opera in Stockholm. Eri Klas is closely associated with leading composers, conducting world premières of works by Schnittke, Gorecki, Pärt and a number of Estonian composers. In 1990 he was awarded the Swedish Order of Nordstjärnen by King Carl Gustav, followed by the Order of the Finnish Lion, bestowed on him by the President of Finland. In 1994, he received an honorary doctorate from the Estonian Music Academy and was also appointed professor of the Helsinki Sibelius Academy. Eri Klas is currently Music Director of the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Tampere Philharmonic, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Finnish National Opera.

Einojuhani Rautavaara (geb. 1928)

Insel der Seligen · Klavierkonzert Nr. 3 ('Gift of Dreams') · Klavierkonzert Nr. 2

Einojuhani Rautavaara wurde am 9. Oktober 1928 in Helsinki geboren. Nachdem er 1952 an der Universität seiner Heimatstadt graduiert hatte, wurde er Schüler von Aarre Merikanto an der Sibelius-Akademie von Helsinki. 1955 erhielt er ein Stipendium der Koussevitzky-Stiftung, das ihn in die Lage versetzte, bei Vincent Persichetti an der New Yorker Juilliard School sowie bei Aaron Copland und Roger Sessions in Tanglewood zu studieren. Er vertiefte seine Ausbildung bei Vladimir Vogel in Ascona und bei Rudolf Petzold in Köln. Von 1966 bis 1971 war er als Dozent an der Sibelius-Akademie tätig. Dann wurde ihm eine staatliche Professur verliehen.

In seinem frühen Schaffen, für das beispielsweise das preisgekrönte *Requiem in Our Time* (1953) steht, wurde Rautavaara von den nordischen Klassikern Sibelius und Nielsen sowie von Bartók, Schostakowitsch und folkloristischen Elementen beeinflusst. Seine vierte Symphonie aus dem Jahre 1962 war dann eins der ersten finnischen Werke, in denen Reihentechniken Verwendung fanden. Zwei seiner dauerhaftesten Erfolge entstanden 1972, als sich das stilistische Spektrum des Komponisten bereits deutlich erweitert hatte: In *Vigilia* benutzte Rautavaara Gesänge der orthodoxen Liturgie, in *Cantus Arcticus* (Naxos 8.554147) werden neben modalen und aleatorischen Elementen Zuspieldänder mit Vogelstimmen eingesetzt. Die Musik der jüngeren Zeit verrät wieder eine größere tonale Ausrichtung. Dazu gehören die bislang letzten vier Symphonien (*Symphonie No.7* erschienen auf Naxos 8.555814) sowie die Opern *Thomas* (1985), *Vincent* (1990) und *Aleksis Kivi* (1997). Die kontinuierlich wachsende Zustimmung zu seiner Musik lässt sich unmissverständlich an der Diskographie und an den während der letzten zehn Jahre entstandenen Auftragswerken ablesen.

Isle of Bliss (Insel der Seligen) entstand 1995 für das Orchester des Espoo Musik-Instituts. Es verdankt seine Anregung dem Gedicht „Das Heim der Vögel“, in

dem Aleksis Kivi (1834-72) das sagenhafte Bild eines paradisiatischen Eilands entwarf. Rautavaara folgt im Großen und Ganzen der formalen Anlage dieses Gedichts: Nach einer lebhaften Einleitung folgt ein nachdenklicher Abschnitt, der durch die Einwüfe zahlreicher Solobläser markiert ist und den Eindruck erweckt, dass die Zeit stehen bleibe. Schließlich erhebt sich eine expressive Threnodie der Streicher, die das Aufziehen der Morgendämmerung verkündet. Nach einer Erinnerung an die Musik des Anfangs verklingt die Musik rasch im Nichts.

Sein erstes Klavierkonzert aus dem Jahre 1969 gehört zu den ersten Werken, in denen sich Rautavaara von der äußerlichen, modernistischen Ästhetik abwandte. Nach seinen eigenen Worten wollte er hier „den ganzen grandiosen Reichtum des Instruments beschwören“. Zwanzig Jahre später fand er in seinem zweiten Klavierkonzert, das für Ralf Gothoni geschrieben wurde, einen faszinierenden Ausgleich zwischen traditionelleren und radikaleren Elementen. Zwar werden serielle Techniken angewandt, doch es sind nicht die Organisationen einer Reihe, die hier die musikalische Substanz bestimmen, wie die diatonischen und chromatischen Facetten der melodischen und harmonischen Schreibweise vermitteln. Das Konzert besteht aus drei Sätzen, die ohne Pause gespielt werden, wobei die beiden Ecksätze zusammen etwa so lange dauern wie der Mittelsatz allein. In *Viaggio* beginnt mit rieselnden Klavierfiguren und fragmentarischen Klängen des Orchesters, indessen eine leidenschaftliche Melodie durch die Streicher aufsteigt. Dann kommt der Solist zu seinem vollen Recht. Perkussive Einwüfe erhöhen die Spannung, während die Streicher den Satz einem dramatischen Schluss entgegenreiben. Der von Trauer erfüllte Klaviersatz zu Beginn des *Sognando e libero* findet seinen Widerhall in der ruhigen Gelassenheit der Streicher und Holzbläser. In der Mitte des Satzes zieht das Tempo überraschenderweise an: In einer lebhaften Toccata jagen Klavier und Orchester

einander zu einer brutalen Klimax empor, die schlagartig verstummt. Die Gedanken vom Anfang des Satzes sind jetzt so transformiert, dass sie wie die Erinnerung an eine unwiederbringlich verlorene Unschuld klingen. Klavier und Schlagzeug verleihen dem Beginn des Satzes (*Uccelli sulle passioni*) einen ungewissen Anstrich. Wenn Streicher und Blechbläser einfallen, kommt es zu einer dynamischen und expressiven Steigerung. Wie im ersten Satz schwingen sich die Streicher auf – jetzt gegen eine Flut von „Vogelstimmen“ des Klaviers und der andern Orchestergruppen. Das Stück verschwindet nicht ganz außerhalb der Hörweite, während der Anfang des Werkes flüchtig wiederholt wird.

Das dritte Klavierkonzert *Gift of Dreams* schrieb Rautavaara für Vladimir Ashkenazy, der bei der Uraufführung im Jahre 1999 das Philharmonische Orchester Helsinki vom Klavier aus dirigierte. Auch dieses Konzert besteht aus drei Sätzen, wobei hier allerdings der erste und der zweite Satz von annähernd derselben Länge sind. Der zart-expressive Streichersatz wird vom Solisten ergänzt, der den Diskurs

anschließend auf eine höhere emotionale Ebene bringt. Blechbläser und Glocken verleihen dem grundlegenden melodischen Motiv ein gebieterisches Aussehen, dann verklingt der Satz in einer Stimmung distanzierter Ruhe. Der zweite Satz (*Adagio assai*) beginnt mit einem nachdenklichen Klaviersolo vor dem expressiven Hintergrund des Orchesters. Klavier, Streicher und Pauken engagieren sich vorübergehend in einer Art Streitgespräch, bevor sich das Klavier dann im ruhigen Dialog mit den Solobläsern findet. Schließlich wird die Stimmung des Anfangs wieder hergestellt, bevor der Satz in introvertierter Verzückung endet. Das Finale (*Energico*) beginnt mit schroffen Tönen und bewegt sich über teils lebendige, teils reflexive Episoden bis zu einer gesteigerten Apotheose, in der frühere Gedanken des Werkes wieder aufgenommen und transformiert werden. Der Schluss ist wiederum kein eigentlicher Abschluss: Der Solist verliert sich in der Ferne vor den zarten, mehrdeutigen Harmonien der Blechbläser und Streicher.

Richard Whitehouse

Deutsche Fassung: Cris Posslac

The early compositions of the internationally renowned Finnish composer, Einojuhani Rautavaara, draw on the Nordic classicism of Sibelius and Nielsen, as well as the influences of Bartók, Shostakovich and folk music. Although, during the 1960s, Rautavaara experimented with avant-garde compositional techniques, the *First Piano Concerto*, written in 1969 (Naxos 8.554147), marked another significant turning point as the composer sought, in his own words, to evoke “the entire rich grandeur of the instrument”. In the *Second Piano Concerto* of 1989, Rautavaara finds an intriguing accommodation between traditional and more radical elements. His *Third Piano Concerto*, written in 1998 for Vladimir Ashkenazy, is reminiscent of Bartók’s *Piano Concerto No. 3* in its austere beauty, while the orchestral fantasia *Isle of Bliss* was inspired by a poem by the Finnish national poet Aleksis Kivi, depicting the mythical concept of the island paradise.

**Einojuhani
RAUTAVAARA**
(b. 1928)

Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3

1 Isle of Bliss	11:47
Piano Concerto No. 3 ('Gift of Dreams')	26:39
2 Tranquillo	9:28
3 Adagio assai	11:39
4 Energico	5:32
Piano Concerto No. 2	23:39
5 In Viaggio	5:50
6 Sognando e libero	12:09
7 Uccelli sulle passioni	5:40

Laura Mikkola, Piano
Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra • Eri Klas

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