

A close-up, high-contrast portrait of Anders Hillborg, the conductor, looking slightly to the left. The lighting is dramatic, with warm yellow and orange tones on the right side of his face and darker, cooler tones on the left. The background is blurred, suggesting a stage or concert hall setting.

ONDINE

Anders Hillborg

Clarinet Concerto

Liquid Marble

Violin Concerto

Martin Fröst

Anna Lindal

Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra

Esa-Pekka Salonen



Anders Hillborg (1954-)

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|---|------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>Clarinet Concerto (Peacock Tales)</i> | 28:48 |
| 2 | <i>Liquid Marble</i> | 10:22 |
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[64:52]

Martin Fröst, clarinet

Anna Lindal, violin

Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Anders Hillborg is one of Sweden's best-known and versatile composers. Many of his works have been premiered by Esa-Pekka Salonen. The two men met when they were both students, and they have maintained contact as musicians and friends ever since. After the recording of this disc, they were invited to cast an eye over their two decades of cooperation:

ES: You rapidly became a household name among us young Finnish composers. Our impression of Swedish composers otherwise was that you were feeble craftsmen and airhead Maoists.

AH: And I loved the passionate, serious attitude to music that you had in Finland.

ES: I think we two realized that we were interested in the same things, in both music and life. I have always believed in teamwork and exchange of ideas between performers and composers. When you bring me a score, you do not need to explain why you wrote this or that just so. We only need to discuss the details.

AH: When you said that you wanted to conduct *Worlds*, my first orchestral piece, I could scarcely believe it. My self-esteem was not all that good at the time, of course...

ES: That must have been around 1983, at the same time that the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra began to negotiate a closer cooperation with me. I borrowed your flat while you were in Paris. There was nothing but a mattress there.

AH: Well, maybe it wasn't all that cosy.

ES: One morning the doorbell rang, and there

was the management of the orchestra with flowers, saying that they had appointed me Chief Conductor. And I was standing there in my underwear with that single mattress on the floor behind me!

In any case, I did suggest *Worlds* to Swedish TV. There were a few dicey bits in the score, though...

AH: ...almost criminally difficult things! But it's a student work; it has more of my influences in it than of me – Ligeti, Reich, Xenakis, Feldman... But I did not reach the culmination of my technical problems with the orchestra until *Clang & Fury* in 1985–89. Instead of starting with small forms like a good student, with solo pieces and chamber music, I jumped in at the deep end with *Celestial Mechanics* (1983–85) and *Clang & Fury*, pieces that were way beyond my craft. Today I can only say that it was a completely mad plunge.

ES: I'm not so sure that it was. Think of youthful works like Sibelius's *Kullervo* and Mahler's *Das klagende Lied*, wild pieces that do not give a damn about practical problems.

AH: OK, well, I have no regrets. *Celestial Mechanics* and *Clang & Fury* had more of me than of my influences in them. It is a source of energy to me now to remember how one once had the courage to place vision before security.

ES: And it was exciting for me to see how you could translate the electronic music connection that you Swedes had into orchestral music. I had never before heard such sounds, and I learned a lot from it. I liked your aesthetic freedom, your not being shackled by the strict Post-Serialism that was the dominant mainstream in Finland.

AH: It was fortunate that I came into contact with your uncompromising academic stance. The attitude in Sweden at the time was anti-intellectual and contemptuous of craft, with the ubiquitous mantra “who are you writing for and why, can the audience understand you...” I had a rock music background, and I had had enough of populist crap, I wanted to do art.

ES: I had no contact with rock music at all – it was a closed book to me. I was lucky to be able to come to Sweden and experience your more relaxed aesthetic approach. It made it easier for me to write music the way I wanted to; and that in turn helped me reach Los Angeles.

AH: The musical world back then was an ideological fridge where ‘Sado-Modernism’ held sway and...

ES: ...the shadow of Boulez lay heavy over all, at least in Finnish music. Another difference is that in Sweden solo concertos began to boom. In Finland, it is the conductors who commission pieces.

AH: But when Anna Lindal phoned me and commissioned a concerto, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that I would agree. At the time, in 1985, the very concept of a ‘violin concerto’ was seen as something laden with tradition, something bourgeois. And virtuoso technique was something very suspect. The Violin Concerto was my first extensive work after *Clang & Fury*, and the first work where I consciously sought a more pragmatic approach: the music had to be playable, and the consideration of the actual people

performing the music became as important as the realization of an abstract musical idea.

ES: I never had a problem with virtuoso technique – I am a musician myself, and I have striven for it. The intensity of someone performing a hideously difficult task is fascinating.

AH: Certainly the virtuoso can create experiences that cannot be found in any other way.

ES: The Violin Concerto is one of your best pieces; it is not like other solo concertos. Instead of the schematic opposition of the individual and the community, you work with a more interesting dynamic where the soloist also appears as a full member of the community. Here are the contrasts that you have been playing with ever since: the static and the hyperactive, the mechanical and the human, the nobly beautiful and the banally brutal, the comic and the moving. Almost never sentimental, but surreal in a way – like Dalí’s melting watches. And when something familiar does return, it is in a ritardando and distorted so far from its original guise that it becomes something quite different...

AH: Shifts between extremes are risky, and in this I feel a kinship with Mahler: if it is not played well, it will sound as if it were meant to be frivolous. Mahler complained that Strauss only needed two rehearsals for his works, while he (Mahler) needed at least eight. I have made considerable revisions to the Violin Concerto, as indeed I have to most of my extensive pieces. For me, it is often not until the premiere that I realize the full potential of the material.

ES: That is what happens in teamwork. Think of the premiere of Mahler's Seventh Symphony: seventeen rehearsals and two conductor's assistants (Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer!) who were constantly rewriting the parts...

AH: A highly pleasant contrast to the everyday life of the experimental orchestral composer with a chronic shortage of rehearsal time came with our rock project with Eva Dahlgren, where I wrote the music and the arrangements. When I came to the first rehearsal, ready to face the usual chaos of sound that results from the first reading of any of my pieces, I was flabbergasted. Everything was perfect from the very first! This was the luxury of using an existing musical language where nothing had to be explained. But the project with the recording and the concerts took up much time, and in the middle of it all you wanted to have *Liquid Marble*...

ES: ...which I then conducted at a concert that I will never forget.

AH: The Proms in London in 1997!

ES: That very morning my wife woke me up and told me that Princess Diana had died. While the BBC discussed with the Palace whether the concert could go ahead at all – all entertainments had been cancelled – the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra was already on the plane to London. They made an exception, just for us, although we had to put Elgar's *Nimrod* on the programme. Everyone was incredibly nervous, here we were, foreigners expressing the grief of the nation... The musicians began to vibrate five

seconds before we started... the sound was incredible.

AH: After *Nimrod* there was a minute of silence, and then my piece. I thought: I'm going to destroy everything. But many people thanked me afterwards: *Liquid Marble* had given them a channel for their emotions. My basis for the piece had been in eruptions, flowing magma and lava, but of course there are elements of tragedy or horror in there if you choose to hear it so.

ES: You have not let me scream in your Clarinet Concerto.

AH: No, the scream is reserved for Leif Segerstam, who conducted the premiere. The Clarinet Concerto has hold the most revisions of any of my works. One reason for this is probably that I wrote it incredibly quickly. Another reason is that it exists in several versions and lengths – with or without choreography, with orchestra or tape. A third reason is that Martin Fröst played the Clarinet Concerto many times and continuously reported enthusiastically to me about things that should be revised in the score.

ES: Revisions in orchestral music are almost always improvements. There are so many things that one cannot foresee: acoustics and balance, the orchestra's attitude and playing style.

AH: But you must also learn to realize when the limit has been reached, when it is time to do something new instead of tinkering endlessly with old works.

ES: Exactly. The ability to say: this is what came of it. Shit happens.

Camilla Lundberg

The *Clarinet Concerto (Peacock Tales)*, commissioned by Swedish Radio, was written between June and September 1998 in close collaboration with Swedish clarinetist Martin Fröst, to whom it is dedicated.

It was premiered by him and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra with Leif Segerstam conducting in October 1998. Apart from being a virtuoso instrumentalist, Fröst is also an accomplished mime artist and dancer, and the work makes use of both these aspects. The piece exists in two versions: the original version, represented on this CD, and the 12-minute 'Millenium Version' (also scored for clarinet solo and tape). Fröst has performed this piece numerous times all over the world, winning acclaim for his unique, spectacular and virtuoso performance of the work.

The *Violin Concerto* was commissioned by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and is dedicated to Swedish violinist Anna Lindal. After its premiere in 1992 by this orchestra under Jukka-Pekka Saraste, the work was extensively revised. A slow middle section was added, extending the duration of the piece to 25 minutes from the original 17 minutes. Since the premiere, Anna Lindal has performed the work with, among others, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Warsaw Philharmonic. It has also been performed by the Tokyo Philharmonic with Mari Kimura as soloist. *Liquid Marble* was commissioned by Svenska Rikskonserten for the student orchestra Orkester Norden in 1995 at the initiative of Esa-Pekka

Salonen and received its first performance in Tampere in August 1995 with Guido Ajmone-Marsan conducting. Since then, it has become one of the most frequently performed contemporary Swedish orchestra pieces.

Anders Hillborg

(Translated by Jaakko Mäntyjärvi)

Anders Hillborg (b. in Stockholm 1954) gained his first musical experience singing in choirs, and he was also involved in various forms of improvised music. From 1976 to 1982, he studied counterpoint, composition and electronic music at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, where his teachers included Gunnar Bucht, Lars-Erik Rosell, Arne Mellnäs and Pär Lindgren. Brian Ferneyhough, who was a guest lecturer at the College of Music on several occasions, was also an important source of inspiration. Apart from occasional teaching positions (as Professor of Composition at the Malmö College of Music in 1990 and at various master classes and courses), Hillborg has been a full-time freelance composer since 1982.

His sphere of activity is extensive, covering orchestral, choral and chamber music as well as music for films and pop music. He has received several awards and distinctions, including the Christ Johnson Music Prize in 1991 and a Grammis (the Swedish Gramophone Award) as Composer of the Year in 1995 for the record 'Jag vill se min älskade



komma från det vilda' (I want to see my beloved coming from the wild) which he produced together with Eva Dahlgren.

Celestial Mechanics for solo strings and the Violin Concerto were nominated recommended works at UNESCO's Composers Rostrum in 1992 and 1995, respectively, and in 2002, his orchestral work *Dreaming River* won first prize.

Esa-Pekka Salonen studied at the Sibelius Academy and made his conducting début with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1979. From 1985–1995 he was appointed Music Director of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and also in 1985 took up the post of Principal Guest Conductor of The Philharmonia which he held until 1994. He was Director of the Helsinki Festival in 1995 and 1996. Since 1992, he has been Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

Salonen is renowned for his interpretations of contemporary music. He is the recipient of many major awards including the Siena Prize by the Accademia Chigiana in 1993, the first conductor ever to receive the prize; in 1995 he was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Opera Award and in 1997 received their Conductor Award. In 1998 he was awarded the rank of Officier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French



government.

Esa-Pekka Salonen is recognised as an accomplished composer. He studied with Niccolò Castiglioni and Franco Donatoni in Italy. In August 2001, his latest orchestral work, *Foreign Bodies*, was premiered at the Schleswig Holstein Festival followed by the UK premiere at the BBC Proms.

Martin Fröst has within a short period of time become one of the foremost and most sought-after international clarinetists. His performances have been met with acclaim by the press, public, conductors and colleagues alike. He appears regularly as a soloist with the leading orchestras of Europe, and he has performed as far afield as in Japan. In his numerous appearances at major international chamber music festivals, he has entered into musical collaboration with some of the leading instrumentalists of our time, giving chamber music performances in the most prestigious concert series all around the world. Martin Fröst has inspired several contemporary composers to write music for him. He has extended the boundaries of musical expression. Anders Hillborg's Clarinet Concerto, with integrated elements of choreography and mime, has been a resounding success for him. Martin Fröst has made a great number of recordings, two of which have been nominated for the Swedish gramophone (Grammis) awards. He is currently pursuing several new projects.



Anna Lindal (b. 1954) was engaged as leader of the Stockholm Royal Philharmonic before she turned 18; in 2001, however, she resigned her post to concentrate on her solo and chamber music career. She also teaches the violin as a visiting professor at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm.

Anna Lindal studied the violin with Professor Sven Karpe at the Royal Academy of Music from 1967 to 1973, when she completed her soloist diploma. She lived abroad for a considerable period of time thereafter, studying in Switzerland and France (Rudolf Baumgartner, Aida Stucki,



concert examination 1977) and performing extensively; in 1983, she moved back to Stockholm. She has become known as a proponent of contemporary music, collaborating with various composers and interesting chamber music programmes where she combines works from various periods, from the Baroque to the present. Chamber music is her foundation, but she also appears as a soloist with orchestras, performing unusual repertoire such as Schumann's Violin Concerto or works dedicated to her, such as Anders Hillborg's Violin Concerto.

Anna Lindal has a number of CDs to her credit, including two solo discs, chamber music with the string trio Trio des Lyres and as a member of the tango quintet Tango Libre.

The **Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra** traces its history back to the ensemble known as Waldimirs orkester (Radiotjänsts Dansorkester, or the Dance orchestra of the radio service), which was founded in 1936 and which in 1948 changed its name to the Radio Orchestra. In 1967, the orchestra was merged with what was then the Underhållningsorkestern (Pops orchestra), and the 100-member ensemble dubbed the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra was created. Since then, the orchestra has developed under internationally known strong conductors such as Sergiu Celibidache, Herbert Blomstedt, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Yevgeny Svetlanov, and is today an orchestra of international quality. Manfred Honeck of Austria took up the post of chief conductor in 2000, and the principal guest conductor is currently Mark Wigglesworth. The Orchestra has always had a special interest for contemporary music, and it premieres new works by both Swedish and foreign composers every year.

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© 2003 Ondine Inc.
Fredrikinkatu 77 A 2
FIN-00100 Helsinki
Tel. +358 9 434 2210
Fax +358 9 493 956
e-mail ondine@ondine.fi
www.ondine.net

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