



Notes on the Program

By James M. Keller, Program Annotator

EXPO

Magnus Lindberg The Marie-Josée Kravis Composer-in-Residence

In September Magnus Lindberg began a two-year appointment as the New York Philharmonic's Composer-in-Residence, and over the course of this season audience members will have the opportunity to hear four of his orchestral works: two new compositions (the first being tonight's *EXPO*, which was given its World Premiere by the Orchestra on September 16); his 1995 symphonic movement, *Arena*; and his widely acclaimed Clarinet Concerto of 2002.

Lindberg emerged on the international music scene in the 1980s, one of a handful of Finnish composers of his generation that included Kaija Saariaho, Jouni Kaipainen, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. All four studied with the same teacher at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, the renowned composer and pedagogue Paavo Heininen. Lindberg also worked with another senior eminence of Finnish music, the composer Einojuhani Rautavaara.

Lindberg and Salonen were close colleagues during their student years and together they founded Toimii, an instrumental ensemble that not only championed modern music but also helped both composers investigate novel instrumental possibilities and compositional procedures. Lindberg was also active as a pianist, appearing both

in concert and on recordings, especially in contemporary repertoire. In 1981 he left Finland for Paris, where he studied with Vinko Globokar and Gérard Grisey. Other formative training came from Franco Donatoni (in Siena), Brian Ferneyhough (in Darmstadt), and at the Electronic Music Studio (in Stockholm). His work has been honored with such awards as the UNESCO International Rostrum for Composers (1982 and 1986), the Prix Italia (1986), the Nordic Council Music Prize (1988), the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize (1993), and the Wihuri Sibelius Prize (2003).

During the 1980s Lindberg's music revealed its composer's penchant for complexity, a trait that led him to be uncompromising in the difficulties he'd set before his musicians. "Only the extreme is interesting," Lindberg proclaimed. "An original mode of expression can only be achieved through the marginal — the hypercomplex combined with the primitive."

As the decade unrolled Lindberg grew increasingly preoccupied with the intricacies of rhythmic interaction on multiple levels; this led to the composition, in 1983, of *Zona* (for solo cello and chamber ensemble). *Zona* brought his investigations of rhythmic complexity to the practical limit of the unaided human mind, so for his next major work, the award-winning

In Short

Born: June 27, 1958, in Helsinki, Finland

Resides: in Helsinki

Work composed: completed on May 15, 2009

World premiere and most recent New York Philharmonic performance:
September 16, 2009, Alan Gilbert conducting in the New York Philharmonic's Opening Night Concert

Estimated duration: ca. 9 minutes

Kraft (for orchestra and ancillary ensemble), he devised a computer program to assist in generating more meticulous calculations to fuel his composition.

In the course of music history, composers who have been drawn toward stylistic complexity have often arrived at a breaking point and then moved on to create works within a sound world that — at least from the outside — appears to be far simpler. So it is that, following the intense difficulty of *Zona* and *Kraft*, Lindberg proceeded to soundscapes that, in many cases, seem more relaxed and less insistently “on overload”; some might even be described, fairly, as smooth or spacious. That said, many of Lindberg’s scores, even those written in the modern “classical” mode, remain generally vigorous, colorful, dense, and kinetic, and, despite the extreme refinement of his compositional method, his scores manage to sound very spontaneous.

Although he has worked in a variety of genres, Lindberg has carved out a particular reputation as a composer of orchestral music. “The orchestra,” he has declared, “is

my favorite instrument.” Symphonic works of the past decade include *Feria* (which the New York Philharmonic performed in 1997 in its United States Premiere), a Concerto for Orchestra (2002), and concertos for cello (1999), clarinet (2002), and violin (2006). Among his most recent works is *Seht die Sonne* (*Behold the Sun*), jointly commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony. These scores reveal Lindberg’s increasing interest in presenting clear-cut melody, sometimes even of a folkish tint, underscoring the fact that, even after composing some 80 works, he continues to develop an idiosyncratic path of personal creative discovery.

Instrumentation: two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, whip, tambourine, bass drum, suspended cymbals, triangle, wood block, tenor drum, crash cymbals, tam-tam, harp, and strings.

The Composer’s Words

Magnus Lindberg has offered these thoughts about his new work, *EXPO*, which, in the Opening Night Concert on September 16, was the first piece Alan Gilbert conducted in his capacity as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic:



Magnus Lindberg

The title is self-explanatory; [it refers to] the exposition of Alan’s season.

I work with extremely strong contrasts, setting up some contrasts between super fast and super slow music and then a strange amalgam between these poles. [*EXPO* is] a piece built on qualities I find so gorgeous in Alan’s way of making music — absolute technical and physical straightness, no mystery around the rational part of it, and then on top of that the highly irrational and mysterious part of how you actually put music together.

Given the brevity of the piece ... I thought a pithy word like “expo” would make a fitting title; besides, I like the sound of the word. A work of any length must have a trajectory, a sense of direction and logic for how it evolves. I have tried to establish a musical language to communicate this drama. As short as *EXPO* is, there are more than 10 tempo markings, resulting in a feeling of great tension and energy in the orchestra.