

TOMMIE HAGLUND: MUSIC AND UNIVERSE

The universe, mysticism, sounds of cosmos- that is in music by Tommie Haglund. As an idea, but also as a concrete, as he really used sounds from cosmos, transformed by NASA, in his *Cello Concerto*. Music of spheres. In his pieces, Tommie Haglund has developed motivic work (I do not know if I translated it into English properly: it is musicological concept) in very unordinary manner: repeated theme, motif, chord or even single sound, each time turns out to be different, as if one looked at art piece shining with another light from different lamps. Process of composing begins with one single sound stuck in Haglund's mind. Since it comes out in sheet-paper (in his process of composing, Haglund do not use the piano), suddenly the full chord, concentrated on this sound, appears (though not always in dur-moll system). Then there is a movement, and finally- the music! Music which, paradoxically, by its movement, creates a state. Music, which most often is held in a slow pace, even if it says about anxious. Music, that is, itself, extremely personal, inseparably connected with and coming from composer's life experiences.

Music must come from the soul- says composer- Sometimes, I feel, music can express more than I can imagine. Sometimes, the sounds are even more thrilling than my own vision before. Music express what the words cannot express. Owing to music, we enter into a new dimension of awareness.

Looking at his so-far-life, Tommie Haglund, he finds positive results. With emotions but, at the same time, with a peace, he says about his difficult childhood, time spent in Great Britain, Soldanella, serious disease, and finally, successes. He is probably the best living Swedish composer and one of the most interesting figures in contemporary music.

Childhood and the first adventure with cosmos

Tommie Haglund was born on January 15th 1959 in Kalmar. There was no music tradition in his family. Visiting his grandparents' house where was a huge gramophone enabled him contact with music. Till today, Haglund has remembered one such visit. There was a radio quiz in the radio. One moment, his grandfather told Tommie: *Listen to, my son, it is a great music!* There was Andante from Mozart's 21st Piano Concerto.

But Tommie's childhood was not happy. Family problems caused at 7-year-old boy, serious psychosomatic disease, in effect of which, he spent the following 1,5 of year in hospital. He compares those-days mood to that evoked by Mozart's Andante. It was a feeling of complete peace. Haglund also remembers trying to imagine being in cosmic space. Radio's disturbances were to help him with feeling cosmic sounds. Then he wished to sacrifice his life to composing. After many years, while working with Cello Concerto, he came across real NASA recording. He decided to use it in his new composition. History repeated itself and memories from his childhood came back when composing Cello Concerto, Haglund fall into serious disease. The pain, suffering and even coping with death are the elements still present in his compositions since the first one at the age of 11.

One Sunday, I had an idea of Symphony in my mind. Music was whirling in my mind but I didn't know what to do with that. I called my music teacher. <Come to me, I will help you>- he said. -<Can anyone lift you here?> I answered no, but, after a while, I decided to borrow a bike from my younger brother and came to my teacher. His house was 30 km. far away from ours. He helped me to arrange music material and write down the music. In the evening he lifted me to my house. I will never forget it and be grateful to him forever.

Guitar

But Haglund's music activities in his youth, concerned not only composition. Since he was 9, he sang in Boys Choir at Cathedral in Kalmar and shortly after he started playing guitar at

Music School in his city and then with Bo Strömberg, well-talented guitarist. He introduced young Haglund to the music of John Dowland and the art of Julian Bream. He also taught him musical discipline. Accompanied by Strömberg, 18-year-old Haglund, moved to Halmstad. He lived in a little room in the basement where he was learning, composing and teaching. At Aarhus College of Music, he also studied guitar, as well as later, in London, with John Mills. At early 80s Mills came to Halmstad with masterclasses. At once he offered Haglund studies in London. And it was Mills, to really introduce Haglund to music by Frederick Delius. As far as Haglund's professors of composition are concerned, we must mention, first of all, Eric Fenby and Sven-Eric Johanson, with whom he had private lessons in Gothenborg and who was a huge source of support for young composer.

Delius, Fenby and Soldanella

While saying about his music godfathers, Tommie Haglund mentions, first of all, Frederick Delius. It was just listening to his *Violin Concerto*, that made Haglund to choose a profession of composer. When he was 24, he met for the first time, Eric Fenby, his following professor of composition, a composer, conductor and Delius's amunensis. Haglund was so fascinated by Delius and Fenby, as he was going to write a play based on the memories of the latter one: *Delius as I knew him*. In fact, this idea, was never led to the result. The first Haglund and Fenby meeting took place just two days after finishing recording session of *Song of the High Hills*. Haglund recalls, that Fenby, for more than an hour, was talking about his Swedish-British fiance, Soldanella Oyler, whom he met during his stay at Delius's house in Grez-sur-Loing but whom he was never to have married. Soldanella come back to Sweden and Fenby married an English girl. But, in fact, love in their heart never perished. Two weeks after meeting Fenby, Haglund had a phone call from Soldanella herself who had received a letter from Fenby. It was the birth of friendship between Soldanella Oyler and Tommie Haglund, which lasted till Soldanella's death in 2001. Haglund own many souvenirs from Soldanella as well as from Fenby. Soldanella even joined Haglund's family becoming godmather for his daughter.

She gave me courage to sacrifice my life to composing. - as Haglund confesses these days. He says about Fenby:

He always cared for me and was truly interested in what I did. He was very critical, but also open-minded and sensitive. He was truly my friend. Nowadays I miss him so often.

It was just Fenby and Soldanella, who are mentioned by Haglund to have had the most meaningful impact on the shape of his compositions those days (1980/90s).

Intensio Animi

The premiere of Haglund's piece *Intensio Animi* for cello and piano, in 1988, performed at Stockholm's Konserthus, to commemorate 300th centenary of Emanuel Swedenborg, was a real breakthrough. It was played by John Ehde, till today, one of the most closest Haglund's friends and a great advocate for his music. From the first sound, sustaining C, the listeners were just like hypnotized.

It was beginning of new chapter in my life. - said Haglund many years later. Before the first performance, the composer introduce his new piece to Fenby who praised it a lot. But it was Fenby to give Haglund a piece of advice:

Do not overuse music notes like Bax so as not to end up like Messiaen.

Regarding a list of Haglund's works, their titles attract one's attention from the very beginning: *Intensio animi* means *Power of Soul*, *Spirare celorum* (the piece commissioned for King Carl XVI Gustaf's birthday in 1996) – *The breathing of Heaven*, other most significant pieces were called: *Flaminis Aura (Cello Concerto)*, *Il regno degli spiriti (Streichquartet)*,

Inim Inim, Miraggio, L'Infinito, Insomnia, To The Sunset Breeze, Hymns To the Night, La Rosa Profunda, Daughter of the Voice...

Family

Haglund recalls one day, while being a student, when he had a very realistic, heavenly like, vision, he decided to come back to Halmstad where his girlfriend (who became shortly after, his wife) was waiting for him. They cared for and brought up their new-born daughter (her name was Victoria, as a tribute to great Renaissance composer, Tomas Luis de Victoria), in the evenings Tommie used to teach and at nighttime, he composed and listened to music by Delius. Soon their second daughter, Amanda, was born.

I didn't want to move from there. Living in Halmstad was a great solution also for children. They are the most important thing in my life, even though sometimes I was selfish overworking myself. My wife, Elisabet, and me, are living nowadays in a historic house and musicians from around the world come to us. I like being far away from what some people may call the centre of the world.

Today, the walls in one of Haglund's rooms are decorated with portraits of his four daughters. Despite a lot of work, composer's time and heart is always opened to the closest persons.

A Man

His particular features of personality as well as life experience make growth of unusual life wisdom. Openness to the world of nature, towards God, to another people, and, finally, to himself, mystical-like experiences, and unordinary artist's imagination, are the base for his philosophy of life. During our conversation there were many words that can easy evidence composer's attitude but also be some kind of lecture for us.

Before getting asleep I wonder, what I have learnt from another people, in which way I have grown and in which way I have increased another people's growth this day. In my opinion, the aim of life is to help each other with personal growth. It demands from us being very conscious, listening carefully, being gentle and doing with love what we are to do. We should do what we love to do, instead of putting money or respect of another people first. It demands responsibility for what we do and what we love.

This words acquire unusual meaning regarding fact that they come from the men who faced with death more than once, and each time found in himself a power to survive. After the latest serious disease which attacked the whole Haglund's system, only slight meaningless problems with walking have remained.

Humour and seriousness

Haglund lives with his wife in beautiful house near forest in Swedish sea-city, Halmstad. Now we are at the saloon. The walls are decorated with portraits of Haglund's music heroes: Fenby, Delius, Beethoven, Mahler, Schumann, but also a photo of Soldanella Oyler and some art pictures. There is an original Schumann's letter from 1835 as well as contract signed by Mahler, connected with cancelled premiere of Strauss' Salome in Vienna. In the central part of the room there is a piano with manuscript of new-rising composition. At the piano-Mozart's and Beethoven's busts. On the left there is McKwacz's (I do not know how to call him in English)- from Disney's *Donald Duck*, image. Humour means a lot in Haglund's life. Many times it helps to take things from the proper perspective. Haglund recalls a visit of Elizabeth Pitcairn who through the whole week with composer himself, improved the interpretation of *Violin Concerto Hymns To the Night* commissioned by and dedicated to her: *We were tired with several-hours work and needed some time to relax. I suggested watching Fawlty Towers to come back to work with new spirit and energy. She [Elizabeth Pitcairn] had*

never seen that before and laughed a lot. When we came back to work, the progress was so huge as we decided to watch Fawlty Towers as often as possible.

Personally, Tommie Haglund remains in friendly relation to John Cleese who appreciates his music a lot.

On listening to The Music

Listening to, besides composer, his *String Quartet Il Regno degli spiriti*, dedicated to Soldanella Oyler to commemorate her memory, I noticed that his music always have suggestive introduction and its source, and never comes from nothing, mess or chaos. Hence, its aim is to develop this source (which, most often, is one singular sound), not to discover the stabile element among the invisible space (mess) or chaos. Haglund agreed with me. But chaos appears itself- quite often and on purpose, somewhere between the introduction and conclusion, in the central part of composition. It appears when the first main source is joined by the second source and, at once, another ones. Nut, in fact, it always leads to the solution in one crystal clear source. We can see this in the Quartet that opens with first violin sound and concludes with the cello sound. The beginning is very close to the end. But a way between them is not straight and simple.

It is just like a life- the composer concluded my thought.

The Art

I asked Haglund, which one of his pieces, he liked the most, which one is the closest to his heart.

This particular one which I work with at the moment. But taking a tome perspective... I like Daughter of The Voice, I like Violin Concerto, I like Cello Concerto, I like others, but it is like with children. It is impossible to say which one is most-beloved, the best. They are different. My pieces are like children for me. And that's why it is so difficult to leave them to publish, to say they are finished. It is much easier to say that it is too early yet and they are not ready to be printed. It is like with children, when parents think they are still unready to leave home. (...) I am a perfectionist. I know my pieces very well and can recreate them from heart. They are so strongly connected with me. For me, music has its physical sense. I remember my pieces so well, because they are in my memory of body.

Music has for me another dimension, activating different parts of awareness than a word.

Working with vocal works, like La Rosa Profunda or Daughter of the Voice, I read the text once and put it aside, concentrating only on the music.

Music gives people something they cannot buy- it gives an experience. Music creates empathy in people and many other feelings. Music changes the world. I do not think that musicians, composers are better people. It is that each of us has music in himself. In many different senses.

The future

More or less, from the time of publishing his disc *Hymns To the Night*, Haglund's international popularity seems to get arouse. Lately, he received from his compatriots many prestigious awards such as honour prize from the City of Kalmar (composer's city of birth) and the prize of Halland Academy. BIS record company is going to record a series of discs with Haglund's music. As far as his compositional activity is concerned, nowadays he works with orchestrating the cycle of songs *La Rosa Profunda* and with his String Trio. In the nearest future he concerns first of all Piano Concerto and Symphony. Listenig to one of his latest works, charming choral piece *Själens helgedom*, this future music might turn out to be quite different from former works. The composer himself, says:

I feel some need to experiment with major and minor chords. Still sadness and tragedy comes into the music but it is different and my confidence is coming back...

Łukasz Kaczmarek.