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Kyllönen's music covers the entire emotional gamut

*Timo-Juhani Kyllönen's stylistic scale has proved to be both broad and varied. This is clearly demonstrated in his vocal music, which ranges from the religious *Missa Festiva* to the "erotic song cycle" *Amor Vivus* and his recent monologue opera, *Tango solo*.*

"I BELIEVE THAT GOODNESS holds the world together. Through music I seek beauty in chaos; I want to communicate positive energy." It is with these words that **Timo-Juhani Kyllönen** (b. 1955) expounds his mission, his musical credo. But despite having this highly optimistic mission, his music covers the entire emotional gamut. It is steeped in powerful, often dark-hued moods, and his expression ranges from absorbed meditation to lively, fast-beat rhythms.

Kyllönen was something of an unknown quantity when he first arrived on the Finnish music scene with a concert of his works at the 1986 Helsinki Festival. Before that he had studied in Moscow (unusual for a Finn), not only composition but also the accordion and orchestral conducting. Initially, some claimed to detect Russian strains in his melodically rich, atonal idiom, but his stylistic scale has proved to be both broad and varied.

Music for musicians

Kyllönen has personal experience as an active musician, first as an accordion player and subsequently a choir leader and conductor, and this no doubt explains why musicians have always liked his works. His music has also found its way abroad, so that in addition to Finland he has had profile concerts in such countries as Brazil (Santos, Sao Paulo), Peru (Lima), Germany, Israel, Ireland, Sweden, Russia and the United States (New York and elsewhere).

"Musicians in different parts of the world have shown an interest in my music and made sugges-

tions," he says. The fact that Kyllönen speaks seven languages fluently makes it easy for him to establish international relations. But languages also inspire him as a composer. "I'm fascinated by the way the melodic lines differ from one language to another. Maybe that's one reason why I like vocal music."

Kyllönen's own instrument is the accordion, and among his main works is the *Accordion Concerto* (2001). He wrote it on the initiative of his former accordion teacher, **Matti Rantanen** – one of the most highly-respected Finnish masters of that instrument – and it is strongly marked by vibrant rhythms, sometimes with a hint of Latin-American colour. Other major instrumental works by Kyllönen include two Symphonies (1986, 1997), the symphonic poem *Lichtenthal* (1998), a *Concerto grosso* for violin and orchestra (2002) and a wealth of chamber music.

Vocal music in many moods

Kyllönen's broad scope is clearly evident in his vocal music. He has composed for all kinds of choral line-ups: children's choir (such as *Three Alleluia Songs*), female choir (e.g., the *Sea Suite*), mixed choir (e.g., *Ciclo para coro mixto*) and a few works for male choir. The weightiest example of his religious music is the five-part *Missa Festiva* (2008) for soloists, choir and orchestra. Representing a totally different world is the large-scale "erotic song cycle" *Amor Vivus* (2007) for baritone and orchestra exploring the feelings of sensual love.

Opera is another of Kyllönen's interests. *The Book of Kings*, a family opera, was premiered in 2009 in Cádiz in Spain and has since been performed in Finland, too. His third, most recent work in this genre is a monologue opera, *Tango solo*, first heard in Espoo, Finland in January 2011. Based on a text by the Peruvian writer **Maritza Núñez** now living in Finland, it is set during the military dictatorship in Argentina and tells the fate of a lonely woman, Nicole.

"I was immediately fired by the text," says Kyllönen. "It would be wonderful to get the work performed in South America, but it's not just Latin-American, it's global, too, and topical, because the same thing is happening even today in lots of countries."

Accompanying the soprano is a chamber ensemble that includes an accordion. Setting the beat from time to time are lusty tango rhythms. Kyllönen has not, however, borrowed ideas from, say Piazzolla, and has instead dived straight to the roots of the tango, the milonga. The tango element is not just a colourful veneer but an integral part of the world of the opera and Nicole's fantasies.

"The tango element is in a way woven into the music of *Tango solo*, and it is only one element of the work," Kyllönen stresses.

KIMMO KORHONEN

See *Timo-Juhani Kyllönen's homepage* at www.timo-juhanikyllonen.com