

Sunday, February 28, 2010, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Swedish Radio Choir

Ragnar Bohlin, *guest conductor*

PROGRAM

Hugo Alfvén (1872–1960) Aftonen (1942)

Ned Rorem (b. 1923) In Time of Pestilence (1973)

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,
from *Rückert-Lieder* (1905)

Sven-David Sandström (b. 1942) Lobet den Herrn (2003)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied,
BWV 225 (1726–1727)

INTERMISSION

Anders Hillborg (b. 1954) Mouyayoum (1983)

Frank Martin (1890–1974) Mass for Double Chorus (1922, 1926)

Kyrie
Gloria
Credo
Sanctus
Agnus Dei

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SWEDISH RADIO CHOIR

Ragnar Bohlin, *guest conductor*

Soprano

Marie Alexis
Jessica Bäcklund
Susanne Carlström
Pernilla Ingvarsdotter
Jenny Ohlson
Helena Olsson
Ulla Sjöblom
Lena Söderström

Alto

Ingrid Aareskjold
Helena Bjarnle
Annika Hudak
Christiane Höjlund
Inger Kindlund-Stark
Ulrika Kyhle-Hägg
Tove Nilsson
Eva Wedin

Tenor

Magnus Ahlström
Per Björsund
Niklas Engquist
Love Enström
Mattias Lilliehörn
Fredrik Mattsson
Jon Nilsson
Gunnar Sundberg

Bass

Staffan Alveteg
Lars Johansson Brissman
Mathias Brorson
Rickard Collin
Bengt Eklund
Stefan Nymark
Johan Pejler
Joakim Schuster

Hugo Alfvén (1872–1960)
Aftonen (1942)

Hugo Alfvén is known internationally for his *Swedish Rhapsody*. But he was also a keen choral composer and arranger, and several of his pieces have entered into the standard choral repertoire in Sweden. Among them is his serene and beautiful setting of Herman Säterberg (1812–1897)'s poem *Aftonen* (“Evenings”). It depicts a silent evening landscape, where echoes of the shepherd’s horn linger.

Ned Rorem (b. 1923)
In Time of Pestilence (1973)

Ned Rorem, one of America’s most celebrated composers, was named “the world’s best composer of art songs” by *Time* magazine. The marriage of word and tone are crucial. These settings of six short verses by the English Renaissance poet Thomas Nashe (1570–1601) are breathtaking in their directness and austerity.

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)
»Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen« from Rückert-Lieder (1905)

Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866) was one of 19th-century Germany’s most famous poets, and many composers set his poems to music. Mahler’s wonderful setting of this poem, known mostly in its original setting for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, speaks of being dead to the world with all its tumult. It is presented here in an arrangement for 16-part choir by German conductor and arranger Clytus Gottwald (b. 1925).

Sven-David Sandström (b. 1942)
Lobet den Herrn (2003)

Sven-David Sandström is one of Sweden’s best-known composers. With more than 10 years as professor of composition at Indiana University, he has blessed the choral repertoire with a number of masterpieces, though his *œuvre* covers all genres. For some years he has focused on composing in the same forms as Johann Sebastian Bach, though with his own tonality and style. In the early 1990s, he composed the titanic *High Mass* for choir, orchestra and soloists, with Bach’s B-minor Mass serving as a model. He recently completed a series of *a cappella* motets, with the same texts as Bach’s six motets. *Lobet den Herrn*, from 2003, is composed for double chorus to the same text as Bach’s motet.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV 225 (1726–1727)

Singet dem Herrn is arguably Bach’s most popular motet, certainly the most jubilant with all its virtuosic coloratura. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was reportedly so deeply moved when he heard a performance of this work in 1789 that he requested permission to see the music and proceeded to copy out the parts. “Here is something from which one may learn a lesson!” he exclaimed. Could this have been the inspiration for some of the grand fugues that appear in Mozart’s late works, for example, the Requiem and the final movement of Symphony No. 41 in C major? One can only wonder. The juxtaposition of two texts in the second movement is especially artful, and typical of the manner of preaching through music employed by Bach, also known as “the fifth Evangelist.”

Anders Hillborg (b. 1954)
Mouyayoum (1983)

Anders Hillborg is known internationally, but mostly through his innovative orchestral music. This *a cappella* masterpiece from 1983, however, is a wonderful exception. Composed for 16-part chorus, without text, it uses sliding vowels and minimalist rhythms in a way that sets both audience and performers in a state of cosmic trance.

Frank Martin (1890–1974)
Mass for Double Chorus (1922, 1926)

Frank Martin, son of a Swiss Calvinist minister, wrote his Mass for Double Chorus in the 1920s, but did not permit its performance until 1963, because he believed it “unworthy” and not representative of his mature, impressionist style. Austere yet deeply inspiring, the Mass is today recognized as one of the great choral monuments of the 20th century. Alex Ross, music critic of *The New Yorker*, describes the Mass as follows: “It was written back in 1922, well before Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Psalms* made it fashionable for French-speaking composers to strike a monkish pose. It sounds like a Renaissance mass lost in time, aware nonetheless of long centuries passing and new horrors unfolding.”



Thirty-two professional singers form the **Swedish Radio Choir**, which has been recognized since the 1960s as one of the great *a cappella* choirs of the world, frequently engaged by the foremost international conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti and Valery Gergiev for concerts, tours and recordings. It is unique in its mastery of the full spectrum of choral repertoire in all its breadth and depth, from Bach and Palestrina, through the Romantics, to Strauss, Ligeti and contemporary composers.

Founded in 1925, the world took note of the Swedish Radio Choir in 1952 when Eric Ericson became its principal conductor, molding it into the flexible choral instrument that it remains today. Ericson transformed the choir into an ensemble capable of performing advanced choral repertoire—works by such composers as Richard Strauss and Max Reger as well as music of its own day. Arthur Honegger heard his own choral music sung for the first time the way he had imagined it, and began spreading word that this choir could sing practically anything. The Ericson sound became legendary. Many composers found the Swedish Radio Choir to be the ideal instrument for their music: composers such as Ingvar Lidholm, Sven-Erik Bäck and Lars Edlund; György Ligeti and Krzysztof Penderecki. The works they wrote

specifically for this choir count among the classics of choral repertoire in Sweden and internationally. Eric Ericson retired after more than 30 years' service, but he has been welcomed back many times as Conductor Emeritus.

Each successive Music Director since Ericson has impressed his individual stamp on the choir and brought new colors and skills. In the 1980s Anders Öhrwall shared his specialist understanding of Baroque music. Gustaf Sjökvist premiered works by Sven-David Sandström, Tomas Jennefelt and Hans Gefors, while also presenting programs with Lill Lindfors, songwriter Olle Adolphson and other guest artists from the popular sphere. Tónu Kaljuste, the first non-Swedish director, brought repertoire from Eastern Europe, including the music of Arvo Pärt and Alfred Schnittke, while Stefan Parkman presented a series comprising all of Bach's major works. Peter Dijkstra was named Music Director of the choir in 2007.

Since its first sensational tours to Berlin and Venice, the Swedish Radio Choir has carried on a rich and varied schedule of international activities. It is regularly invited to participate in international festivals and concerts. Its work with Riccardo Muti and Claudio Abbado in the 1980s resulted in a series of acclaimed concerts and recordings. In 2008, the choir toured in Italy, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries. It took part in a festival in Rotterdam and The Hague, joined forces with the Rotterdam Philharmonic and Valery Gergiev and other important ensembles and conductors. In 2009, the choir toured in Italy with Claudio Abbado and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, among others, and in 2010 they return to North America under the direction of Ragnar Bohlin.

The choir is well represented on CD and DVD, with performances of both *a cappella* and major symphonic works on such labels as Deutsche Grammophon, EMI, Sony Classical and Virgin Classics. The Swedish Radio Choir's vision is to deploy its exceptional sonic range to place its own special imprint on the *a cappella* and symphonic choral repertoires. It is an ensemble in which each individual voice finds its place in a unified artistic expression.



Ragnar Bohlin began his tenure as Chorus Director of the San Francisco Symphony in March 2007. Born in 1965, he served as choirmaster of Stockholm's Maria Magdalena Church and holds a master's degree in organ and conducting and a postgraduate degree

in conducting from the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm. Mr. Bohlin studied with the renowned choir director Eric Ericson and studied piano with Professor Peter Feuchtwanger in London on a British Council scholarship. Through a Sweden-America Foundation scholarship, he visited choruses throughout the United States. He studied singing with the great Swedish tenor Nicolai Gedda and has performed as a tenor soloist for concerts and oratorios. With Stockholm's KFUM Chamber Choir, the Maria Magdalena Motet Choir and the Maria Vocal Ensemble, Mr. Bohlin has toured internationally and won numerous prizes in international competitions. He has prepared choruses for some of the world's foremost conductors, including Herbert Blomstedt, Valery Gergiev, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Alan Gilbert.

Mr. Bohlin has appeared regularly on Swedish radio with the Swedish Radio Choir, the Maria Vocal Ensemble and the Maria Magdalena Motet Choir, and has worked frequently with the Ericson Chamber Choir, the Royal Philharmonic Choir and the Opera Choir of Stockholm. With the Maria Vocal Ensemble and special guests Rigmor Gustafsson and Lena Willemark, Mr. Bohlin recorded a CD of new jazz music by composer and pianist Elise Einarsdotter, who set texts by E. E. Cummings and other great poets. In October 2007, Mr. Bohlin conducted the world premiere of a new requiem by composer Fredrik Sixten, broadcast on Swedish Public Radio.

Mr. Bohlin's CD recording of a *Saint Mark Passion* by the same composer and another recording, *Mysterium*, featuring mainly *a cappella* music, were released in Sweden in spring 2008. He has taught at the Royal Academy in Stockholm and in February 2008 was Visiting Professor at Indiana University. In October 2008, he conducted a performance with trombonist and composer Christian Lindberg and the Swedish Radio Choir for release on CD. The Choir tours the United States with Mr. Bohlin conducting in spring 2010. Ragnar Bohlin was awarded the prestigious Johannes Norrby Medallion for expanding the frontiers of Swedish choral music.