

Sunday, May 7, 2023, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Nina Stemme, *soprano*
Magnus Svensson, *piano*

PROGRAM

- RICHARD WAGNER (1813–1883) *Wesendoncklieder* (1857–58)
Stehe still!
Der Engel
Im Treibhaus
Schmerzen
Träume
- WAGNER/FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886) “Am stillen Herd”
from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1871)
Magnus Svensson, *piano*
- SIGURD VON KOCH (1879–1919) *Die geheimnisvolle Flöte* (1916)
Die Lotusblumen
Die traurige Frühlingsnacht
Der unwürdige
Die geheimnisvolle Flöte
Herbstgefühl

INTERMISSION

- GUSTAV MAHLER (1860–1911) *Kindertotenlieder* (1904)
Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n
Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen
Wenn dein Mütterlein
Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen
In diesem Wetter
- KURT WEILL (1900–1950) Surabaya Johnny (1929)
Nannas Lied (1929)
Youkali (1934)

Major support provided by The Bernard Osher Foundation.

For years, Swedish born **Nina Stemme** has been considered a leading singer of the most challenging roles in major musical dramas: Isolde, Brünnhilde, and Kundry, Salome and Elektra, Minnie/*Fanciulla* and Turandot. That she initially shied

fully only after taking the time a development of this kind requires.

When she was first offered the part of Isolde—to be performed at the 2003 Glyndebourne Festival—she already had 14 years of on-stage experience, having first taken

lyrical parts such as Cherubino, Pamina, the *Figaro* Countess, Agathe, and Eva, before moving on to increasingly lyrical-dramatic roles such as Mimi, Butterfly, Manon Lescaut, Tosca, the *Tannhäuser* Elisabeth, Marschallin, and Senta. Isolde would have been the next step, but it was not until she had conferred with Birgit Nilsson that Stemme accepted the offer. To her surprise, the legendary Wagner singer offered to help her learn the part. Nonetheless, Stemme felt she was not yet ready to sing Isolde. When she did take up the role for the first time, her performance was met with enthusiasm and she subsequently made a recording with Plácido Domingo singing as Tristan and Antonio Pappano conducting. Even then, Stemme remained cautious: “You

are never ready with these gigantic roles,” she said in retrospect in an interview with the *New York Times*.

Respect for the roles and the operas, flexibility, diversity, and a level-headed estimation of her voice’s potential—these were the



Neda Navaree

away from these staggering heights of the soprano repertoire is a noteworthy—if not the defining—characteristic of her career. Mozart’s Cherubino is a far cry from Isolde and Turandot, a leap only few have mastered. Stemme made the transition suc-

factors that, alongside the voice itself, as well as native talent and musicality, transformed this highly gifted singer into an artist of global stature. In 1993, she was rewarded for her efforts when she won Plácido Domingo's Operalia competition. Whether at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, La Scala in Milan, the Bayreuth Festival, the Vienna State Opera, or the Royal Opera House in London, Stemme has now joined the great tradition of singers like Flagstad and Nilsson at the world's leading opera houses.

It will come as no surprise that she has been lavished with awards and honors. Stemme has been appointed Swedish Court Singer and the Bavarian and Austrian "Kammersängerin," and received the "Premio Abbiati" critics' award (2010), the Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera (2010), the International Opera Award for the Best Female Singer (2013), and the *Opera News* Award (2013), to name but a few. The German magazine *Opernwelt* has crowned her Singer of the Year twice, in 2005 and 2012.

That Stemme's native Sweden is proud of her is amply demonstrated by a generous list of honors that includes the Birgit Nilsson Scholarship, the "Litteris et Artibus" Royal medal (2008), the Jussi Björling Scholarship (2016), the city of Stockholm's Saint Eric medal (2017), an honorary doctorate from the University of Lund, and the Musical Export Prize of Honor, awarded to her by the Swedish government in 2016.

In 2018, she received the prestigious Birgit Nilsson Prize. The award's festive ceremony with the Swedish royal family took place in October 2018 at the Royal Swedish Opera.

Stemme's special status as a singer of "extreme" roles is also reflected in her list of audio and video recordings. Alongside the *Tristan* recording with Pappano, her performance of *Isolde* has also been documented in a live recording from Berlin under Mark Janowski as well as a television recording of

her Glyndebourne performance in Nikolaus Lehnhoff's production. Her rendition of the *Die Walküre* Brünnhilde is available as an audio recording from St Petersburg under Valery Gergiev as well as a video from La Scala under Daniel Barenboim. The diversity of her repertoire is manifested in her performances in *Aida*, *Jenůfa*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *La Fanciulla del West*, and Zemlinsky's *Der König Kandaules*.

After a successful debut as the Dyer's Wife in the anniversary production of Richard Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Vienna State Opera—a role that, along with Elektra, has become an important part of Stemme's repertoire—the soprano most recently debuted the role of Kostelnicka in *Jenůfa* at the Theater an der Wien with enormous success.

In May 2022, Stemme performed Brünnhilde for the last time in a complete *Ring* cycle at the Vienna State Opera, a role she had sung with the greatest success worldwide for more than 10 years.

Projects during the current season include *Tristan und Isolde* at the Teatro San Carlo in Napoli, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and the Vienna State Opera; her long-awaited debut as Ortrud (*Lohengrin*) at the Vienna State Opera; a new production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (as the Dyer's Wife) at San Francisco Opera, as well as recitals at Wigmore Hall (London) and in Geneva, Toulouse, Stockholm, and Budapest.

Pianist **Magnus Svensson** is acknowledged as one of the leading Scandinavian accompanists, collaborating with singers worldwide including Pretty Yende, Dorothea Röschmann, Christophe Prégardien, Malin Byström, Benjamin Appl, Miah Persson, Irène Theorin, Anna Larsson, Ailish Tynan, Ann Hallenberg, John Lundgren, Matthew Rose, Elin Rombo, Camilla Tilling, Daniel Johansson, Kristina Hammarström, and Cornelia Beskow, as well as rising stars such as Christina Nilsson and Johanna Wallroth.

Renowned for his versatility and extensive repertoire, he is a regular solo guest, chamber musician, and accompanist at leading music venues and festivals across Scandinavia, Europe, and the United States. During the 2022–23 season, Svensson con-

tinues his strong relationship with the Konserthuset Stockholm, his musical home since 2015. A highly respected programmer, he curates the prestigious lieder series for the Konserthuset, which is now in its tenth season. Guests this year include Ian Bostridge, Bryn Terfel, and Nina Stemme.

Svensson has a wide-ranging discography including solo piano discs of Mozart, Schumann, and Bach. Adding to his fast-growing collection of lieder discs, upcoming releases include recordings with Irene Theorin and Malin Byström.

Svensson has been the music editor at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music since 2012 and has since published over 750 new editions of Swedish music. For many years, he was involved in the extensive programming of music and concerts produced in association with the Royal Palace in Stockholm. He teaches at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm as well as at the College of Music and Opera at Mälardalens University.



Peter Knutson