

Swedish Grace

Svensen
Fernström
Stenhammar
Alfvén

Staffan Mårtensson
clarinet

Scandinavian
Chamber Orchestra
at Scandinavia House

Magnus Mårtensson
conductor

Per Tengstrand
Shan-shan Sun
piano

Henrik Frenidin
viola

JOHAN SVENDSEN (1840–1911)*Folk Songs Op.27*

- | | | |
|---|--|--------|
| 1 | Allt under himmelens fäste | – 3:45 |
| 2 | Du gamla, du friska, du fjellhöga nord | – 3:10 |

JOHN FERNSTRÖM (1897–1961)*Clarinet Concerto Op.30*

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|---|------------------|--------|
| 3 | Allegro moderato | – 6:50 |
| 4 | Rondo. Grazioso | – 4:09 |

WILHELM STENHAMMAR (1871–1927)*Three Songs from Op.20, arranged by Staffan Mårtensson*

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|---|----------------------|--------|
| 5 | Stjärnöga (Star-eye) | – 1:31 |
| 6 | Månsten (Moonlight) | – 1:55 |
| 7 | Adagio | – 2:37 |

Sensommarnätter (Late Summer Nights) Op.33

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|----|-------------------------|--------|
| 8 | Tranquillo e soave | – 5:10 |
| 9 | Poco presto | – 2:10 |
| 10 | Piano. Non troppo lento | – 3:16 |
| 11 | Presto agitato | – 3:23 |
| 12 | Poco Allegretto | – 2:52 |

HUGO ALFVÉN (1872–1960)

- | | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 13 | Midsommarvaka (Midsummer Vigil) Op.19
<i>Version for piano four hands by the composer</i> | – 12:21 |
|----|--|---------|

TWO SWEDISH FOLK SONGS*arranged by Staffan Mårtensson*

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|----|--|--------|
| 14 | “Vi sålde våra hemman” (We Sold Our Homes) | – 2:16 |
| 15 | Näckens Polska | – 1:15 |

SCANDINAVIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK

The Scandinavian Chamber Orchestra of New York was founded in 2001 by conductor Magnus Mårtensson and pianist Per Tengstrand. Its mission to bring the music of Scandinavia to American audiences has been widely acclaimed and the orchestra is quickly becoming an integrated part of New York's cultural life.

Most concerts are in the Victor Borge Hall at Scandinavia House on Park Avenue which is, naturally, the ideal home for the orchestra.

The Scandinavian Chamber Orchestra is proud to present this CD, which is the orchestra's debut recording. We present the World Premiere CD-release of John Fernström's clarinet concerto with soloist Staffan Mårtensson, and you can also enjoy some wonderful piano music: Wilhelm Stenhammar's "Late Summer Nights" and a sensational four-hand version of Hugo Alfvén's famous "Midsummer Vigil"

Also, enjoy the fantastic creation by Josef Frank, "Manhattan", which makes a perfect designer's match to the project of Scandinavian music played by an Scandinavian-American orchestra in New York!

The SCO would like to thank: ASF, Svenskt Tenn, Barbro Osher, Anders Wall, the Swedish Council of America, Scandinavian Airlines (SAS), American Swedish Institute, SWEA, SVEA, Jan Eliasson, Olle and Inger Wästberg.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS – STAFFAN MÅRTENSSON

Staffan Mårtensson (born 1964) has in the last decade established himself as one of Scandinavia's leading clarinetists. His repertoire includes all the well-known master-pieces for his instrument by Mozart, Brahms, Weber, Crusell and Schumann, as well as works by 20th century composers such as Debussy, Berg, Messiaen, Stockhausen and Berio.

In 1990, after having finished his studies in Stockholm, Rotterdam and Banff (Canada), Mårtensson won the Swedish National Young Artists Competition. He also received second prize in the Tromp Muziek Concours in Eindhoven, Holland for "his musicality, his sense of style in music from different periods, and for his convincing interpretations of contemporary works".

Mårtensson performs as a soloist in his native Sweden and around Europe, and holds the position of Principal Clarinetist of the Stockholm Royal Opera Orchestra. He is also the Artistic Director of Östergötland Music Days and the Linköping Chamber Music Festival.

Staffan Mårtensson enjoys performing in various musical genres, e.g. jazz, and is an enthusiastic advocate of contemporary music. His collaboration with European composers has lead him to premieres of three clarinet concertos in recent years, most notably the Johannes Kern "Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair" in Vienna Konzerthaus 2002. Coming seasons will see premieres of concertos by Roland Freisitzer in Vienna Musikverein, and by Icelandic composer Atli Ingólfsson.

Staffan Mårtensson's recordings include two CDs with works for clarinet and piano by Brahms and Schumann, and one with music by Swedish composers of his own generation.

MAGNUS MÄRTENSSON

Magnus Mårtensson's acclaimed performances as conductor in concert halls and in opera houses are garnering great attention, as he is invariably praised for possessing "both the technique and intelligence to produce high quality performances" (The Buffalo News).

The winner of the prestigious Darius Milhaud Award at the Cleveland Institute of Music (...unusual talent and creativity...), Mr. Mårtensson has been Music Director of the Slee Sinfonietta and Director of orchestral activities at State University of New York at Buffalo since 1996. His innovative programming, with an emphasis on 20th century music, and high level performances have attracted wide attention.

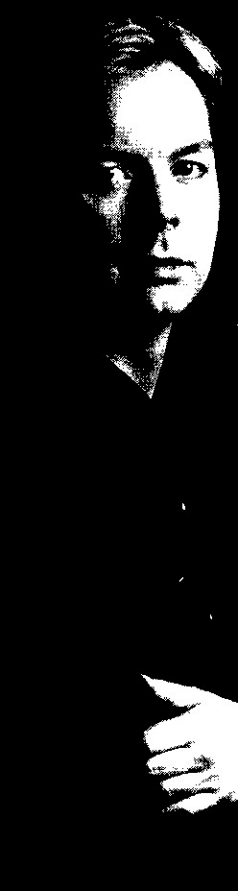
In February 2002, Mr. Mårtensson conducted the inaugural concert with the Scandinavian Chamber Orchestra, of which he is the co-founder and Music Director.

Mr. Mårtensson has conducted throughout northern Europe as well as in North and South America and has collaborated with such internationally acclaimed artists as Elmar Oliveira, Ursula Oppens, Pierre-Yves Artaud, and Per Tengstrand. He has premiered over 50 new works and has conducted several premiere recordings.

Mr. Mårtensson studied at The Malmö Academy of Music, The Cleveland Institute of Music, and privately in New York City. Among his teachers are Gunnar Staern, Dan-Olof Stenlund, Louis Lane, Paul Doktor, and Evy Bråhammar.

Magnus Mårtensson can also be heard on Mindfeel CD003, conducting the chamber orchestra Musica Vitae in Chopin's piano concerto in F minor with soloist Shan-shan Sun.





PER TENGSTRAND

“One of the world’s leading young pianists”, wrote Washington Post about Swedish pianist Per Tengstrand. He is also one of the very few pianists in the world traveling with his own Steinway, an instrument with a very unique sound.

Mr. Tengstrand started taking lessons from his mother at the age of six, and played for the first time in public at the age of seven. After studies in Malmö, Paris and Geneva with Romuald Sztern, Dominique Weber, Dominique Merlet and Hans Pålsson, Tengstrand won First Prize in the Cleveland International Piano Competition in 1997. This launched an international career with performances in the US (Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center), Japan (Suntory Hall), Singapore, China, South Korea, Malaysia, The Philippines as well as most European Countries.

Soloist engagements include The Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Japan Philharmonic, Osaka Symphony Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Orchestre National de France and Tapiola Sinfonietta.

Tengstrand has recorded several CDs, among them a live recording of Beethoven’s “Emperor Concerto” with Tapiola Sinfonietta conducted by Richard Westerfield, and a CD titled “Me and My Steinway”. These recordings are available at www.mindfeel.com

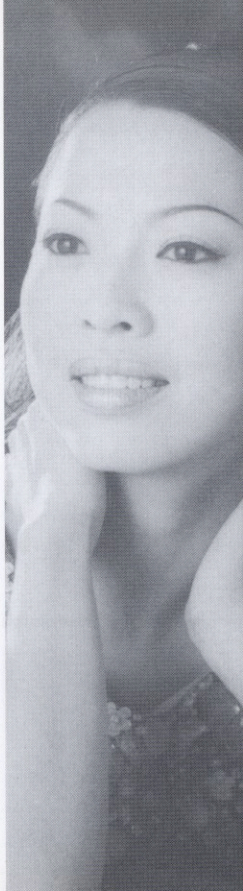
In 2003 the documentary “The Soloist” was premiered in Sweden, a film by Magnus Gertten and Stefan Berg. The film follows Per Tengstrand during nearly 3 years and provides a unique insight in the life of a concert pianist. The reactions to the movie has been extremely positive among both audience and critics.


SHAN-SHAN SUN

Shan-shan Sun, a native of China, began piano lessons at the age of five, and at the age of nine she was admitted to the Young Artist Program at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In 1991 Ms. Sun came to the United States to study at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Ms. Sun is active in performing as a solo pianist as well as a chamber musician. At the age of six Ms. Sun gave her first public performance and soon after she began to perform in major cities of China. At the age of ten Ms. Sun performed for president of China Jiang Zeming. After moving to the US, Ms. Sun has given piano performances in Cleveland, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Seattle, and New York, among other cities. Ms. Sun has also toured Hong Kong, Russia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, and Sweden. Most recently Ms. Sun appeared as soloist with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Värmland Sinfonietta in Sweden, the Amalfi Coast Festival Orchestra in Italy, the Scandinavian Chamber Orchestra in New York, the Liepaja Symphony Orchestra in Latvia, and the South Orange Symphony Orchestra. She has also been invited to numerous festivals, such as the Linköping Chamber Music Festival and the Giresta Piano Festival in Sweden.

Ms. Sun has won prizes in the Darius Milhaud Competition, the Nina Wideman Piano Competition, and most recently she took the first prize in the South Orange Symphony Artist Competition in USA. Her first CD, which includes a live performance of the Chopin Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor, was recorded in August 2002, and was recently released by Mindfeel. Among Ms. Sun's piano instructors are Paul Schenly, Anne Epperson, Sergei Babayan, Qing-hua Wang, Romuald Sztern, and Susan Starr.





HENRIK FRENDIN

Henrik Frendin is one of the most versatile string players in the Scandinavian music scene. Besides his career as a viola soloist and his progressive activities in the fields of electroacoustic music, folk-music and jazz, he is also one of the most sought-after teachers in Scandinavia.

JOHAN SVENDSEN (1840–1911)

Two Swedish Folk Songs Op.27

Norwegian composer Johan Svendsen was besides Edvard Grieg the most important romantic composer in Norway during the late 19th century. As a 15-year old boy he joined the army, and soon became active in a military band. His interest in music became more and more intense, and in 1863 he went to study in Leipzig, first as a violinist, but after he injured his left hand he turned to composition.

After returning to Norway he conducted a concert with his own works, and an anonymous critic gave his works a rave review: the reviewer turned out to be the 24-year old Edvard Grieg. Being active and very succesful also as a conductor, he moved to Copenhagen in 1883 to become the music director of the Danish Royal Opera. His arrangements of Scandinavian folk songs are made with extraordinary skill, and the second of the two recorded on this CD, "Du gamla du friska", was later to become the Swedish national anthem.

JOHN FERNSTRÖM (1897–1961)

Clarinet Concerto Op. 30

John Fernström was born 1897 in Ichang, China, where he also spent the first ten years of his life at the mission his father directed. He came to Sweden in 1907 and started to study the violin at the Conservatory in Malmö. He played with the Symphony Orchestra of Helsingborg from 1916 until 1932, with some interruptions for studies; first as a violinist, later as one of its leading conductors.

Throughout the 1920s, Fernström studied the violin, composition and conducting mainly in Copenhagen and Berlin. He was the principal conductor of the Malmö Broadcasting Orchestra between 1939 and 1941 and from 1948 until the end of his life, and he initiated the Conservatory in Lund and the Lund Symphony Orchestra. He also founded the Nordic Symphony Orchestra, a youth orchestra with the finest young musicians from the Nordic countries, that still to this day is an almost mandatory stepping stone for aspiring young Scandinavian musicians. Among Fernström's works are twelve symphonies, two violin concertos, choral and chamber music, incidental music to plays, and songs.

The clarinet concerto was composed in 1936 and is scored for solo clarinet and string orchestra with timpani. It's a piece with two main movements, the first in a moderate tempo with nocturnal, seductive melodies and an almost bitter-sweet character. For the most part the first movement can be seen as a wonderful duet between the cello part and the solo clarinet. A spiritual solo cadenza leads into the rondo, and the concerto ends in a rhythmic, optimistic spirit. If the King of Scandinavian clarinet concertos is the Nielsen concerto, the Fernström concerto certainly makes a very beautiful Queen!

WILHELM STENHAMMAR (1871–1927)

Three songs from Op. 20, arranged by Staffan Mårtensson
Sensommarnätter Op. 33 for piano solo (Late Summer Nights)

The three songs by Wilhelm Stenhammar that I have chosen for this recording are examples of the composer's extraordinary melodic and harmonic talent. I like them for their elevated simplicity, and for the quiet drama present in the music itself, also when sung without words.

Staffan

Mårtensson

Summer is especially meaningful for Scandinavians. For a cold, dark country, summer brings a short time of relief. Summer nights, with their beautiful light, are filled with a magic that inspired many artists and composers during the era of Romanticism. Late Summer Nights, Stenhammar's best composition for piano, passionately evokes the soul of the Swedish late summer, which holds a certain sadness. Late summer nights are the most beautiful nights of the whole summer, but they remind us that summer passed too quickly, and that we did not make enough of it. Perhaps we feel lonely, knowing that winter's darkness will soon arrive.

This melancholy is present in Stenhammar's wonderful first piece, while the second, Poco Presto, almost holds a function of the Scherzo in the Suite. The third piece, with its beautiful sonorities and floating harmonies, has an abstract character that almost puts it in an impressionist style. The Presto Agitato tells us the legends of late summer nights, when trolls are about in the woods, and the music is reminiscent of the romantic and passionate atmosphere that the night can bring. The last piece, Poco Allegretto, says so much in so little time: it waves goodbye to summer, it starts longing for the next, and it remembers the good and the bad time of the one that is soon to be gone. This music draws us close to the Scandinavian soul, and its beauty and originality is proof that Wilhelm Stenhammar's compositions deserve a place in the standard repertoire.

HUGO ALFVÉN (1872-1960)

Swedish Rhapsody No. 1, Op. 19: Midsommarvaka
(Midsummer Vigil) Arrangement for piano duet by the composer

Hugo Alfvén is one of Sweden's best-known and beloved composers. His infectious sense of humor is revealed by his Swedish Rhapsody No. 1: Midsummer Vigil (Midsommarvaka), which he wrote in 1903. This piece is made out of different Swedish folk tunes, but its success and originality is built more on the ingenious way that the music reflects the spirit of the people and nature around Midsummer time. The version for piano four hands was arranged by the composer himself. This piece has become something of a hit tune, and its popularity with both connoisseurs and the general public is the essence of a very rare gift that Hugo Alfvén was blessed with: the ability to bring art of the very best kind to be heard and loved by everyone.

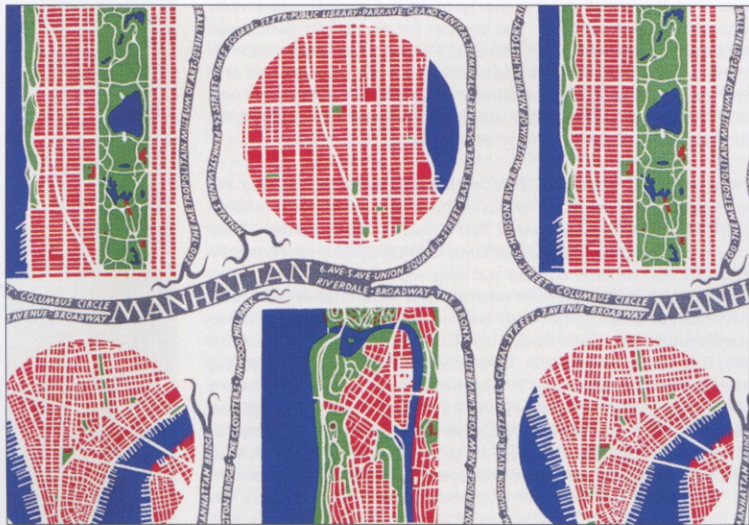
Hugo Alfvén was born 1872 in Stockholm. He started playing the piano at the age of eleven, but soon the violin took over. He entered the Stockholm Conservatory in 1887 where his violin teachers were Johan Lindberg and Lars Zetterkvist. Conjointly with his conservatory studies, he also studied painting with Otto Hesselbom and Oscar Törnå. In 1897-1898 he continued his violin studies with Cesar Thomson in Brussels, but after that he devoted himself entirely to composition. He was awarded the Composer's Scholarship of the Royal Academy of Music in 1896-1897 and 1899, and on receiving the Jenny Lind Scholarship in 1900 he went abroad for three years, visiting Paris, Vienna, Budapest, Italy and Spain. In 1903 he rejected an offer from the Stockholm Conservatory to teach composition there, but in 1910 he accepted the position as Director Musices at Uppsala University, an appointment he retained until his retirement in 1939. An eminent orchestral conductor, he made Sweden's first stereo gramophone recording in 1954, featuring Midsummer Vigil (Midsommarvaka). Hugo Alfvén died 1960 in Mora, Sweden.



TWO SWEDISH FOLK TUNES

In arrangement for clarinet and viola by Staffan Mårtensson

Of the two Swedish folk songs, the first is an emigrant song, "We Sold Our Homes", telling us the sorrows and hardships of the people forced by famine to leave their home country to begin a new life on a new continent. The second, "Näckens Polska", is one of many accounts in Swedish folk-lore of an evil spirit of the water. His fiddle-playing lures young couples into dancing and eventually to death in the dark waters.



THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION

The American-Scandinavian Foundation (ASF) promotes international understanding through educational and cultural exchange between the United States and Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

Founded in 1910 by Danish-American industrialist Niels Poulsen, the ASF is a publicly supported, nonprofit organization that carries on an extensive program of fellowships, grants, trainee placement, publishing, membership offerings, and cultural activities. It is headquartered in New York City and has alumni, donors and associate members worldwide.

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE – THE NORDIC CENTER IN AMERICA

The American-Scandinavian Foundation operates Scandinavia House - The Nordic Center in America. Located at 58 Park Avenue, between 37th and 38th streets in midtown Manhattan, it is close to many of New York City's other cultural, business and transportation facilities. Scandinavia House contains an auditorium, exhibition galleries, meeting and reception rooms, a library, a book/gift shop and a cafe in an eight-story building of over 28,000 square feet.

The mission of Scandinavia House is to promote the Nordic region as a whole while increasing the visibility of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden in New York City and the United States. Detailed with exquisite care, the cultural center reflects Scandinavia's well-deserved reputation for excellent craftsmanship and sophisticated design, and the Victor Borge Hall combines the best in Scandinavian design with state-of-the-art technology.

SVENSKT TENN

Svenskt Tenn was founded in Stockholm in 1924 by Estrid Ericson, designer and art teacher, in association with pewter artist Nils Fougstedt. Initially the company devoted its operations exclusively to art objects in pewter, and adhered largely to the clean, uncluttered classic designs of the 1920s.

The company's breakthrough came a year later in 1925, when Svenskt Tenn took part in several important exhibitions in Sweden, including Bygge och Bo (a housing and construction fair), Svenska Mässan and Liljevalchs. More noteworthy, however, was the company's involvement at the Exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes in Paris, which was a landmark success for Swedish arts and crafts in general and for Svenskt Tenn in particular. Estrid Ericson was awarded the Exposition's Gold Medal for her artwork in pewter.

More success was to come in 1927 in an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and later the same year in Detroit and Chicago. Estrid Ericson's work was well received wherever it went, securing Svenskt Tenn's international reputation. That same year Svenskt Tenn moved to new, much more spacious premises on Strandvägen 5 in Stockholm, where it still has its store to this day.

Josef Frank was a well-known architect, town planner and designer from Austria. With World War II looming on the horizon, he was forced to leave Austria and moved to Sweden, the home of his wife, where he also met Estrid Ericson who was already familiar with his work. The combination of Estrid Ericson's entrepreneurial skills and Josef Frank's timeless design turned out to be a highly successful concept. The first exhibition at the Liljevalchs art gallery in Stockholm in 1934 was an unprecedented success. Josef Frank's soft, colourful tones and large patterns were a breath of fresh air in the austere, monochrome interior-design world of the time.

In 1944, Estrid Erikson married sea captain Sigfrid Ericson, which meant she only had to change a single letter in her name. The working partnership between Estrid Ericson and Josef Frank lasted for 33 years until his death in 1967.

SCANDINAVIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
of New York
