



When Ture Rangström died in 1947, he was already a classic, yet the formulas for his art remain unwritten even to-day. His work held itself outside analyses, as if its own spirit cast a veil over the very notes, so that if one tries with a ruler or scissors to examine it further, one will find that one has not the right instruments for veils of spirit.

Ture Rangström would no doubt be satisfied with these conditions. Few composers have been more susceptible to inspiration and environment than he was. Usually there are periods in the creative life of composers when they place their main emphasis on musical craftsmanship. "Inspiration is work" is for example a statement once made by Honegger. In that regard Rangström was always a young composer and when his creative will burst into blaze, theory and intellectual consideration ceased to have any significance. "Technique has its own living psychology" was a comment Rangström once made when discussing song composition, implying that a series of rules should be as rich as life itself.

On relating how his songs have come into existence he has said "Whenever I open a poetry book, new or old, it can happen that a verse will suddenly strike upon my conscience. It is as though the portals to the secret garden of one's conscience are thrown open at their gables as if to say "Come in, Sir. But one moment! – It is here that my new song bursts into blossom, here it plays and for that short moment I am its servant!"

Ture Rangström was a child of the literary "nineties" (if we can also regard Strindberg as belonging to it), yet born a little too late so that he was split within himself, hesitant between the old and the new, just as also were Hjalmar Söderberg and Bo Bergman. Bo Bergman was one of the poets whom Rangström most frequently set to music. When writing in the volume "Musikmänniskor" to the memory of Lennart Lundberg and Henning Mankell, he began with song of praise for the atmosphere of that age, "When I look back on the musically formative years of my youth, I can still experience even to-day those fresh and penetrating cultural foundations which Swedish creative music could build upon at the start of the century. The frequently calumniated idyll of the turn of the century could certainly find pride itself on its political stability and excellent gastronomy, but in reality there was nothing which was lacking in the question of the passions of tension, storm and stress, when social, cultural and artistic



Ture Rangström

values were concerned. The eighties with Strindberg, still alive and a provocative figure in 1912, the nineties with their blossoming national romantic poetry and painting, all that made a stimulatingly powerful impression on the old and the new." Such a quotation thus leaves hardly any doubt as to where Rangström's heart was, and this book came out in 1943.

We know already, even without applying predetermined laws for Rangström, that his songs form the most valuable part of his legacy. The "Strindberg" symphony can be highly valued as a personal document, whose music seeths and simmers, for there is hardly anything in Rangström's entire output which is more resplendent in its struggles and conflicts than this work. Yet the conflicts remain unsolved, and the work's technical shortcomings are sometimes hard to overlook. "The composer, by making some personal allowances, can notice certain specific, leading and even developed motives in this work; a certain realised lay-out in symphonic spirit besides a notable contrast of effect between the movements", wrote Rangström with a characteristic self-irony many years after the first production of this symphony.

With less pretensions to depth but more artistically intergrated is the suite Divertimento Elegiaco for string orchestra. Written in 1917, three years after the Strindberg symphony, its fundamental spirit lies not far from the romantic fantasy-world of E. T. A.

Hoffmann, and here again literary inspiration also makes itself felt.

But that it is virtually always the case. Rangström as composer lived a life absorbed in poetry, for him the word had the same thrill as the tone. He was a good reader of poetry, and the way in which he read poetry was the determining factor in the shaping of his romantic songs. He shared certain characteristics with that author who made a powerful impression on his youth – August Strindberg – susceptibility to impressions. The creator in his romantic songs is seldom mistakable, but they are shaped in a shimmering sensitivity according to their word values. Ture Rangström, a grand seigneur in his methods of composing, talking and appearing was vigilant, gentle and cautious when he confronted a poem; he heard its smallest tremors and lived its life, just as a Carolinian can unveil himself in his work.

For that reason his moods are as varied as the moods of his poets. Thus when Bo Bergman hailed Rangström on his sixtieth birthday, it was with a poem, which spoke of the instrument of spring, on notes which glitter with sunshine and sparkling happiness and the "summery song in the deep voice of a cello" and of how it "surged like forests, oceans and human breasts". But there is also a winter, and Ture Rangström knew that also, perhaps even better than anything else

But winter plays his lure,
At the farewell of autumn
Arise oh spirit, and dance
Away as a guest of winter's storms
Hear their raging,
Wonderful is their dance,
And the storm is in major.

Gustav Fröding's lyric cycle "From King Erik's songs" are a part off he collection "Stänk och Flikar" which appeared in 1896, Rangström's settings dating from 1918. The impression of Erik XIV, as conveyed by the poet, does not take historical authenticity into consideration. It is rather its own situation in which the poet has read into the fate of the unhappy king. He is, as it says here – "the king, who squandered his kingdom and spoiled every beautiful thing within his reach, but who out of his darkness begged on a forgiving charity from those who loved him – a king who could only bring sadness and never happiness".

Alf Thoor

English adaptation Andrew McCredie

TURE RANGSTRÖM

Side 1: KUNG ERIKS VISOR (King Erik's Songs) – G. Fröding

Klunkom Welam Welamsson – En visa om mig och narren Herkules
– En visa till Karin, när hon hade dansat – En visa till Karin ur
fängelset – Kung Eriks sista visa.

Soloist: Erik Saedén

Royal Court Orchestra Stockholm

Stig Westerberg, conductor

3 LYRISKA SÄNGER (3 Lyrical Songs)

DEN ENDA STUNDEN (J. L. Runeberg) – Soloist: Elisabeth Söderström

VINGAR I NATTEN (Bo Bergman) – Soloist: Erik Saedén

BON TILL NATTEN (Bo Bergman) – Soloist: Elisabeth Söderström

Stig Westerberg, piano

Side 2: DIVERTIMENTO ELEGIAICO for strings

1. Preludio visionario

3. Canzonetta malinconica

2. Scherzo leggiero

4. Giga fantastica

Royal Court Orchestra, Stockholm – Stig Westerberg, conductor