

Translation from the Swedish text

A refined aquarellist

Kai Nieminen (b. 1953) is a lyric and a poet of the contemporary Finnish music scene. His music is stylistically difficult to define and it gets its inspiration from other art forms as well as nature. It is mostly subtle and has a programmatic dimension; the pieces often stem from outer-musical ideas which are reflected in poetic titles such as *Poems from Standstill Time and Silence* (dedicated to Morton Feldman) or *Capriccio, Astolfo sulla luna* (after Italo Calvino).

Nieminen could be compared to a musical aquarellist whose delicately balanced colour palette is pleasant for the ear without being sweet or sentimental.

The underlying thematic ideas are not brought to the fore; rather they are suggested in a refined way.

Wednesday's composition concert showed all this clearly by offering a cross-section of his chamber music from the past 18 years. From a pure aesthetic point of view there were no bigger differences and a stronger contrast between the pieces might have benefited the program.

The piano trio *Trio La Rue* has taken Nieminen's music to heart and even commissioned a work from him: *Reflecting Landscapes* (2011) inspired by a poem by Emily Dickinson. In his *Notturmo "Uccelli della notte"* for violin and piano Nieminen is moving in Messiaen-like birdwatcher trails while *Epitaph* for cello and piano (1993), dedicated to Tyko Sallinen, resounds in the Ostrobothnian inner landscapes.

*In der Winterszeit* (2004/11) - dedicated to Paul Klee and originally written for oboe, cello and piano - was now premiered in a version for piano trio. Its musical characterization was exceptionally clear and concrete: one could almost feel the icy wind in his/her bones.

The young musicians clearly seemed to be inspired by their task and presented an extraordinary refined musical portrait. However, one could feel that an essential part of Nieminen's musical expression is missed due to the fact that orchestra's colourful resources are not at disposal.

The *Temppliaukio Church* is as such an atmospheric concert hall and the music sounded fine, but a more intimate space could have fitted better with the intrinsic character of Nieminen's music.

Hufvudstadsbladet / Mats Liljeroos