



ØRJAN MATRE

preSage for orchestra | violin concerto

PETER HERRESTHAL violin

STAVANGER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ROLF GUPTA

ØRJAN MATRE and ROLF GUPTA

Photo: © Carina Johansen



MATRE, ØRJAN (b.1979)

VIOLIN CONCERTO *(Manuscript)*

24'15

Version for solo violin and orchestra (2014)

Commissioned by Peter Herresthal with support from Det Norske Komponistfond

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|---|-----|-------|
| 1 | I. | 16'04 |
| 2 | II. | 8'08 |

3 PRESENT *(Manuscript)*

13'01

for orchestra (2013, rev. 2015)

Commissioned by the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra

TT: 37'48

PETER HERRESTHAL *violin*

STAVANGER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ROLF GUPTA *conductor*

INSTRUMENTARIUM

Violin: G. B. Guadagnini, Milan 1753.

Bow: Benoît Rolland 'Signature bow'

Peter Herresthal's violin-playing is central to **Ørjan Matre's** 2014 **Violin Concerto**; it is a piece in which Herresthal's particular virtuosity in the violin's sonic stratosphere – those gossamer harmonics, those long, floating melodic lines – is an essential part of the concerto's musical dynamic. 'I've worked much more closely with Peter than I usually do with soloists when I write concertos', Matre says, 'so all of those things he does so fantastically are in the piece'. You hear that right from the violin's first entry in the piece, in which the violin's long-held ultra-high B hovers above the orchestra's nervous, ghostly rhythms; abandoned by the other instruments, Herresthal's violin sings a slow song on its own, establishing one of the key dramatic contrasts in the music: the violin seems to be teaching the orchestra to sing throughout this long, mostly slow opening movement.

The individual form of Matre's concerto – a much longer opening movement followed by a shorter, faster, second – wasn't the original plan for the piece. 'My goal at the start', he says, 'was to write a single very long movement that would be played alone. But after I had finished it, I realised that it didn't work on its own. Although the opening section is still a long and slow movement, there is fast and restless material too', in the unsettled pulses, whispers and sighs that Matre asks the orchestral players to make throughout, creating a extended, poetic palette of instrumental sounds. 'And you almost feel that faster material is always behind the music, even when its surface is slower. It's trying to get through. But the soloist always calms the orchestra down, and it's not until the next movement that he jumps in and says: "let's do it"'. The second movement presents the material of the first movement again, but just in a faster tempo – you can follow much of the first movement in the solo part of the second. In a sense, the concerto represents two ways of seeing exactly the same thing.'

It's music that Peter Herresthal says is 'tailor-made for me'. But that doesn't

make it easier to play. He talks about the enormous challenges of the double-stops that Matre writes at the uppermost limits of the violin's range, which are used to such striking effect throughout the piece. 'You would think that when somebody writes music so carefully for your register, for your personality, that it should be easier to play. But there's more pressure, in a way, because you should be able to do it.' Herresthal especially relishes the passage at the end of the first movement, when the concerto finds a melody – precisely notated in quarter-tones – that seems to resonate with another musical tradition. 'It sounds like folk music, with the open D string and overtone harmonies.' Matre confirms this source. 'I have worked with a Norwegian folk singing project, and that place at the end of the first movement [and the end of the second movement and the whole concerto as well] has a melodic shape and intonation that comes from that tradition: the quarter-tones, and the drone on an open string.' But Matre says it's an unconscious influence, not an attempt to fuse musical cultures together, since he only realised the connection after he had composed the concerto.

Matre's recent music increasingly explores the possibilities of spatial distribution of instruments as a compositional resource: 'I have a strong feeling that the audience opens their ears immediately when the instruments are placed around them rather than just in front of them.' And while the Violin Concerto is made for a conventional presentation of soloist and orchestra, there's an innate sense of dramatic opposition in the way the piece pits the melodic lines of the soloist ('he allows me to be a little bit romantic', Herresthal says, 'and I really like that – but it's always on the right side of being kitschy') against the febrile, unstable sonic ground of the orchestral writing. And Matre has released the latent instrumental-theatrical potential of the Violin Concerto in the context of his Concerto for Orchestra, written for the Oslo Philharmonic in 2014. Half-way through the 70-minute Concerto for Orchestra, Herresthal appears in the middle of the audience playing the opening section

of the Violin Concerto, joining the orchestra on stage, and disappearing as mysteriously as he appeared – a ‘really fantastic effect’, Herresthal says. The Violin Concerto has still another incarnation in a version for ensemble and soloist, but this recording realises the concerto in the full-orchestral state that Herresthal has played the most.

One distinctive strand of Matre’s creativity is his refraction of music by other composers and from other sources – Handel, Monteverdi, other kinds of Norwegian folk music – in new contexts. And his orchestral work *preSage* shares an indebtedness to another composer, in this case Stravinsky. Matre explains: ‘The Oslo Philharmonic asked me several times to write a piece that could open a concert, and I turned them down again and again. But after they commissioned the big piece, the Concerto for Orchestra, I agreed to write them a short concert opener as well. And it was for a concert where they were supposed to play *The Rite of Spring* – which is the piece that is the reason I started composing. So I used that very short movement from *The Rite*, “The Sage”, the one that’s over before you even realise it’s started. It’s just two things: those extremely high contrabassoons and double basses, and that harmonic string chord. That was the starting point for my piece, to create everything between those two ideas, so that’s why it’s *preSage*, and “presage” in the sense of what the piece heralds at the start of a concert’. Matre doesn’t quote the material of Stravinsky’s Sage directly, but the string chord and instrumentation of the original are part of *preSage*, as well as what he thinks of as Stravinsky-esque rhythms and block-like construction. But Matre’s explanation doesn’t reveal the range of wildness and unpredictability, from filigree string writing to full-on orchestral assault, that *preSage* releases in its 11 minutes. Matre’s piece composes out the weirdness of Stravinsky’s enigmatic Sage; making us listen into the Sage’s strangeness, and creating something distinctively, memorably his own.

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Ørjan Matre was born in Bergen in 1979 and studied composition at the Norwegian Academy of Music with Bjørn Kruse, Lasse Thoresen, Olav Anton Thommessen and Henrik Hellstenius. He was appointed as the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra's composer in residence (2006–08), and in 2013–14, he was the 'Profile Composer' of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. Matre was awarded the Lindeman Prize for Young Musicians in 2011 and the following year won the Edvard Prize (named after Edvard Grieg) in the Contemporary Music category for his clarinet concerto *Inside Out* (2010). Matre blends traditional influences with new playing techniques – one can often hear elements of tradition in his music, a dance rhythm or fragments of a melody, but they are suggested with great delicacy.

www.orjanmatre.no

Peter Herresthal is recognized as a brilliant and inspired interpreter of contemporary violin music, strongly associated both in concert and recordings with works by composers including Per Nørgård, Arne Nordheim, Henri Dutilleux, Thomas Adès, Olav Anton Thommessen, Henrik Hellstenius and Jon Øivind Ness. He has appeared with orchestras and ensembles including the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Oslo, Bergen and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestras, Remix Ensemble Porto, Tapiola Sinfonietta, the symphony orchestras of Melbourne, Navarra, Stavanger, Trondheim and Helsingborg, Oslo Sinfonietta, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Askø|Schönberg, Ensemble Ernst and Bit20, with conductors such as Andrew Manze, Anu Tali and Sakari Oramo. Peter Herresthal has given the Austrian, Norwegian, Spanish and Australian premières of Thomas Adès's violin concerto *Concentric Paths*, the last of these conducted by the composer at the 2010 Melbourne Festival. Other festival appearances include the Bergen Festival, where Herresthal currently curates an annual series, Risør Chamber Music Festival, MAGMA 2002 Berlin, and the Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

festivals. His previous recordings for BIS include acclaimed discs with works by Nordheim, Thommesen and Nørgård. Released digitally in 2014 his recording of Adès's violin concerto *Concentric Paths* has received a warm welcome, with reviewers finding 'an objective intelligence and sonic beauty' (BBC Radio 3 *CD Review*) and 'great subtlety and refinement' (*MusicWeb International*) in Herresthal's performance. Peter Herresthal is a professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music and visiting professor at the Royal College of Music, London, and at the NYU Steinhardt School in New York.

www.peterherresthal.com

The **Stavanger Symphony Orchestra** (SSO) has become one of the most successful orchestras in Scandinavia. In recent years it has achieved an outstanding artistic development, attracting an ever-growing following, both inside and outside Norway. This success is partly due to the orchestra's move, in 2012, into its present home, Stavanger's new, state-of-the-art concert hall.

Christian Vasquez is the orchestra's current chief conductor, while Fabio Biondi is artistic director for baroque and classical music. This shared artistic leadership has been in place since 1990, testifying to the orchestra's particular focus on authentic performance practice of earlier repertoire. Biondi's predecessors in the post were Frans Brüggen and Philippe Herreweghe.

The orchestra has visited several European countries, Japan and the USA, including a successful appearance in the Carnegie Hall. The SSO discography to date includes more than 40 CDs, including complete series of orchestral music by the 20th-century Norwegian composers Harald Sæverud, Geirr Tveitt, Fartein Valen and Arvid Kleven. A number of these discs have received international awards.

Since 1990, Statoil has been the principal sponsor of the orchestra, whose patron is HRH Crown Prince Haakon.

Following composition, piano, organ and harpsichord studies in Norway and the Netherlands, **Rolf Gupta** studied conducting with Jorma Panula at the Sibelius Academy as well as with Ilya Musin and Herbert Blomstedt. His composition teachers have included Olav Anton Thommessen, Lasse Thoresen and Per Nørgård. Rolf Gupta has been chief conductor and artistic director of the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra, and also chief conductor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and of the Norwegian Baroque Orchestra. In addition, he works with orchestras such as the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Frankfurt and Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestras, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Symphony. Rolf Gupta has made a number of recordings, including programmes of music by Per Nørgård and Olav Anton Thommessen for BIS. His repertoire extends from baroque and classical music, on both modern and period instruments, through to contemporary works, and he has collaborated closely with several composers including Hans Werner Henze, Luciano Berio, Magnus Lindberg and Bernhard Lang. Gupta's background as a composer-conductor has also formed the basis for critically acclaimed readings of the standard repertoire.

A STRING OF RELEASES FROM PETER HERRESTHAL



HENRIK HELLSTENIUS

In Memoriam (Violin Concerto No. 2)

Like Objects in a Dark Room for orchestra

BIS-8004

STAVANGER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ROLF GUPTA



THOMAS ADÈS

Violin Concerto 'Concentric Paths'

Three Studies from Couperin

BIS-8003

NORWEGIAN RADIO ORCHESTRA

ANDREW MANZE

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Violin Concerto · Duplex · Partita für Paul BIS-1212

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OSLO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA / ROLF GUPTA · GONZALO MORENO *piano*

PER NØRGÅRD

Helle Nacht (Violin Concerto No. 1) · Spaces of Time · Borderlines (Violin Concerto No. 2) BIS-1872

STAVANGER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA / ROLF GUPTA

Innspillingen er utgitt med bidrag fra Norsk Kulturråd.



KULTURRÅDET

Arts Council
Norway

The present recordings will be released on SACD together with Henrik Hellstenius's *In Memoriam* and Violin Concerto No. 2 (already available as a download: BIS-8004) in the spring of 2016. For further information please visit www.bis.se.

RECORDING DATA

Recording: April 2015 at the Stavanger Concert Hall, Norway
Producer: Marion Schwebel (Takes Music Production)
Sound engineer: Ingo Petry (Takes Music Production)

Equipment: BIS's recording teams use microphones from Neumann and Schoeps, audio electronics from RME, Lake People and DirectOut, MADI optical cabling technology, monitoring equipment from B&W, STAX and Sennheiser, and Sequoia and Pyramix digital audio workstations.
Original format: 24-bit / 96 kHz

Post-production: Editing: Marion Schwebel

Executive producer: Robert Suff

BOOKLET AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

Cover text: © Tom Service 2015
Cover image: Tom Sandberg (1953–2014): 'Untitled' (detail) © Tom Sandberg/BONO 2015
Back cover photo of Peter Herresthal: © Sussie Ahlburg
Typesetting, lay-out: Andrew Barnett (Compact Design)

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If we have no representation in your country, please contact:
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PETER HERRESTHAL

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BIS-8005