



ECCE ARBOR!

chamber music
by Maria Lithell Flyg

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|--|-------|
| 1. Ecce arbor! Se trädet! (See the tree!) (2020) | 20:37 |
| Alexandra Büchel <i>soprano</i> • Ivo Nilsson <i>trombone</i> | |
| Heléne Sikdal <i>horn</i> • Johannes Thorell <i>saxophone</i> | |
| Tora Thorslund <i>trumpet</i> | |
| 2. Okjökull – the enormous scale of loss happens slowly (2022) | 12:07 |
| Meredith Clark <i>harp</i> • Ludvig Nilsson <i>percussion</i> | |
| 3. Caress (Smekning) (2023) | 11:36 |
| Ludvig Nilsson <i>percussion</i> • Mika Takehara <i>percussion</i> | |

Total time: 44:15

FEATURING

Alexandra Büchel, soprano	track: 1
Meredith Clark, harp	track: 2
Ivo Nilsson, trombone	track: 1
Ludvig Nilsson, percussion	track: 2, 3
Heléne Sikdal, horn	track: 1
Mika Takehara, percussion	track: 3
Johannes Thorell, saxophone	track: 1
Tora Thorslund, trumpet	track: 1
Jerker Eklund, sound engineer:	track: 1, 2, 3
Mika Takehara, recording engineer:	track: 3

ABOUT THE MUSIC

This album brings together two works of mine based on environmental, climate change and biodiversity themes, and a third piece about a loving percussion duo.

Now that climate change is more and more noticeable, it is urgent to bring attention to what we are in the process of losing.

As a child, I often played alone outdoors. Nature provided a world full of beauty and magic that awakened a desire to explore. Out in the woods, in meadows, or up in the old oak tree in our backyard, I felt safe.

Right now, in Sweden, woodlands are rapidly being deforested and replaced by timber farms. Alongside climate change, the forest industry poses the biggest threat to biodiversity in this country. In order to shine a light on this matter, I have used music to illustrate what is going on. ***Ecce arbor! (Behold the tree!)*** is written for the soprano Alexandra Büchel and the musicians Ivo Nilsson, Heléne Sikdal, Johannes Thorell, and Tora Thorslund.

Alexandra is the advocate for the woodlands in a monodrama that is simultaneously beautiful, furious, and sad. This piece was premiered at Sörmland Museum in connection with their exhibition about our vanishing landscapes. It was also performed at the Korsholm Music Festival, Finland (2022). The lyrics are written by the dramatist Greta Sundberg.

For many people in Sweden today, forests are a spiritual space, a place for recreation and reflection. With *Ecce arbor!* I wish to bring attention to this ingenious system by which all things interact in nature. Woodlands are not only a resource; they are also an entire universe of plants, animals and other species where trees communicate and help each other by way of mycorrhizal association. It is estimated that it takes, on average, 90 years for a deforested area to rebound enough for the mycorrhizal community to be as diverse as before, though some species never recover.

Every five years a Red List is presented, an inventory of the flora och fauna found in Sweden. These plants and animals are either endangered or even extinct in one or more regions of the country.

The piece ***Okjökull – the enormous scale of loss happens slowly*** is dedicated to the first glacier to be declared dead on Iceland. I was commissioned by Iceland's DuoHarpverk, but on this recording, I have teamed up with Ludvig Nilsson, percussion, and Meredith Clark, harp.

As a way to deal with the grief people feel about the effects of climate change, there is an organization that performs ceremonial "funerals" for dead or vanished glaciers. To enhance this piece I have used recorded sounds of singing ice, which create a backdrop for the music from the harp and percussion along with many "dripping" notes.

Caress is an affectionate percussion duo written specifically for Ludvig Nilsson and Mika Takehara, who are married. My intention was to capture the closeness of their relationship both with regard to music and as a married couple. We have conducted workshops where we explored touch on drum skins and on human skin, in addition to the wide range of emotions that arise over the course of a long relationship.

MARIA LITHELL FLYG *composer*

Maria Lithell Flyg is a trained contemporary music composer. She began her career as a singer and went on to take a master's degree in composition at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm in 2014. Maria has composed chamber music, choral music, opera and orchestral works. Her music is often expressive and both melodic and rhythmically playful.

Maria has composed six chamber music operas, one of which is a commissioned piece for the Royal Swedish Opera as a part of their Short Stories III initiative: *Min tur nu* ("My Turn Now"), another is a piece for the Piteå Chamber Opera/Norrbottnensmusiken. At the moment, she is busy working on her first full-length opera, commissioned by the Vadstena Academy, which will be premiered in July 2028.

In 2019 she was awarded the Church of Sweden Culture Scholarship for her Requiem over lost biodiversity, *Frid-lyst* ("Endangered"), written for Sofia Vokalensemble and their conductor Bengt Ollén.

She received a Swedish Music Publishers Award nomination for the four songs she wrote for the soprano Lisa Carlioth (Swedish Radio Choir) and musicians from the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. In 2021 she was awarded the City of Stockholm Culture Scholarship for "Contributions of artistic merit".

Much of Maria's music has come to revolve around climate and environmental themes, and in 2023, a 20-minute-long piece written for the soprano Julia Sporsén and the Västerås Sinfonietta premiered *Antropocen - Jag är unik och spelar ingen roll* ("Anthropocene – I am unique yet matter not"), with lyrics by the poet Jonas Gren, and conducted by Simon Crawford Phillips.

The Nordic Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Sofia Winiarski, has performed Maria's sinfonietta piece *Every second breath comes from the ocean*.

Maria Lithell Flyg has released two albums with a selection of her chamber music: *Collected Chamber Music* in 2019 (Footprint Records / Naxos) and *Longing* (Daphne Records / Naxos) in 2022.





ALEXANDRA BÜCHEL *soprano*

Alexandra Büchel has established herself as a vivid performer within classic and contemporary opera; appreciated for her fearlessness on stage and for being open to exploring the unexpected.

This has led to collaborations with composers such as Catharina Backman, Britta Byström, Karólína Eiríksdóttir, Christofer Elgh, Hans Gefors, Ivo Nilsson, Annelies van Parys, and Hawar Tawfiq.

Her soprano voice graces concert venues and opera houses both in Sweden and abroad. Some of her most acclaimed roles include:

Gepopo in *Mysteries of the Macabre*; the blind poetess in *Aniara*; Lady Madeline in *Usher*; Charles Manson in Martin Lissel's *NOBODY*; and Judith in Malin Bång's opera *I, Volcanic*, performed at Teatro Municipal in São Paulo. In 2017 she was awarded the Birgit Nilsson Scholarship.

photo: Riccardo Palombo

MEREDITH CLARK *harp*

Meredith Clark is an American harpist living in Stockholm. She moved to Sweden to join the Royal Swedish Opera as their principal harpist in 2023. Meredith has performed extensively with the San Francisco Symphony, including on their Grammy Award-winning album of Kaija Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*.

Meredith enjoys drawing audiences in with both intimate moments and virtuosic displays and has been praised for her resonant sound, "liquid command," and "playing with heart-stopping tenderness." Equally at home in the recording studio, the orchestra pit, and on stage, Meredith has been featured as a soloist and chamber musician in Sweden, Germany, and across the United States.



photo: Maximillian Tortoriello

IVO NILSSON *trombone*

Ivo Nilsson studied at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and at IRCAM in Paris. In 1989 he debuted as a soloist with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and as a composer with an Octet premiered by the Ensemble L'Itinéraire at Radio France.

His music has been performed by internationally acclaimed ensembles such as the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Kammerensemble Neue Music Berlin, Orchestrutopica, and Vertixe Sonora. He is a member of the Axelsson & Nilsson duo, Ensemble MA, and KammerensembleN, and is a frequent guest in other ensembles, such as Klangforum and Ensemble Modern.

Ivo Nilsson was the artistic director of the Stockholm New Music festival in 2003 & 2005. In 2007 he was awarded the Interpretation Prize by the Society of Swedish Composers. In 2017 he was elected member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music.

photo: Anna Dvornik



LUDVIG NILSSON *percussion*

Ludvig Nilsson is principal percussionist at the Royal Swedish Opera as a member of the Royal Swedish Orchestra, one of the oldest orchestras in the world, established in 1526 with GMD Maestro Alan Gilbert.

In addition to this, Ludvig is active in Japan and has played with the Mito Chamber Orchestra, including their European tour. He has played chamber music at the Toppan hall, Tokyo Opera City, and Harmony Hall, Matsumoto. He has been performing with the Saito Kinen Orchestra at the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival since 2005, including touring to Carnegie Hall with Maestro Seiji Ozawa in 2010. He received a Grammy Award in 2016, with the Saito Kinen Orchestra recording of Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*.

Ludvig is sponsored by Sabian cymbals in Canada and Pearl Drums Japan.

photo: José Figueroa





HELÉNE SIKDAL *horn*

Heléne Sikdal is a graduate of the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. Since then, she has mainly been a freelancer in chamber and symphony orchestras based in Sweden. In addition to the French horn, Heléne also plays heritage instruments such as the baroque horn and the classic natural horn and is much in demand by ensembles that embrace this genre, such as the orchestras at Drottningholm Palace Theatre and Confidencen. She played on Arnold Östman's prizewinning recordings of the operas of Mozart.

When it comes to modern genres, she performs with ensembles like Folkoperan, the Uppsala Chamber Orchestra, Västerås Sinfonietta, and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, to name a few. In addition to this, she regularly plays with the Royal Swedish Army Band – often on horseback!

"The diversity of my profession and the experiences this provides is the best part of my job!"

photo: Heléne Sikdal

GRETA SUNDBERG *dramatist/ librettist*

Greta Sundberg, born in Uppsala, Sweden. A 1999 graduate of DI, the Swedish Institute of Dramatic Art, she has been commissioned by the Uppsala City Theatre, Swedish Radio Drama, and Sweden's Royal Dramatic Theatre, to mention a few.

Greta is a dramatist, a playwright, and an opera librettist. Her full-length opera *La Quintrala*, with music by Lars Graugaard, opened in Copenhagen in 2004, at DAO, Den anden Opera, and in 2015 she penned the libretto for *Silverfågeln* ("Silver Bird"), based on the biography of Jussi Björling by Yrsa Stenius, with music by Mats Larsson Gothe. Greta Sundberg is devoted to contemporary theatre, opera, and literature, but she is also an advocate of culture for children and young adults as well as societal issues in general.



photo: Katinka Kassius



MIKA TAKEHARA *percussion*

Mika Takehara is a percussion soloist and composer whose work brings together dance, poetry, and visual art. She has appeared as a soloist with ensembles such as the Berliner Philharmoniker and the Los Angeles Philharmonic under the direction of Gustavo Dudamel, and many others.

Mika performs in the electronic duo ZAWA-ZAWA with Lisa Nordström; in the duo KLAJIMARA with violinist Klara Hellgren; with the Saito Kinen Orchestra founded by Seiji Ozawa; and in the experimental free improvisation group Konpeito along with bandoneon player Mikael Augustsson.

She is sponsored by K&K Sound, Sabian, and Pearl Drums. Her recordings are released on BIS Records, Sony Music, Decca Records, Deutsche Grammophon, and ajabu! records.

In addition to her concert activities, Mika works with film music, composes for theatre and dance performances, and gives solo recitals, masterclasses, and interdisciplinary artistic projects around the world.

photo: José Figueroa

JOHANNES THORELL *saxophone*

Johannes Thorell debuted as a soloist with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra in 2002, and has gone on to be a sought-after soloist, as well as a chamber music and orchestra musician. He performs regularly with the Nordic Saxophone Quartet and his devotion to contemporary music has led to a considerable number of commissions and premiere performances.

In 2002, Johannes won first prize in the Wolfgang Jacobi Competition in Munich, and in 2002, he was introduced as a "Young Swedish Soloist" at the exclusive "Music at the Palaces and Manors of Sörmland County" Concert Series".

In 2011, Johannes released his debut CD *The Forbidden Saxophone* along with pianist Magnus Sköld, which was followed by the CD *Far North* in 2012. As of 2025, Johannes teaches saxophone at the Royal College of Music, Stockholm.

He is a Henri Selmer Paris performing artist and co-founder of the Nordic Saxophone Festival.

photo: Annika Falkuggla



TORA THORSLUND *trumpet*

Tora Thorslund is principal trumpet in the Royal Swedish Orchestra, where she's been a member since 1996.

Tora is a diploma graduate of the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. Alongside being a member of the orchestra, she has appeared as a soloist and as a chamber musician, as a former member of KammarensembleN and the Stockholm Chamber Brass.



photo: Bertil Thorslund

JERKER EKLUND *sound engineer*

Jerker Eklund is a sound engineer, producer, and musician.

Graduate of the individual programme at the Royal College of Music.

As a musician, he's worked with artists such as Jill Johnson, Nils Landgren, Blacknuss Allstars, Simone Moreno and Lena Philipsson.

Recording music is something he's always done—his father, Christer Eklund, gave him his first Tandberg tape recorder when he was 7 years old!

A sound engineer since 1996. Had his own studio since 2012. And he's currently sharing a studio with the legendary Alar Suurna at the Shortlist Studios complex.



MUSICIAN QUOTES

"Working with Maria Lithell Flyg on Ecce Arbor! has been very inspiring. Maria composes with great perceptiveness for the vocal parts, making the music both fun and demanding to perform."

In this piece she has used my vocal resources well to evoke Mother Nature as she rages and mourns the diverse woodland voices that are being silenced."

~ Alexandra Büchel

"It was a joy to play Maria's 'Okjökull - The enormous scale of loss happens slowly.' In the piece we explore different textural elements, harp and percussion trade off virtuosic, gestural riffs, as well as getting to contribute rhythmic drive and melodic moments."

With the backdrop of singing ice that reminds us that nature is always there, always changing and evolving (and in this case literally melting), and a part of everything that we experience - it's a powerful statement. There's beauty and tragedy, and the piece is a snapshot for both."

~ Meredith Clark



Ecce arbor!

Musik: Maria Lithell Flyg

Libretto: Greta Sundberg

Introduktion

1. Rike-dom

Förundran över naturens under. HON stiger fram, smyckad med löv, lav, strån och kvist – HON bär med sig skogen

Se! Där! Och där – och där!

Se! Yrfän, blindstickor, vilda!

Vaknar: under barkskrovel,

sköldar - urtidshud

Vi lyfter, blir till!

Puppa och stift, pistill - och bin – bin!

Se, träd fram! Träd här – och här:

Aspen, boken, drakfotsroten

Svirr! Darr, dirr! Bli varse, och se:

Här är vi! Här, och här, vi är:

I sänkorna, valven, kanalerna

Sporer och gömfrö, säl

Väven som laven, stark och sträv-

Vi är alla komna:

Se kärnen - vår Rike-Dom

2. Verk

HON åser en avverkning, blir starkt påverkad av den brutala "slakten"

Nej! Nej! Nej! Nej! Nej! Nej!

Våra ådror! Dom låter oss,

skiljas åt ... i stryckedjor, snaror-

Roten ur, vältan upp,

svarta klor, sågtand vass:

Blottar, hugger, sliter av,

Nerven som går genom stammen,

vårt allt-

3. RASERIER

Det gryr. HON blir varse vidden av förödel-sen. Förskräckelse först, sedan ursinne

Så ta då allt ifrån oss!

Ni som tar er rätten!

Ta! Ta! Ta! Ta! Ta! Ta!

Plundra! Stycka! Kapa!

Vi står ju här på rad,

streckkodsra

Ni som tar er rätten:

att rensa, att skända!

Tappa oss på livet, vår sav

Så låt då allting brinna –

Låt lågorna förtära, förinta-

Låt allt bli till aska!

Ni som låter oss försvinna

Vi som står åker här,

utan val

Hur vågar ni? Hur vågar ni!

Utan oss – vad blir kvar?

Vad blir kvar?

4. Sorg

HON ropar, liksom provande

Silvergran? Vresalm? Naverlönn?

Var blev ni av?

Så tyst ... så mörkt...

Hästkastanj? Järnek? Ava-rönn?

Varglav ... ? Vedstjärna ... ?

Var är ni alla?

Skirmossa? Lummer? Brandticka?

Blågryn! Svartöra! Bleka jordrök!

Ask – vårt gammelträd, svara oss du –

Svara oss du, svara oss nu

Solvända! Glasbjörk! Gråsvingel!

HON får inget svar. En stum mäktig tystnad bemäktigar sig platsen.

5. Trädens tid

HON vaknar. Reser sig långsamt. Försöker kanske "ta åter" det förlorade genom att samla på sig kvistar, grenar, kottar? HON söker sig fram mellan stubbarna

Se, här stod vi, tillsammans
Här, och här och här ...
– vi växte, verkliga

Vi stod uråldriga ... vilda: Skog!
Vår Rike-dom av kär!

Nu står vi kuliss längs vägarna
skymmer slagfältens sår,
sargade stammar, späda-

Vem ser pärlor små, av guld
Glimma, rinna, heta nedför barken,
intill glipan, ännu varm?

Vem vet hur spåren löper,
Vem vet hur våra ringar går?
I cirklar, åren
Er tid är en annan än vår-

*Trådöga, Sandlilja i gammelskog
Kärnyckel, Lappnicka, Skogsalm, Gran*

Lys frid, och låt oss bli-
Stå kvar, i det som en gång var.

*Skogsfru Stjärnmossa blå
Minns våra namn.*

Nu träder vi fram!
Ecce arbor!
Se träden, se träden, se träden ...

*HON väcker de uppräckta träden och de
utrotningshotade växterna till liv – frammanar
dem. De "lyser fram", likt rop, på oväntade
ställan. Allt eftersom spinnas ett nät av ljus mel-
lan henne, stubbarna, musikerna, publiken.*



Ecce arbor! – (Behold the Tree!)

Libretto: Greta Sundberg

Music: Maria Lithell Flyg

Introduction

1. Our true wealth

Marveling at the wonders of nature. SHE appears, adorned with leaves, lichen, twigs and blades of grass – SHE brings forth the woodlands.

Behold! There... And there!

Behold! Buzzing insects,
dragonflies in the wild

Stirring: under a protective blanket of
bark – ancient skin

We rise and emerge
Pupae, stems unfolding pistils. And bees – bees!

Behold and go forth! Trees here – and here:
Aspen, beech, ancient dragon-feet roots

A whirring. Pulsing. Be mindful and see:
Here we are! Here. And here. We are:
In hollows, canopies, channels:
Spores, angiosperms, pussy-willows

A weave like the lichen, strong and rugged.
We have all begun thus.
Behold these vessels, our true wealth

2. The cutting

SHE witnesses deforestation. The brutal “slaughter” affects her deeply.

No! No! No! No!
No! No! Our very veins!

They drag us apart, choked in chains.
Uprooted, knocked down. Black claws,
sharp jagged saws

Stripping, chopping, tearing apart
the nerve that runs through their trunks
– our everything

3. R A G E

Sunrise. SHE discovers the extent of the devastation. Shock followed by rage.

Well then, take it all away from us!
You who think it's your right

Go on, take it, take it, take it...
Ravage! Dismember! Sever!

We're all
lined up, like bar codes.

You who take the liberty to gut, to violate!

Draining the life out of us, our sap.

So then let it all burn –
Let flames consume and destroy -
Reduce it all to ashes!

You who allow this
disappearing!

We who are anchored here have
no choice.

How dare you? How dare you?!
Without us – what remains?
What remains?

4 Grief

SHE calls out, as if testing the waters.

Silver fir? White elm? Field maple?

Where did you go?
It's so quiet... So dark...

*Horse chestnut? Holly? Rowan?
Wolf lichen...? Elixia flexella...?*

Where did you all go?

*The shining hookeria? Club moss? Shelf fungi?
The blue-grey shingle lichen! Tripe fungus!
Earthsmeke!*

The ash – our sacred Nordic tree, give us a sign!
Please reply, let us know

Rockrose! Downy birch! Sand fescue!

*SHE hears nothing. A powerful silence settles
over the site.*

5 The Tree's Turn

SHE awakens. Gets up slowly. Possibly trying to regain what is lost by collecting twigs, branches and pinecones. SHE weaves her way past the tree stumps.

Behold, here we stood, together.
Here, here, and here...
- We grew. We were real.

We were ancient... wild: Forests!
Our vessels, our true wealth

Now we line roads, like a film set,
hiding the battlefield,
the mangled trunks, the tiny seedlings

Who can see the golden beads glinting,
running down the bark by the gash,
still warm?

Who knows where the trails lead?

Who knows what tales our rings tell?

In circles, in years
Your time is not like ours

Bissoloma lichen, Saint Bernard's lily in virgin forests, marsh orchids, stickseeds, wych elm, spruce

Protect all our species
And let us be.

To stand tall once again as in olden days.

*Ghost orchids, Blytt's leafy moss,
Remember our names.*

We're taking a stand!
Ecce arbor!
Behold the trees, behold the trees...

SHE brings the uprooted trees and the endangered plants back to life – summo-ning them. They "light up", as if calling out, in unexpected places. Bit by bit, a web of lights is spun between HER, the tree stumps, the musicians, and the audience.

ALL WORKS COMPOSED BY Maria Lithell Flyg

PRODUCED BY Maria Lithell Flyg
RECORDING ON TRACKS 1 AND 2 BY Jerker Eklund
RECORDING ON TRACK 3 BY Mika Takehara
MIXED AND MASTERED BY Jerker Eklund

Track 1 recorded at Gustaf Adolfskyrkan
Track 2 recorded at Studio 3, Swedish Radio
Track 3 recorded at Ateljén Studio 3

TEXT EDITOR Maria Lithell Flyg
TRANSLATION Ingrid Eng
PHOTO COVER Tina Axelsson
PHOTO BOOKLET Tina Axelsson
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Little by Lithell Music Production
www.marialithell.se

This production has been funded through financial support from the Swedish Arts Council.

Both pieces *Caress* and *Okjökull* have been funded with support from Helge Ax:son Johnson Foundation.

Ecce arbor! has been funded with support from the Swedish Arts Grants Committee.

