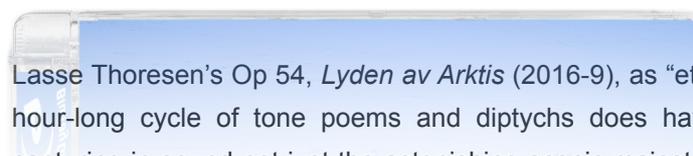


Lyden av Arktis

Thoresen *Lyden av Arktis*, Op 54: *Bare hvitt*, Op 54/1; *Brefont*, Op 54/3; *Himmelflokk og flukt*, Op 54/4; *Minnemøter*, Op 54/6; *To satser for strykeorkester*, Op 54/5; *Hymne til det urørte*, Op 54/7a; *Kollaps*, Op 54/7b
Arktisk Filharmoni, dir. Christian Kluxen
Lindberg Lyd 2L-169-SABD (65 minutter)

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Conductor Christian Kluxen describes Lasse Thoresen's Op 54, *Lyden av Arktis* (2016-9), as “et akustisk atlas over Arktis”, and in a way this hour-long cycle of tone poems and diptychs does have something of a documentary feel to it, capturing in sound not just the astonishing scenic majesty of the Arctic but some of the life—including Man—that inhabits it. The subtitle of the whole cycle is *La Terra Meravigliosa*, translated here as “Det underbare land”, though more literally it should render as “Det fantastiske landet”. In truth, Thoresen's overall score, designed to be playable by both a full-scale symphony orchestra or a smaller, ‘sinfonietta’-sized ensemble, is both underbare and fantastiske. As with Smetana's *Ma vlast* (‘My country’), each movement can be played separately or in concert together. Solos abound throughout; for example, for cello (in the opening section, *Høgtid*, of the first *satser for strykeorkester*, Op 54/5), or trombone (opening *Sjelereise*, the second panel of *Minnemøter*, Op 54/6), and the opening *Bare hvitt*, Op 54/1, is a gold mine of unusual sonorities, from what sound like exhalations from the orchestral body to the sounds of a hurre, or plastic hoses swung rapidly in the air. (Many years ago, the late, great Danish composer Vagn Holmboe demonstrated this latter to me at his home.)

I specify the opus numbering in detail above as the sequence of the seven movements given on the disc differs from that on the composer's website. The diptych *Minnemøter* has been promoted into fourth position, while the original second movement, *Flammehimmel*, Op 54/2, is omitted altogether. It is not clear whether *Flammehimmel* has been withdrawn or just excluded from the recording; there is room to accommodate it on both the SACD and Blu-ray discs and does seem to have been present at the cycle's premieres in Tromsø, Bodø and Oslo on September 10th-12th 2019. That said, the cycle as presented here, and the order the movements are given in, provide a coherent and cogent sequence of considerable imaginative resource.

I am not sure that I would agree with conductor Christian Kluxen in suggesting that *Lyden av Arktis* will be thought eventually as comparable with Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie*, not least because Thoresen's concept is quite unlike either of those and its subject matter has no connection with them, either. (True, there IS a palpable sense of loss at various points during *Das Lied von der Erde* and in the coda, *Kollaps*, of *Lyden av Arktis*, but I do not see how they can be related sensibly!) Rather, Thoresen's music has a starkness that recalls—at some

distance—that of Jón Leifs’ naturalistic tone poems. In terms of its scope and scale (but not musical language), I am reminded more of the Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer (and ecologist) John Luther Adams, who has been deeply inspired by the landscapes of Alaska (where he lived for a quarter-of-a-century, and by Inuit culture—as in his epic single-movement *Sila: The Breath of the World* (2014), recently released by Cantaloupe Music (CA21177; curiously, Adams’ most recent large-scale work—premiered in April of this year—is entitled *An Atlas of Deep Time*). The Arktisk Filharmoni directed by Christian Kluxen give a fine and impressive performance of Thoresen’s music, and the composer is fulsome in his praise of both in the booklet. Morten Lindberg’s sound is, as always, sensational. A very important release for all sorts of reasons. — Guy Rickards

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