

Musical rituals of Northeastern Europe

Ten strong female voices and vocal acrobats

Mariana Sadovska

Solo voice and indian harmonium

Kurbasy

Mariia Oneshchak – voice

Myroslava Rachynska – voice

Nataliia Rybka-Parkhomenko – voice

Outi Pulkkinen

Solo voice and jouhikko

Ensemble MeNaiset

Sirkka Kosonen – voice

Anna-Kaisa Lienes – voice

Eila Hartikainen – voice

Maari Kallberg – voice

Anneli Kont-Rahtola – voice

Outi Pulkkinen – voice



The eastern cultural area is still characterized by many pre-Christian influences, the magical belief in the power of nature and archaic knowledge, which was especially safeguarded by women and practiced in songs and rituals.

In western Europe it was above all the mystic Hildegard von Bingen, who in the 12th century dealt with religion, medicine, music, ethics and cosmology and who propagated the idea of the holistic nature of human life: "Man has three paths in himself in which his life takes place: the soul, the body and the senses. Only if these three aspects of life were respected in a balanced way, the human being would stay healthy.

This worldview also existed since very early times in Eastern Europe, where it was also the women who kept secret knowledge of the effects of herbals, trees, animals and ritual practice. Unlike Hildegard von Bingen, who collected many details in her famous writings and left them for posterity, in the cultivated landscapes of Central and Northeastern Europe, this knowledge was mostly passed on orally in epics and chants to the next generations and to the modern age.



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Under the direction of Mariana Sadovska the concert recalls some of these great themes from archaic times and their musical forms.

The Finnish singers Outi Pulkkinen and the ensemble McNaiset have their cultural roots in Karelia, whereas Mariana Sadovska and Ensemble Kurbasy have their musical home in Western and Central Ukraine. 10 voices are presenting traditional songs and original compositions, whose motives lie in the ancient wedding and fertility rituals, in the fascinating dialogue with nature as well as in mysterious mantras for health and happiness.

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It is about the artistic practice of – by no means museum ossified academic care of traditional musical traditions dating back to the Middle Ages. It was the women who once cherished the mystical knowledge of Eastern Europe and invoked it in rituals. At the beginning of this evening, "Musical rituals of the Northeastern Europe" in the series of world music in the Mozart Hall of the Alte Oper Frankfurt, the two female vocal ensembles have staged in the mutual affinity of a peaceful competition.

The trio Kurbasy with the soloist Mariana Sadovska, who originated from the context of a theater in the Ukrainian city Lviv (= Lemberg), is beautifully costumed with clothes and a floral headdress. In simple black robes, however, the five singers of McNaiset appear with their soloist Outi Pulkkinen, all classically trained at the Sibelius Academy. In the course of industrialization at the beginning of the twentieth century, traditional rural folk tradition has come to a standstill, but today the productions are the product of a reliable folk music research.

The Bulgarian women's voices, which were at a certain moment highly popular in the West, are reminiscent of Kurbasy's delightfully melodious throat singing. The Finno-Ugric, in the region of Karelia originating Runo songs in the repertoire of McNaiset on the other hand, are marked by a distinctive rhythm, which results from the emphasis on the first syllable. The collection "Kalevala", published by the folk music researcher Elias Lönnrot in 1835, has played a fundamental role in the foundation of Finland as a country.

Invocation of nature and seasons, weddings and other family celebrations, these are the main motives here and there. Central to this evening was the a-cappella choral singing, on the edge Outi Pulkkinen has appeared alone with a song to the wind, a composition of her own according to an old epic.

Fascinating is the bird-like coloratura, accompanied by Pulkkinen on the jouhikko, a traditional three-stringed bowed lyre, from Finland, Russia and Karelia. Its strings are traditionally of horsehair. The presentation by Mariana Sadovska started on the drone of an Indian harmonium with quiet whisper into one of the Ukrainian lullabies of the type, which turns into a complaint - an increasingly expressive song.

In an entertaining revue the premiere of these ensembles has offered a cross-section of the enormous wealth of the song forms of this region, sometimes with appealing sliding transitions, sometimes even in the bodily version of a surround sound. Even if the musicians finished the concert after irritatingly short seventy-five minutes - it can't be said, that one had received too little.

by Stefan Michalzik



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