

Anu Komsu CV August 2024

Anu Komsu is one of Finland's foremost international singers, a coloratura soprano with a strong reputation on the world's concert and opera scenes and her career is ongoing successful in today's musical life globally. She is praised for her perfect musicianship, technical skill, expressive interpretations and vast repertoire that ranges from renaissance music to progressive jazz and the most advanced contemporary scores. By commissioning and premiering new works for her voice type, she has helped to widen and enlarge its repertoire for the last 30 years, whilst also singing bel canto and presenting forgotten coloratura masterworks for today's public. She is the modern day Jenny Lind. In 2020 She was awarded the Madetoja prize by Finnish composer's society and was also a nominee for the Nordic Council's Music Prize. In the autumn of 2021 she received the prestigious Erik Bergman Prize for her special achievements in performing and commissioning new vocal repertoire internationally.

Anu Komsu made her debut as an opera singer in 1991 in Ligeti's *Aventures and Nouvelles Aventures* at the Helsinki Festival, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen. Internationally she appeared at the Frankfurt am Main opera in 1993 as Olympia (Offenbach: *Hoffmann's Tales*), a role where she was nicknamed "Polarstern" in the German musical press.

Her 70 opera roles contain several critically acclaimed performances of Zerbinetta, Lulu, Gilda, Norina and recent season Queen of the Night and Mother in Law in Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence* and she will perform the Mother in law in the coming new production of *Innocence* in Semper Oper Dresden in 2025 season. In 2017 Anu sang the huge coloratura role of Catherine in the Finnish premiere of Giacomo Meyerbeer's *l'Etoile du Nord*. In the more recent years she has extended her repertoire also to lyrical and dramatic soprano roles, such as Salome(2019 Turku Philharmonic), Nannetta, Susanna, Micaela, Rosalinde and Tiresias(Poulenc). Along the traditional repertoire Anu has performed significant 20th century and contemporary works like Schönberg: *Moses and Aron*, Ligeti: *Mysteries of the Macabre*, Schnittke: *Life with an Idiot* (in the German premiere 1995, Bremen). She has performed Morton Feldman's cult status opera in its respective French and Danish premieres in 2004-5, and when performing the same work at the Salzburg Festival in 2011 the press named her "Antioper Helden" (=Anti opera heroine). John Zorn's *Machine de L' Etre* at the New York City Opera brought her the attribute "Pyrotechnic Grace". Among important title roles she has performed James Dillon: *Philomela* (Paris Odéon; Budapest Festival; Strasbourg Musica; Casa da Musica Porto), Peter Eötvös: *Lady Sarashina* (Warsaw Opera 2013), Heinz Holliger: *Schneewittchen* (Basel Theatre 2014).

George Benjamin created the soprano role in his opera *Into the Little Hill* specially for Anu. Since the premiere in Paris, 2006, she has performed this work in Europa and the USA already 50 times, and still counting-most recently at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and Wigmore Hall London in 2019. Eva's role in Karlheinz Stockhausen's opera *Donnerstag aus Licht* (Basel Theatre 2016) was another critically acclaimed performance. Anu is the only singer ever to have performed all of Eva's massive role in this 6-hour opera where it is usually shared by different singers. The show was named Best Opera Production of the Year by the German Opernwelt magazine.

The major international opera scenes and festivals where Anu Komsu has appeared include Opéra de Paris Bastille, Paris; New York City Opera; Stuttgart State Opera; Frankfurt Opera; Basel Theatre; Bremen Theatre; Munich Theater am Gärtnerplatz; Hannover State Opera; Braunschweig State Opera; Salzburg Festival; Lincoln Center Festival; Wiener Festwochen; Lucerne Festival; Berlin Festwochen; Warsaw National Opera; Lyon Opera; Theatre Odéon, Paris; Casa da Musica Porto; La Scala Milan; Mi-To Festival Milan and Turin; Finnish National Opera.

The major international concert halls where Anu Komsu has performed include Musikverein and Konzerthaus, Vienna; Philharmonie Berlin; Royal Albert Hall, Barbican and Royal Festival Hall, London; Philharmonie, Chatelet and Cité de la Musique, Paris; Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; Alte Oper, Frankfurt; Gewandhaus Leipzig; Lincoln Center NY; Walt Disney Hall LA; Osaka Concert Hall; Symphony Hall, Birmingham; Philharmonie, Cologne; Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg; Auditorio della Musica, Rome; Rudolfinum and Smetana Hall, Prague; Konserthuset, Stockholm; KKL Lucerne; Musiikkitalo Helsinki.

Anu has performed as soloist with numerous leading orchestras such as Vienna Philharmonic; Berlin Philharmonic; Deutsches Symphonieorchester Berlin; La Scala Orchestra Milan; New York Philharmonic; Toronto Symphony Orchestra; Los Angeles Philharmonic; BBC Symphony Orchestra; BBC Philharmonic; Czech Philharmonic; Orchestre de Paris; Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France; Philharmonia Orchestra London; Bavarian Radio Symphony; Rotterdam Philharmonic; Vienna Symphony; Oslo Philharmonic; San Francisco Symphony; Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome; City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; HR Symphony Frankfurt; Ensemble Intercontemporain, Paris; Ensemble Modern, Frankfurt; London Sinfonietta; Avanti Chamber Orchestra; Gulbenkian Orchestra Lisbon; Lyon National Orchestra; Haydn Orchestra Bolzano; Mahler Chamber Orchestra; Chamber Orchestra of Europe; Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra; Helsinki Philharmonic; Sinfonia Lahti; Turku Philharmonic; Asko Ensemble; Netherlands Radio Philharmonic; Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra.

The conductors Anu has worked with include Sir Roger Norrington, Sakari Oramo, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Alan Gilbert, Jesus Lopez-Cobos, Franz Welser-Möst, Theodor Guschlbauer, Heinz Holliger, Peter Eötvös, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Susana Mälki, Leif Segerstam, Hannu Lintu, Francois Xaver Roth, Massimo Zanetti, Santtu Rouvali, Anna-Maria Helsing, Martyn Brabbins and Gergely Madaras. Her directors list is equally impressive: Piere Audi, Arturo Marelli, Lydia Steier, Leea Klemola, Maria Sid, Christoph Loy, Udo Samel, David Mouchtar-Samorai, Achim Freyer, Tony Palmer, Claus Guth, Karin Beier, Anthony Pilavachi, Frank Hoffman, Lasse Pöysti, Juho Kuosmanen. A highlight was also collaborating with Christoph Waltz in Matthias Pintscher's opera *l'Espace Dernier*.

Anu has a massive concert repertoire, especially works with orchestra which include Sibelius *Luonnotar*; Magnus Lindberg *Accused*; Lutoslawski *Chantefleurs et Chantefables*; Szymanowski *Fairy Princess songs*; Richard Strauss *Four Last Songs*; Aarre Merikanto *Ekho*; Debussy (orch. Oramo) *Chansons de Jeunesse*; Rued Langgaard *Symphony nr 2*; Mahler *Symphonies 2,4,8*; Nielsen *Symphony 3*; Vaughan Williams *Symphony 3.*; *Nono Canti di vita e D' amore*

Large works World premiered by Anu include Kaija Saariaho *Saarikoski* (2013-2020) and Leino (2000-2007) songs; Jukka Tiensuu *Voice Verser* (2012); Christian Mason *Man Made* (2018); Jonathan Harvey *White as Jasmine* (2000); Esa-Pekka Salonen *Floof* (1988) and *Wing on Wing* (2004); Richard Ayres *Noncerto* (2002); Un Suk Chin *Cantatrix Sopranica* (2005); Kimmo Hakola *Le Sacrifice* (2006)

Anu has enjoyed a long partnership with lied pianist Pia Värri, with whom she has recorded two cd albums: *O'Heart* (songs to Eino Leino poetry) and recently *Sumun Läpi*, complete vocal music with piano by Kaija Saariaho. They have an extensive repertoire together: Debussy, Fauré, Tchaikovsky; Pauline Viardot; Wolf; Erik Bergman; Richard Strauss. György Kurtag's *Kafka Fragmente* for soprano ad violin have featured in her repertoire since 1988, first with Sakari Oramo (with whom the prize-winning recording for Ondine was made), and later also with violinists Andras Keller, Isabelle Faust, Minna Pensola and Patricia Kopatchinskaja.

She has made hundreds of recordings, including Mahler *Symphony 4* with SWR Symphony and Sir Roger Norrington; B.A.Zimmermann *Soldaten Vocal symphony* with Finnish RSO and Hannu Lintu; *Being Beauteous*-music by Britten, Henze, Castiglioni, Schönberg and Szymanowski with Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra cond. Juha Kangas and Uusinta Ensemble cond. Sakari Oramo; *Coloratura* with Sinfonia Lahti cond. S.Oramo; *Aarre Merikanto Ekho* with Turku Philharmonic cond.Petri Sakari; *The Brightest Matter*, a jazz album; Nielsen *Symphony 3* with BBC Scottish cond.Osmo Vänskä; Heinz-Juhani Hoffmann *Ahti Karjalainen opera*; Langgaard *Symphony 2* with Vienna Philharmonic cond.S.Oramo (Gramophone Award); Harvey White as *Jasmine* with BBC Scottish cond.Ilan Volkov (Gramophone Award); Nielsen *Symphony 3* with Stockholm Philharmonic cond.Sakari Oramo (Gramophone Award); Saariaho *Leino Songs* orchestral version with Finnish RSO cond.S.Oramo (Gramophone Award).

An important phase in Anu Komi's career occurred in 2004-2018, when she was (alongside her extensive soloist career) founder and Artistic Director of West Coast Kokkola Opera company, and for the last four years of that period also Managing Director. Between 2006 and 2017, the company produced the Kokkola Opera summer festival.

The last festival in 2017 was marking the 100th year of Finnish independence with a Finnish premiere of Giacomo Meyerbeer's opera *l'Etoile du Nord* (1854), based on a story taking place in Finnish Karelia with a leading role of Katariina (Catherine) from Vyborg. The opera was performed in Kokkola, and in November 2017 in the Helsinki Music Centre-the latter was captured by YLE and is still to be found on their on demand service Yle Areena free of charge. The production received praise in the Finnish media, as well as in the leading German opera magazine *Opernwelt* and also in a major Russian opera publication. The performers of the opera represented European top class artists working alongside Finnish debutants.

Anu was responsible for the planning of all the festival productions, as well as the touring activities which took the company to Helsinki, Turku, Espoo, Oulu, Stockholm and Umeå (Norrlandsoperan). The festival produced 25 full scale opera productions as well as over 100 concerts and events at both inside and outside venues. The scale of the repertoire was vast, ranging from early baroque to contemporary and jazz. Anu was also director in five operas: Vivaldi *La Verita in Cimento*; Detlev Glanert *Leviathan* and *Der Engel auf dem Schiff*; Puccini *Suor Angelica* (with co-director Juha Mustanoja) and Kurt Weill *Silbersee* (with film director Juho Kuosmanen). *Silbersee* got excellent reviews in the German magazine *Opernwelt* and was focussed upon as the only opera event besides Savonlinna festival.

The Kokkola Opera commissioned and premiered three new works:

-Sebastian Fagerlund's *Döbeln* (2009)-also performed in Turku and Oulunsalo music festivals, at the Stockholm Concert Hall and Umeå Norrlandsoperan, and the recording made for BIS received the Record of the Year award from YLE in 2010.

-Heinz Juhani Hoffmann's *Ahti karjalainen-Life, Kekkonen and Deeds* (2012), a production that was also praised in the *Opernwelt* magazine

-Seppo Pohjola's "*Harrbåda's Maiden*", also praised in *Opernwelt*.