

Inspired by Orpheus

Acclaimed Swedish violinist and conductor Katarina Andreasson attended a week of Orpheus Chamber Orchestra rehearsals in November. She took some time out of her busy schedule to answer some questions about her OCO experience.



Jim Wilson - Katarina, please tell us a little about your career and how you ended up as concertmaster of the Swedish Chamber Orchestra.

Katarina Andreasson - I started my violin studies quite early, graduating with a Diploma from The Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen by Prof. Milan Vitek. At the age of 22 I got my first position as 1st Concertmaster of the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra. After 10 years in Denmark I was longing back to Sweden, to our wonderful nature. I got the position as 1st Concertmaster of the Gothenburg Opera orchestra in 1995. In 1997 I had my international debut as a soloist, when I played Howard Blake violin concerto "The Leeds" in Royal Festival Hall with the Philharmonia orchestra. The same year I was offered

the position as 1st Concertmaster of the Swedish Chamber Orchestra (SCO). With the SCO it has really been a journey!

We have developed the orchestra to have our own style of playing, starting out with recording all the Beethoven orchestral music on Simax. For the string players we have especially developed the bow technique, working a lot with expression by bow speed. I am often leading the orchestra from my position as concertmaster. That made me interested in studying conducting. So, at the age of 40 with two small children, I started my conducting studies at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm by prof. Jorma Panula in combination with my job as concertmaster. After 4 years I took my Bachelor degree. My international debut as a conductor was in 2006 with the BBC Symphony orchestra in Belfast. Since then, I am combining my work as a concertmaster with the conducting. I also like to teach, and in 2012 I was installed as a professor at the University in Örebro, where I the same year started the Academic Symphony orchestra.

As a soloist I have recorded, among others, the violin concerto by Peteris Vasks (BIS), which I have played around the world. That recording is to be found in the book: "1001 classical recordings you have to hear before you die".

JW - How did you hear about Orpheus, and how do we inspire you?

KA - On the Swedish Chamber orchestra tour to New York in 2013 performing at Lincoln Center, we wanted to get some new inspiration for the orchestra members. We knew about your democratic way of working and had asked Alan Kay and Ronnie Bauch to come and tell us about your way of working. Although we mostly play with conductor, on a regular basis I lead the SCO from the concertmaster position. In that work I have tried to give every orchestra member space to be a creative musician.

Alan and Ronnie were very inspiring, so after that we often talked about the “Orpheus-method” and I asked my concertmaster colleagues if we should go over and see you work. So, I have been wishing to come over ever since, and I am very happy it finally worked out!

JW - What interested you in coming to NYC to observe our rehearsal process?

KA - Your democratic way of working and your great result made me interested to come and see you work. In my job as a concertmaster I am thinking very much about how I can create an atmosphere where it is inspiring for every musician to keep on being creative and responsible for the result and also to understand their function and role in the music. In our sectionals everybody is welcome to speak up and have suggestions and we often discuss and laugh. With the whole orchestra it is more difficult to find the time for everybody to speak up. I was very interested in how you are dealing with that.

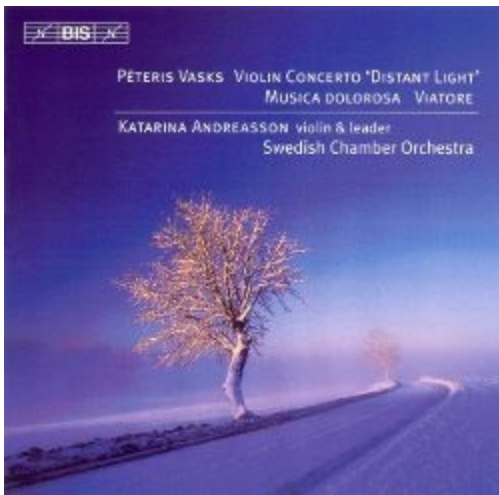
I once made an experiment: in the Mozart Prague Symphony I asked every orchestra member to pick their favorite place in the orchestra, splitting the groups. Then we just played, sitting wherever. That was a great experience! It was like big chamber music and made every musician very responsible and excited. That work has helped us to trust in each other and to build a group.

JW - What information learned from your time in NYC can you take back to your own orchestra?

KA - I am so grateful that I could come and visit you and I felt very welcome! Some things immediately strike me:

- All the orchestra members are very kind and respectful to each other.
- You manage to express things in a very constructive way, so that it creates a good atmosphere.





- You are very good at receiving the constructive criticism from each other, nobody seems to get offended.
- You manage to leave your “ego” at home. It is all about making good music and not personal. It seems that you manage to keep personal things and feelings away from the musical work, although you are also very kind and personal to each other.
- It really works that everybody can give comments in the rehearsal. You have found a way where everybody

is responsible for the timing and also how much time everybody can take in the rehearsal. I experienced that often somebody gave a comment and it was quite quick and you could also leave that quite quick again. If the proposal did not show up to be the one you used, it was no big deal. Laughter was often used to cheer up. There was a trust that it will fall into places by the time you play. I also experienced that everybody’s word had the same weight. Anyone could go out and listen, and when that person told his/her meaning, it was fully respected.

I was very impressed of your way of working!

I have already planned to introduce your way of working to my orchestra, the Swedish Chamber orchestra. In January I will tell the orchestra about your way of working and we will also try that in a production that I am leading. Everybody will have a score in advance and I will meet with the group leaders before the rehearsal.

Let’s see how it works out!.....

Here is a link to Katarina’s webpage: <http://katarinaandreasson.se>

To hear her perform the violin concerto by Vasks, named one of the “1001 classical recordings you have to hear before you die,” [click here.](#)

