

Einojuhani Rautavaara - The Journey (2004)

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Violin Concerto (1976-77) 1. I. *Tranquillo* 12'57 2. II. *Energico* 13'52 Symphony No.8, The Journey (1999) 3. I. *Adagio assai – Andante assai* 10'34 4. II. *Feroce* – 2'49 5. III. *Tranquillo* 5'43 6. IV. *Con grandezza – Sciolto – Tempo primo* 9'35
Jaakko Kuusisto - violin (#1, 2) Lahti Symphony Orchestra Osmo Vänskä - conductor

One might expect that Einojuhani Rautavaara's Violin Concerto (1976-1977) and his Symphony No. 8, "The Journey" (1999) would present some striking contrasts of style and technique since the two decades separating them saw major shifts from avant-garde thinking to a reassessment of traditional norms. The Violin Concerto, however, is already fairly conservative in outlook, with only a few astringent passages pointing to gestural language and experimental ideas. For the most part, this work is serene, lyrical, and harmonically stable, and violinist Jaakko Kuusisto and the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, directed by Osmo Vänskä, interpret it as neo-Romantic in tone, form, and substance. The Symphony -- free of any nods to the avant-garde -- is readily recognizable as a work in Rautavaara's mature, epic style. The somber tone, slow pacing, and mysterious coloration of this work give it a deeply brooding character; the shorter passages of fast, violent music leave little mark on the Symphony's meditative moods. Written at the turn of the Millennium, one may take Rautavaara's music as an elegiac reflection on the passing of the twentieth century, though no explicit program was provided by the composer. The recording's sound quality is good, though the orchestra often seems veiled and unfocused in its lush moments. ---Blair Sanderson, AllMusic Review

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