

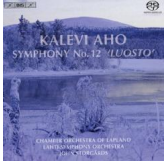
## Kalevi Aho - Symphony No.12 'Luosto' (2008)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 18 October 2013 17:02 -

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### Kalevi Aho - Symphony No.12 'Luosto' (2008)



1. *Samaanit (The Shamans)* 13:16 2. *Kaamos ja keskikesä (Winter Darkness and Midsummer)* 14:00 3. *Laulu tunturissa (Song in the Fells)* 9:36 4. *Myrsky tunturissa (Storm in the Fells)* 11:06 Lahti Symphony Orchestra John Storgårds – Conductor

To say the least, Kalevi Aho's Twelfth Symphony is unique in musical history. Like Wagner's *Parsifal*, it was written to be performed in a specific acoustic environment. But while *Parsifal* was composed for Wagner's six-year-old Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, Aho's Twelfth was composed for Finland's million-year-old Luosto Mountain in Lapland, hence the sobriquet Luosto Symphony. Commissioned by Soldankylä, the city at the base of the mountain, Aho wrote his Twelfth after carefully exploring the mountain slopes' acoustical properties and many of his artistic decisions were dictated by his findings. Given that vast stage, for example, the work would contain no fast sections requiring precision ensemble playing. And because it would be played outside, the possibility of an audible wind had to be taken into account.

Like Nielsen's Fourth, Aho's Twelfth includes parts for antiphonal percussionists. But while Nielsen's work features two percussionists at opposite sides of the stage, Aho's work features four percussionists on opposite corners of the mountain, plus six brass players in a wide ring around the orchestra. And like Nielsen's Third, Aho's Twelfth includes wordless soprano and tenor parts to one of the work's four movements adds a saxophone obbligato. Beyond these additions, Aho's work is scored for large orchestra arranged on the mountain's lower slopes and a chamber orchestra on its upper slopes.

Fortunately or unfortunately, this world-premiere recording of the Luosto Symphony with John Storgårds leading the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Lapland was not recorded at Luosto Mountain but rather at Sibelius Hall in Lahti, Finland. Though some might regret the loss of acoustic authenticity, more will be delighted that this 2007 BIS disc is

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one of the most sonically spectacular recordings ever made. Recorded in super audio sound, the experience of Aho's Twelfth as it comes at the listener from all sides is absolutely overwhelming. The percussion at the start of the opening movement is frightening. The brass at the climax of the second movement is crushing. The soprano, tenor, and saxophone trio in the third movement is tactile. And the sound of both orchestras and all the off-stage brass and percussion going full tilt at the climax of the closing movement is beyond description.

Whether in the view of musical history the Luosto Symphony is more of an updated rewrite of Strauss' Eine Alpensinfonie than a timeless classic like Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony remains to be seen. But in the meantime, any listener with super audio playback system and four or more speakers will probably enjoy taking it out for a spin. ---James Leonard, All Music Guide

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