



Marianne G. Nielsen

S O P R A N O

I mean what I sing

By Soeren H. Schauer

The majority of musicians don't really care what they play – so long as it pays. But not Marianne G. Nielsen. The soprano is one of the most demanding in Danish musical life. "People should have something to take home with them", she says, and explains vividly about lyrics and life, the present and the future.

She graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Music (Det kgl. danske Musikkonservatorium) in 1997. Teachers such as Kirsten Buhl Moeller and Dorothy Irving gave her much. But the further she got through her studies, the more she felt that something was missing. The emphasis was on romantic ballads, contemporary work, and so on, and less on what she was really interested in. Crossing borders and to make a difference. It's all about how the lyrics and the music interact. "Which did most intensely from the Middle Ages to the baroque period".

So before long Marianne went to Paris. Here she studied baroque music, both French and Italian. She became one of Denmark's few experts in this area, and toured with ensembles such as Concerto Copenhagen, Capella Hafniensis, Con Strumenti and Musica Ficta. She made her opera debut in Jerusalem, where she sang the role of Amore in Gluck's "Orfeo".

And she delved further back into the past. Back, in fact, to one of the first named composers of which we know. A woman. In 1998 it was 900 years since the birth of Hildegard from Bingen. The jubilee gave the German abbess a renaissance, ably assisted by some intelligent marketing and the current fascination with mysticism.

Suddenly everyone wanted to hear Hildegard's monotonous, haunting melodies. They reached into people's heads in an occult way, turned us into closet Catholics.

Marianne G. Nielsen led the way, making a much-discussed recording of "Ordo Virtutum" with the *Sequentia* ensemble from Cologne. She performed with them in London, New York and Melbourne, and in 2002 arranged to visit China.

How did the Chinese cope with the odd music?

The soprano holds a long pause. She is not quite sure. "The Chinese normally eat sweets and make phone calls during a concert – but they certainly didn't there."

No, for even though the music is demanding to listen to, they had understood the soloist. Marianne G. Nielsen's contact with her public is unique. "The audience really inspires me," she says. And you believe her. Her red hair and blue eyes radiate all the way to the back row.

She is the light in the room. She gives the music life and meaning. That her voice is beautiful is fine – but not sufficient. The audience must experience the drama of the present, and have something to mull over on the way home. On Saturday you can see her in the "Messiah", a work of which she never tires. The key is identification. "I mean what I sing".

Translation of article from the Danish newspaper "Berlingske" Friday, December 19, 2003.