

## TURE RANGSTRÖM

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Anders Johan Ture Rangström belonged to a new generation of Swedish composers who, in the first decade of the 20th century, introduced modernism to their compositions. In addition to composing, Rangström was also a musical critic and conductor.



Rangström was born in Stockholm on 30th November 1884 where, in his late teens, he started to write songs. His music teacher suggested that he should "vary the harmonies a bit more, make it a bit wilder!" He followed this advice and soon gained the nickname among his colleagues of "Sturm-und-Drangström". He travelled to Berlin where he studied under Hans Pfitzner for a while in 1905-6, and also studied singing with the Wagnerian Julius Hey, with whom he later went to Munich for further studies. His compositions at this time were chiefly for voice and piano.

His Dithyramb for orchestra was completed on 24th October 1909 and first performed on 27 March 1910 which he described as a work of his youth. It was inspired from lines from August Stringberg in Sangora (Singers)

Let languorous moonlight serenades cease  
Although the light still burns in the window  
Ideal has gone to bed between warm sheets  
She is growing old, the old beauty  
And insists on peace and quiet at night  
Singers!  
If the night air has not cracked your beautiful voices  
And if you want to learn new songs  
Why then let the old beauty sleep!  
Together we will strike up a new song for the new day  
For the sun has already risen!

At the time, the composer was a rabid radical bored by sentimental Swedish music who wore a red scarf and Borsalino hat. The original scoring of Dithyramb was somewhat wild and alterations were completed in December 1948 by Kurt Atterberg.

The Symphony no. 1 is dedicated to Stringberg was premiered on 12 March 1915 with the composer making his conducting debut. The four movements are entitled Time of turmoil, Legend, Magic rune and Struggle. The composer wrote that music is not suited to portrait-painting and it is not possible to plagiarise Stringberg in musical terms.

August Strindberg (1849-1912) was a Swedish playwright, novelist, poet, essayist and painter.. he was into scientific experiments and the occult and influenced by Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) who said that the last Judgment was past as he witness it in 1757; he also said that the Second Coming of Christ would not be in person ; that eating meat was profane and that he conversed with spirits from many other planets.

The Symphony no 1 is a rare work unlike any other Swedish symphonies. It contains arbour, magic battles and erotic moments. The orchestration is rich. The opening movement contrasts drama with lyricism and is in visible sonata form. the slow movement may suggest a funeral march and the

scherzo is misnamed since it contains an intermezzo. The finale has four trumpets accompanied by the whole orchestra with a following song melody and the war march returns.

Between 1916 and 1918 came the five minute orchestral work *Intermezzo drammatico* a work of varying quality. In June 1915 he wrote his first genuine incidental music, *Per Olsson and his old woman*.

The *Spring Hymn* (*Varhymn*) is also dedicated to Stringberg and dates from 1942 and is an orchestral adagio lasting about 8 minutes.

The *Symphony no 2* is entitled *My Country* and is dedicated to Stenhammar and dates from 1919. Stenhammar described Rangstrom as a right, humble sort and I love him. The three movements have titles: *The Fairy tale*, *The forest*, *the wave*, *the summer night* and the third is entitled *The Dream*.

Between 1907 and 1922, Rangstrom taught singing and from 1922 to 1925 he was principal conductor of the *Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra*. He founded the *Swedish Society of Composers* in 1924, and he was employed to promote the works of the *Royal Swedish Opera* from 1931 to 1936. After this, he worked free-lance and spent the summers on the island of *Törnsholmen* which he had been given by the people of Sweden who raised the money to celebrate his fiftieth birthday.

1929 saw the appearance of his *Symphony no 3*, *Song under the stars*, which is a rather dreamy piece and marked *maestoso* and lasting some 22 minutes being in one movement and, in 1943, his *Symphony no 4* was performed subtitled *Symphonic improvisation for organ and orchestra*. It originated from 1936 as *Invocation for organ*. There are five movements and Atterburg at one time thought that one of the middle movements be left out

Rangström died at his home in Stockholm after a long illness caused by a throat disease; his funeral was held at Stockholm's *Maria Magdalena Church* and he is buried in the churchyard at *Gryt*. He was grandfather of a playwright, also named *Ture Rangström* (born in 1944 and artistic director of *Stringberg's Intima Teater* since its re-opening in 2003), and uncle of author *Lars Gyllensten*.

Many of his early works took the form of symphonic poems, including "*Dityramb*" ("*Dithyramb*") (1909), "*Ett midsommarstycke*" ("*A midsummer piece*") and "*En höstsång*" ("*An autumn song*"). Following the success of these poems, Rangström began work on his symphonies of which there are four. The first, produced in 1914, is dedicated to the memory of *Strindberg* - "*August Strindberg in memoriam*"; the second, from 1919, is entitled "*Mitt land*" ("*My country*"); the third from 1929, "*Sång under stjärnorna*" ("*Song under the stars*") (1919); and the fourth from 1936, "*Invocatio*", for orchestra and organ.

He composed three operas, entitled "*Kronbruden*" ("*The Crown Bride*"), based on a play by *Strindberg*, which was first performed in 1915, "*Medeltida*" ("*Medieval*"), published in 1921, and "*Gilgamesj*", based on the *Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh*, written during the last years of his life. The orchestration of "*Gilgamesj*" was completed by the composer *John Fernström*, and it was premièred in November 1952 at the *Royal Swedish Opera* with *Erik Saedén* in the title role and *Herbert Sandberg* conducting. Rangström also wrote almost 300 songs and orchestrated about 60 of them.

He died in Stockholm on 11th May 1947.

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