

## ANIARA Östnyland Review

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*[Picture | Caption]*

*Praise for Aniara. The Crossing Choir plays a key part in co-production Aniara – fragments of time and space.*

### Theatre review

#### **Aniara impresses with artistic width.**

Klockriketeatern's biggest production ever, Aniara – fragments of time and space, is an impressive cross-disciplinary reproduction of Harry Martinson's poem Aniara. The piece combines music, acting, choreography, video and light.

*[List of cast and crew and performance dates in Helsinki.]*

Harry Martinson's text from 1956 about humans on a spaceship escaping a home planet destroyed by nuclear weapons was obviously shattering and topical during the Cold War when the text was published. However, the theme was not unheard of. Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* was published in 1950, then Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* and later Arthur C. Clarke's spaceodyssey series, which were followed by a large number of science fiction stories featuring humans on spaceshuttles in our solarsystem as well as in the depths of space.

The movie *Interstellar* from 2014 treats spacetravel as a means of solving humankind's problem of a dying Earth through enabling the search for inhabitable planets in cosmos – something the astrophysicist Stephen Hawking and professor of astronomy Esko Valtaoja also have advocated. Swedishfinnish theatre company Teater 90 grader also staged Aniara in 2010, in an eerie stage adaptation performed within the vaults of Kaapelitehdas.

Harry Martinson's Aniara was, and still is, one of a kind. That Klockriketeatern in particular, which has always treasured Harry Martinson's thoughts and ideas, was to stage a version that includes international flavor does not surprise. Klockriketeatern has always stood out thanks to its original artistic approach and characteristic international productions such as *Uncle Vanya* by Tjehov directed by Andryi Zholdak in 2011 – 2013 and *3 Musketeers – East of Vienna* which dealt with the refugee situation in 2017.

#### **Unique**

The unique thing about Aniara its visionary qualities, the insight of where we humans in our short-sightedness are headed, told through the traditional, reciting, form of epic poetry in combination with an intimate knowledge of computer sciences and a masterful command of language.

To reproduce all this through music, song, acting, choreography and lighting design cannot have been an easy task, but the result speaks for itself. Klockriketeatern's artistic director **Dan Henriksson** both directed and wrote the libretto, and consequently chose what fragments of Aniara we see, and has in this commissioned piece co-operated with American composer **Robert Maggio**,

creating a piece for four instrumentalists and sixteen singers from the Grammy-Awardwinning American choir **The Crossing** from Philadelphia.

Klockriketeatern actors **Carl Alm** and **Matti Raita** appear as vivid storytellers performing in Swedish, English and occasionally in Finnish, whereas choreographer **Antti Silvennoinen** participates as an evocative dancer.

### **Floating**

Aniara – fragments of time of space had its World premiere in the USA and its European premiere in the Netherlands earlier this year. Despite Aniara, on its rectangular stage on the Almi hall at the National Opera, not directly appealing to emotions, it does have a floating, dreamlike audiovisual quality, where the choral performers in white timeless costume, with consistent dramatic or lyric singing, both as a choir and through solos, drive the plot forward.

The music with its genre leaps, containing among other buddhist measures featuring a gong, simply put, feels interesting throughout. The singers, all top level, perform seemingly without any difficulty in different kinds of poses, from being in action to sitting still.

With the help of sound- and lighteffects the performance points out moments of danger such as a collision between Goldonder Aniara and an asteroid which sets Aniara off course without any hope of returning to Earth.

### **Culmination point**

One of the most memorable moments of this piece involve the staging of the artificial intelligence the Mima and its rigger Mimaroben. Mima both terrifies the passengers with memories from Maa (Earth) in its last moments, as well as offers visions of the future which provide comfort.

Dancer Antti Silvennoinen is what makes the difference. As does **Joonas Tikkanen**'s set design featuring footage from Iceland, satellite images of Mars and kinetic lights which move horizontally between the singers.

Some may deem Aniara too repetitive and stylized but this multicultural mix consisting of seventeen fragments about hope and despair, schism and pain, philosophy and existentialism, form a commendable cosmic tale about humankind at a crossroads, as topical today as when it was first published.

### **Egil Green**

kultur@ostnyland.fi

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*(Translation C.Alm 09/19)*