

## **Max Savikangas: Silvertone for oboe and ensemble (2017–19)**

To be premiered on September 12th 2019 in Lohja, Finland in a co-concert organized by the Lohja City Orchestra and Uusinta Ensemble, my chamber concerto Silvertone for oboe and ensemble is largely a portrait of my friend, oboist Keijo Silventoinen. I listened to Keijo's stories, to his oboe playing and to his dreams of a new piece which would feature the oboe in a soloistic role. Hence we will hear my musical interpretation of Keijo as a person and a musician, of his mentioned dreams and also obviously of the oboe as a solo instrument. In my opinion, Silvertone brings the oboe into the spotlight in a new way, as a vital and potent solo instrument of its own right. I also dare to claim that the solo part is absolutely idiomatically written for the oboe, in which Keijo's support and help has been decisive! I also hope that Silvertone as a piece of music will give to the listeners a new, imaginative, energizing and positive musical experience.

Keijo Silventoinen is a sensitive artist and he also has a great sense of humor and empathy. He values in music more the emotional truth than gimmicks, which I wanted to keep in mind when composing Silvertone and wanted to express my own emotional truth at the moment of composition in the pages of the score, perhaps in a slightly more direct manner than in some of my earlier compositions. However, it will still sound like contemporary music – as it should!

Music is a phenomenon resembling language, but without semantics – I might be a composer partly because in music I can express and share thoughts and feelings for which I cannot find words.

Silvertone is cast in one 20-minute movement and gradual changes between musical materials are typical, without clear boundaries between motives and sections. In my opinion, this gives drive and facility to the piece. The oboe solo cadenza by the end can also be performed as a separate solo oboe piece. The cadenza is not fully written out, but utilizes the Directed Modular-Transformative Improvisation Technique developed by me. Including improvisation means, I hope, that each performance will be somewhat different, which might help the piece to stay fresh and interesting over several performances.

The instrumentation of Silvertone has been designed together with Keijo and his inspiring idea was to include the bandoneon, which is related to the concertina, a German folk instrument and also resembling the accordion by its timbre and sound production. Its role in the piece is to bind the solo oboe and the ensemble together on one hand and to play as the alter ego or counterpoint of the oboe on the other.

The bandoneon is probably named after its German inventor Heinrich Band (1821–1860) and it was originally meant to be used in religious and popular music, but by the end of the 19th century it found its way to Argentina in the hands of sailors and emigrants and was adopted there as an essential part of the Argentinian tango orchestra. The sound of the bandoneon is attractively vivid, light and clear, but when required it's also more piercing and projecting than the sound of the accordion. In addition, the accent technique played against the knee provides very striking and powerful effects. The bitonal and seemingly random keyboards of the bandoneon are difficult to learn, but as a reward they enable playing large intervals very fast and also some unique chord change repetitions. The bandoneon part of Silvertone is composed for the so called 142 -tone Rheinische Tonlage commonly used in Argentina.

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<https://maxsavikangas.wordpress.com>