

P O R T F O L I O



SIGNE

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1. BIO

Signe (or Sighne) is an old Scandinavian word meaning a female triumphant. The same or similar words in other languages mean 'sign' - a reference to the improvisation incorporated in the band's music, taking traditional jazz expression into new directions.

The core of Signe's unusual lineup consists of three female voices and until February 2020, a singing double bass player Kaisa Mäensivu. Due to Mäensivu's increasing demand in New York, the group continues as a vocal trio by Josefiina Vannesluoma, Riikka Keränen and Selma Savolainen and appears with guests, such as Mäensivu, cellist Mila Laine and others.

Signe is preparing their next release series, an EP-trilogy that includes new commissions from fresh generation of innovative composers like Mikko Sarvanne, Sampo Kasurinen and Tytti Arola and collaborations with instrumentalists with a strong identity. The three EP albums are to be released during 2021 via Eclipse Music.

One way of describing Signe's musical journey is to track how the group has gained their idiosyncrasy. After a brief start with jazz standard arrangements they started to explore their own language through improvisation. These utterances, syllables and musical gestures were presented in improvised concerts like at the Flow Festival Helsinki in 2015.

Their distinctive sound continued evolving to words and full stories. A repertoire based on Sappho's (c. 630–570 BC) survived fragments was published as their first full-length album 'To Sappho' in 2019 by Eclipse Music and is **nominated both for Finnish Jazz Album of the Year - 2020 Jazz-Emma as well as 2020 Teosto prize** (recognition for composers, lyricists and arrangers). In addition to the compositions by Vannesluoma and Savolainen, the album features commissions by Mikko Sarvanne and Sampo Kasurinen. In the compositions, influences drawn from contemporary classical and folk music coexist alongside those of Nordic jazz, and the music flows and meanders freely following the unmapped paths of improvisation.

To its members Signe means empowerment, sisterhood, experiential research of their heritage as well as celebration of multicultural musical nutrition.

2. MEMBERS

Josefiina Vannesluoma (b. 1990), vocals, composition, artistic director

Riikka Keränen (b. 1988), vocals

Selma Savolainen (b.1993), vocals, composition

Kaisa Mäensivu (b.1990), double bass & vocals, full member 2015-2020, part-time 2020-

Karin Mäkiranta (b.1994), vocals 2014-2015

3. HIGHLIGHTS

Signe founded in Helsinki in September 2014

Collaboration with jazz saxophonist **Jukka Perko** in February 2015

Performance at the **Flow Festival Helsinki** in August 2015

Signatures concert at the **Music Centre Helsinki**, Camerata Hall in April 2016

Summer tour with eight concerts, July 18 - 24, 2017 in the Turku Archipelago

Supported by Alli Paasikivi Foundation and The Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland

Oslo Jazz Festival, Nordic Showcase, August 15 - 20, 2017

EP release 'Signe' and release concert at **We Jazz Festival Helsinki** on Dec 7, 2017

Finnish representative at Nordic Jazz Comets Showcase at EFG London Jazz Festival,

Concert at the **Barbican** on Nov 25, 2018

Album release 'To Sappho' on Feb 22, 2019 (Eclipse Music)

Supported by The Finnish Music Foundation

Release tour with eight concerts in March 2019

Co-organized by Raitala Music and Jazz Finland

Nominated for the "Finnish Grammy Awards" - 2020 Jazz-Emma

album of the year 'To Sappho'

Nominated for the 2020 Teosto prize (*published on Feb 12, 2020*)

composers, lyricists and arrangers of 'To Sappho'

Single release 'Liian Varhain'

On compilation album Voice of Generations | Aikojen ääni (SibaRecords 01/2020)

4. PROJECTS

PROJECT 1 *Early search (2014)*

A collaboration with Finnish jazz saxophonist Jukka Perko in February 2015 produced renditions of jazz standards 'Hunajainen - A Taste of Honey' and 'The Nearness Of You'.

<https://soundcloud.com/vocalssigne>



photo by Jasse Merivirta



photo by Venla Helenius

PROJECT 2 *Vocal Gestures (2015)*

Signe communicates creating impressions about the performance space and people in it. Four vocalists play with onomatopoeic figures, which become refined, surprising textures and move on to sentences and narratives. The sensitivity of organic human voices create a tension with ambient live electronics.

Performance at Flow Festival 2015, Helsinki

PROJECT 3 *Sappho (2016 - 2019)*

Improvisations and compositions based on Sappho's remaining fragments of poems. Sappho (c. 630–570 BC) was a female poet in Ancient Greece who revised the conception of human beings as playthings of the gods. She focused on an individual's emotional life and addressed passion, jealousy and longing from the perspective of us mortals.

Although only a small portion of Sappho's works survive, the translations, including the celebrated Finnish modernist Pentti Saarikoski (1937–1983) paint an emotionally charged sea along which Signe sails. Signe brings together layers of time: Sappho's Greece, 1900's modernism and Signe's present time. With this project Signe presented its new member, the singing bassist Kaisa Mäensivu.



photo by Venla Helenius

Performance at [‘Signatures’ concert](#) at Camerata, Helsinki Music Centre in April 14, 2016
Album release ‘To Sappho’ in February 2019 by Eclipse Music

PROJECT 4 Revitalizing the folk songs from the Finnish Swedish archipelago (2017)

Signe performed Vannesluoma’s arrangements of Finnish Swedish folk songs and psalms originating from Turku archipelago region. In folk songs lyrics, melodies and rhythmic cadences have varied through the time of their existence and Signe continued this tradition through the expression of jazz, minimalism and free improvisation.

On their summer tour in July 2017, Signe performed the folk songs on the same islands from which they were collected and notated during 1880s - 1920s. This repertoire also included sea-themed original compositions like songs in Finnish - *Nostan purjeet* and *Pitkin pitkää iltaa* that were later included on their EP album, released in December 2017.

Summer tour in the southwestern Finnish archipelago in July 2017
EP release ‘Signe’ in December 2017



illustrations and poster by Armi Teva

5. DISCOGRAPHY



To Sappho

CD/digital Eclipse Music

Release date Feb 22, 2019

Josefiina Vannesluoma - vocals

Riikka Keränen - vocals

Selma Savolainen - vocals

Kaisa Mäensivu - double bass, vocals

Recorded November 27 & 28, 2018

at Finnvox Studios, Helsinki

Recorded and mixed by Markus Kärki

Mastered by Jaakko Viitalähde

Produced by Vannesluoma, Kärki & Savolainen

Cover art and photographs by Venla Helenius

Signe's first full-length album *To Sappho* is based on the survived fragments from the Greek poet **Sappho**. In addition to the compositions of **Vannesluoma** and **Savolainen**, the album features commissioned compositions from **Mikko Sarvanne** and **Sampo Kasurinen**. The album is nominated both for Finnish Jazz Album of the Year - Jazz-Emma 2020 as well as Teosto prize 2020 (recognition for composers, lyricists and arrangers).

To Sappho honors the poetry of 20th century. The aesthetic development of modernism is heard in the translations stretching from ornamental language yet stable forms of **Bliss Carman** and **John Myers O'Hara** to **Mary Barnard's** elegant and **Pentti Saarikoski's** charged interpretations. The last track of the album is **Edith Södergran's** poem "Tulevaisuuteni" (Min framtid), translated by **Pentti Saaritsa** and composed by Josefiina Vannesluoma, and it features vibraphonist **Panu Savolainen**, who widens the ensemble's sound by creating a diverse harmonic basis for the song.

Track list:

IN A DREAM (Josefiina Vannesluoma / Sappho, tr. Bliss Carman)

CRETAN GIRLS (Selma Savolainen / Sappho, tr. Mary Barnard)

PUHUN TOTTA (Selma Savolainen / Sappho, tr. Pentti Saarikoski)

ODE TO APHRODITE I - III (Mikko Sarvanne / Sappho, tr. John Myers O'Hara)

AMBROSIA (Josefiina Vannesluoma / Sappho, tr. Pentti Saarikoski)

SE KUULUU JUMALIIN (Josefiina Vannesluoma / Sappho, tr. Pentti Saarikoski)

O APHRODITE (Sampo Kasurinen / Sappho, tr. Bliss Carman)

TULEVAISUUTENI feat. Panu Savolainen (Josefiina Vannesluoma / Edith Södergran, tr. Pentti Saaritsa)



Signe EP

CD/cassette self-published
digital by Texicalli Digital Distribution
Release date Dec 7, 2017

Josefiina Vannesluoma - vocals
Riikka Keränen - vocals
Selma Savolainen - vocals
Kaisa Mäensivu - double bass, vocals

Recorded Aug 22, 2017
at St. Lawrence Church
Recorded and mixed by Väinö Karjalainen
Mastered by Jaakko Viitalähde
Cover art by Juho Aittokallio

Signe's self-titled release introduces the quartet with warm and round acoustic sound captured in the renaissance church of St. Lawrence in Vantaa. The EP album consists of **Vannesluoma's** Swedish arrangements of folk song "Som Turturduvan Uppå Kvist" and a psalm "Ack Ljuflig Tid" that used to be sung in remote islands of Turku archipelago. "Ruben" is an audio drama about two smuggler brothers in 1930's while "Sardeesta" brings **Sappho's** poem to a contemporary rendition in Finnish. The two last tracks of the record are sea-themed original compositions in Finnish - "Nostan purjeet" and Savolainen's "Pitkin pitkää iltaa".

Track list:

SARDEESTA (Josefiina Vannesluoma / Sappho, tr. Pentti Saarikoski)
SOM TURTURDUVAN UPPÅ KVIST (Trad., arr. Josefiina Vannesluoma)
RUBEN (Keränen, Mäensivu, Savolainen, Vannesluoma / Josefiina Vannesluoma)
ACK LJUFLIG TID (Trad., arr. Josefiina Vannesluoma)
PITKIN PITKÄÄ ILTAA (Selma Savolainen)
NOSTAN PURJEET (Josefiina Vannesluoma)



SINGLE RELEASE

'Liian Varhain' on the compilation album
Voice of Generations | Aikojen ääni

CD/Digital by SibaRecords

Release Date Jan 24, 2020

Josefiina Vannesluoma - vocals

Riikka Keränen - vocals

Selma Savolainen - vocals

Recorded Oct 1, 2019 at Music Centre Studios

Recorded by Kaj Mäki-Ullakko

Composed by Josefiina Vannesluoma

Words by Riikka Keränen & Josefiina

Vannesluoma

The human voice is an instrument that has produced meaningful music throughout generations: songs of joy and love, of sorrow and loss. The voice carries traditions over time and space – the voice tells stories that find resonance in the hearts and minds of new generations and cultures. The listener is invited on an eventful journey through various soundscapes of vocal music: classical and contemporary art music, folk music, jazz and a cappella pop. The diverse range of performers feature Sibelius Academy Vocal Ensemble, McNaiset, **Signe** and Club For Five, among others.

6. REVIEWS

“To Sappho laajentaa kuvaamme siitä mihin moderni lauluyhtye pystyy. Jazzista, kokeellisesta sekä valtavirtapopista ja nykymusiikista ammentavat sävellykset sisältävät ajoittain hyvinkin pelottomia harmonisia ratkaisuja. Riisuttu toteutus korostaa sekä melodioiden rikkautta että teatraalisuutta.”

[Teosto Prize 2020 Jury comments for 'To Sappho'](#)

“These tautly-connected quartet of vocalists—one being bassist-vocalist Kaisa Mäensivu,[...]—conjured up a compelling and malleable ensemble identity, moving between folk music links to classical and jazz sonorities, and more experimental touches. The sum effect was quite stunning, and ear/mind-opening.”

[Concert review: We Jazz: Moveable Feast Fest Theory \(Josef Woodard\) AllAboutJazz.com 16.12.2017](#)

“The result is utterly original, uncategorisable art – unlike anything else you’ll hear this year.”

[Album review: Satiny Sapphic harmonies with a jazz bass \(Wif Stenger\) FMQ.fi 07.03.2019](#)

“Signe has made a real cultural achievement by making topical Sappho’s feministic yet sensual celebrations of love.”

[Concert review: Neljän naisen yhtye lauloi ihanasti seksihullun naisen huikentelevaisuudesta \(Katri Kallionpää\) Helsingin Sanomat nyt.fi 15.3.2019](#)

“The music that the band creates is coy and very idiosyncratic. It darts seamlessly in and out of jazz forms, free vocal expression, nordic folk and minimalist avant-garde meanderings. This combination creates a listening experience that is always interesting and occasionally disturbing. The album radiates with a simplistic, sparse beauty.”

[Album review by Owen Davies, Dutch Progressive Rock Page 20.6.2019](#)

“— music floats in some high cloud of art, pop and jazz.”

[Concert review: Lauluyhtye Signe korvasi basson sellolla
\(Katri Kallionpää\) HS nyt.fi 19.10.2019](#)

“Female voices’ co-operation with Kaisa Mäensivu’s bass was magical.”

[Concert review in Jazzpossu blog 26.05.2016](#)