

P O R T F O L I O



SIGNE

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 through an unusual lineup of four female vocalists and double bass.

One way of describing Signe's musical journey is to track how the group has formed its own language through improvisation. After a brief start with jazz standard arrangements they started exploring their own of utterances, musical gestures and syllables that were presented in improvised concerts like at the Flow Festival Helsinki in 2015. Their distinctive sound continued evolving to words and word combinations that were realised as a full project based on Sappho's (c. 630–570 BC) survived fragments and a concert at the Music Centre in Helsinki in April 2016.

Their latest projects and releases have returned to stories and poems. In their 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.

MEMBERS

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

Riikka Keränen (b. 1988), vocals

Kaisa Mäensivu (b.1990), double bass & vocals

Selma Savolainen (b.1993), vocals, composition

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

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

Debut **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**, Nov 25, 2018

Album release 'To Sappho' in February 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

PROJECTS

PROJECT 1 *Early search*

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*

Signe communicates creating impressions about the performance space and people in it. Four vocalists play with onomatopoetic 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*

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 her works survive, the celebrated Finnish translations by poet Pentti Saarikoski (1937–1983) paint an emotionally charged sea along which Signe sails. Signe brings together layers of time: Sappho's Greece, Saarikoski's 1960s modernism and Signe's present time. With this project Signe presented its new member, the singing bassist Kaisa Mäensivu.



extract from Sibelius Academy livestream footage

Performance at 'Signatures' concert at Camerata, Helsinki Music Centre in April 14, 2016

[Livestream footage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACfR2XPWoUg): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACfR2XPWoUg>

Performance at 'Megakupla' festival in May 25, 2016 at Kuudes Linja, Helsinki

PROJECT 4 Revitalizing the folk songs from the Finnish Swedish archipelago

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

DISCOGRAPHY



Signe: 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**.

To Sappho honours the poetry of 20th century. The aesthetic development of modernism is hearable in the translations stretching from ornamental and 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: **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 a radioplay and a tragic story 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)

REVIEWS

"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](#)

"Female voices' co-operation with Kaisa Mäensivu's bass was magical."

[Concert review in Jazzpossu blog 26.05.2016](#)