

Review Aniara

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### **Theatre review: A shard of humanity travels into nothingness**

*[Picture | Caption]*

*Aniara – fragments of space and time is a visually and musically stunning performance.*

Lasse Garoff

### **Aniara – fragments of time and space at the National Opera is a multilayered and poignant experience about existential sorrow and longing in the boundless emptiness of space.**

Aniara – fragments of time and space is based on Nobel laureate **Harry Martinson**'s epic poem from 1956.

Spaceship Aniara departs ravaged Earth in order to allow its eight thousand passengers start a new life on Mars. However a collision throws the vessel off course.

Aniara loses its capacity to steer and continues its journey with undiminished speed. But not toward Mars, instead its course now lies out into empty space, toward the immensely remote constellation Lyra.

The passengers onboard Aniara find comfort in Mima, a computer or artificial intelligence of sorts, that stores humanity's memories and culture.

### **Impressive performance**

Aniara – fragments of time and space is musically and visually astounding, poignant and beautiful. It is all knit together by the many headed choir The Crossing which sings pieces of Martinson's poem newly composed by the American composer **Robert Maggio**.

The double Grammy-winning choir performs with breathtaking technical skill that makes the music sound next to otherworldly.

*[Picture | Caption]*

*Members of The Crossing participate in choreographies as passengers on spaceship Aniara.*

The ensemble, wearing grey and white rags, gather to dignified tableaux in **Joonas Tikkanen**'s minimalistic set design.

Klockriketeatern actors **Carl Alm** and **Matti Raita** deliver the few lines of the piece altering between English, Swedish and Finnish.

Mima itself is portrayed by Wusheng Company's **Antti Silvennoinen** who performs choreographies inspired by Beijing opera, the very disciplined acrobatics of which truly does create a robotic impression.

On the floor memories of Earth are projected in hypnotic panning images that show destroyed landscapes and waves hitting the shore.

## **Hope beyond any reason**

Aniara – fragments of time and space is about despair and regret, but also calls forth a sense of redemption or, at the very least, comfort.

At the bottom of Martinson's epic poem lies profetic moralizing ("why does man destroy its only home in all of cosmos?). However the captivating musical and visual framing of the piece anchors the emotion of the lost souls onboard the spaceship.

The spaceship becomes a landscape laden with symbols where humans in vain try to distract themselves from their fate. They devote themselves to religious worship of the Mima, dance or become apathetic and float away in dreams.

In essence, however, everything they do is without meaning as they sooner or later are bound to return to their desperate situation, being trapped in a bubble of air in boundless space.

*[Picture | Caption]*

*Lost in space, the passengers onboard Aniara still keep on dreaming of a goal for their journey.*

The title "Aniara" is a modification of a word from ancient Greek meaning sorrow or despair. Martinson is said to have been inspired partly by a sudden realization of the stunning depth of space and partly by the USA and Soviet Union developing the hydrogen bomb in the early 1950s.

Aniara – fragments of time and space is an eerie tale. It conveys an atmosphere of heavy sorrow for and longing back to a home that has been destroyed, as well as a hope for a new home beyond any reason, even though one senses there is no end to this neverending journey into space.

Klockriketeatern and the American choir The Crossing perform Aniara – fragments of time and space in the Almi hall at the National Opera in Helsinki until the 21st of September.

The performance had its World premiere in Philadelphia in June and European premiere in Netherlands in July. Artistic director Dan Henriksson has directed the show and composed the libretto.

*[List of cast and crew]*

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*(Translation C.Alm 09/19)*