



Sakari Oramo

Publication The Guardian

Date Friday 4 September 2026

Classical music

Review

Vista, Saarikoski Songs, Three Preludes album review – Saariaho's iridescent visions evocatively rendered



Komsi/Nyman/BBC Symphony Orchestra/Oramo (Online)

Three works by the idiosyncratic Finnish composer who died in 2023 are recorded for the first time



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Fri 4 Sep 2026 07:00 BST

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Ear-catching... Kaija Saariaho Photograph: Emmi Korhonen/Lehtikuva/AFP/Getty Images

Kaia Saariaho died in 2023, leaving behind a significant body of unrecorded music. The three works here, all premiere recordings, span 40 years, yet each bears the Finnish composer's idiosyncratic fingerprints.

The most substantial is *Vista* (2019), a tone poem inspired by a drive along the scenic Interstate 5 highway to San Diego. The first part, *Horizons*, opens with a lingering oboe duet before brass, winds and gleaming tuned percussion usher in more piquant colours. This is music on cruise control, with otherworldly washes of strings and a deal of ear-catching incident. *Targets*, which follows, is altogether more dynamic, a turbulent road trip that winds down to a serene conclusion. Fellow Finn Sakari Oramo is a sensitive, sure-footed guide with the BBC Symphony Orchestra commendably precise and texturally detailed throughout.

The *Saarikoski Songs*, heard here in the 2021 orchestrated version, are evocative settings of five poems by Pentti Saarikoski chosen in part for their focus on humanity's impact on the natural world. Anu Komsu, a longtime Saariaho collaborator, is thoroughly idiomatic, her stratospheric soprano soaring over the iridescent orchestral weave. She's equally authoritative in 1981's *Three Preludes* for soprano and organ (Saariaho's own instrument) where Marzi Nyman handles the angular instrumental lines with aplomb.