

6.12

INDEPENDENCE DAY GALA CONCERT

Helsinki Music Centre at 15.00

Hannu Lintu, conductor

Anu Korsi, soprano

Jean Sibelius: En Saga 20 min

Magnus Lindberg: Accused, song cycle, fp in Finland 32 min

INTERVAL 20 min

Helvi Leiviskä: Symphony No. 3, Op. 31 27 min

I Allegretto scherzando

II Fuga pastoralis

III Allegro

Jean Sibelius: Finlandia 8 min

Interval at about 16.00. The concert ends at about 17.20.

Broadcast live on Yle Teema & ARTE, and online at yle.fi/rso.

A YOUNG COMPOSER'S SAGA

En Saga represents the 27-year-old Sibelius on the threshold of becoming the sovereign master of his chosen means of expression. Its premiere in 1893 was a moderate success; the audience liked it a lot, but the critics were a little taken-aback. With such a name, surely the piece should tell a story? "But what does it say?" was the question on many lips. Was Sibelius perhaps thinking of Dante's *Inferno*, which he had often mentioned to his friends, or maybe the *Poems of Ossian*, or perhaps a Viking drama? True to form, Sibelius said not a word, though he did later concede that *En Saga* came closer in mood to the ancient Norse *Edda* sagas than to the Finnish national epic, *The Kalevala*, which had been his companion throughout the 1890s.

Despite being anchored on the symphonic tone-poem tradition of the late 19th century, *En Saga* is relatively free in its form. It comes closest to a sonata fantasia for orchestra, being constructed on sonata-form lines. Themes and their handling were a problem for Sibelius. He would test them endlessly, which is possibly why they are usually balanced and hang together so well. *En Saga* has three related themes. The first and second are more restrained than the last, which has a slightly playful touch while nevertheless sinking from time to time into a somewhat hazy melancholy. The closing section concentrates on creating a mood of mystery that fades away into

silence, the various themes having by this time galloped away. So what is *En Saga* about? It does not need a story, because the music is able to create a mythological impression without having recourse to words.

MAGNUS LINDBERG (B. 1958): ACCUSED

Accused for coloratura soprano and orchestra is dated 6.12.2014. That it was co-commissioned for soprano Barbara Hannigan by the London Philharmonic, Radio France, Gothenburg and Toronto Symphonies, Cleveland Orchestra and Carnegie Hall says much about Magnus Lindberg's status as a composer.

The fact that he did not choose poetry as his text is also very Lindbergian; the texts of *Graffiti*, for example, are inscriptions from the excavated city of Pompeii. *Accused* consists of three interrogations. The first on the rack is Mademoiselle Théroigne de Méricourt, an ardent republican accused, among other things, of conspiring against the king in the maelstrom of the French Revolution. The soprano sings both the interrogator and the accused, constantly changing sides, which makes her role very difficult.

The second section, following without a break, has been described as Kafkaesque: in an interrogation documented in the GDR in 1970, a Stasi officer wishes to know how, where and why the accused came to be in possession of two issues of the West German magazine

Der Spiegel. He had borrowed them, said the accused, from Frau Irmgard Meyer, who had presumably brought them from West Berlin or Prague. No, he had not been seeking anti-communist propaganda; he just wanted to read the story about the drug problem in West Germany and the persecution of the Indians in Brazil. No, he had not read any of the other articles. The interrogator fires his questions like a machinegun – and what a terrible, efficient machine Stasi was!

The third case comes close to the present day: the transcript of the trial of Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning, convicted in the USA of espionage linked to the release of classified documents to WikiLeaks. The listener is left in doubt about the motives for the act, as for the prison sentence of both the accused and the hacker witness Adrian Lamo.

Musically, *Accused* is powerful 21st-century Lindberg. The orchestral timbres are rich and the harmonies often open and potent; the music is rhythmical and there are lots of tempo changes. The work begins in the manner of a fanfare with music vaguely reminiscent of the opening of Manuel de Falla's ballet *El amor brujo*. The vocal melodies do not underline the characters, though there is a sense of fate at the climax to the second section as the soprano rises two-and-a-half octaves from her lowest register. The fanfare motif also returns after this. The music of the third section is "more metallic", as Adrian Lamo reiterates that the accusations are true. No more questions and answers remain for the fourth and last section, which is just a brief, receding vocalise.

HELVI LEIVISKÄ (1902–1982): SYMPHONY NO. 3

Born into an educated, cultured family in 1902, Helvi Leiviskä had to fight against a wall of prejudice. Refusing to accept that a woman's place is in the home having babies, she studied at the Helsinki Conservatory (nowadays the Sibelius Academy) in the 1920s. Her teacher, Erkki Melartin, though liberal-minded, was amazed that his slender student could produce such strong, sharp dissonances, but he encouraged her just as much as his male students. She further enrolled as a pupil of counterpoint virtuoso Arthur Willner in Vienna for the 1928–1929 academic year; this was to have far-reaching consequences for her music.

Stylistically, her primary model was, however, Leevi Madetoja. Though initially writing in the National-Romantic style, she did not as such choose national topics. A professed theosophist, she was religiously inclined, but the only sign of this in her music is a certain solemnity. For this she was later gently criticised by fellow-composer Sulho Ranta, on the occasions when he could be bothered to focus on her music and not her gender.

And herein lies the crux of the matter: no one objected to or belittled her *music*. On the contrary, certain critics praised it in glowing terms, but could not resist adding that it was "just like a man's". Male was the yardstick: Leiviskä was "just" a female composer, despite being a considerable symphonist. This

maybe explains why her music was not often performed during her lifetime, and nowadays even more seldom.

Helvi Leiviskä's first two symphonies (1947 and 1954) are anchored on her Romantically-tinged period, whereas the third dates from her late period, 1971, and is distinctly Neoclassical. The dominant feature of this symphony in three movements is the expert, airy counterpoint; this assumes the leading role in the middle movement, particularly. Her solemnity makes room for sunny playfulness right at the beginning of the opening movement. The orchestration is sparing, meaning that every note can be heard.

The finale sets off as a determined march before giving way to a calm *Andante cantabile* in which the symphony's playful opening theme momentarily pops up in various instruments. After various build-ups and retreats, the symphony finally ends on a peaceful note.

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957): *FINLANDIA*

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Finland needed heroes, and the role of hero fell naturally to Jean Sibelius. In composing *Kullervo* (1892) and the *Lemminkäinen Suite* (1896), he had already more or less consciously contributed to the nationalist project. For his works reflected a sense of national awakening similar to that of the masterpieces inspired by the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*, by the painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela in the

1890s. Sibelius's role grew even greater, however, with the composition of several works deliberately intended as a sort of protest. One of these was *Finlandia*. 19 *Finlandia* was first heard as part of a pageant or series of tableaux devoted to Finland's history and held in Helsinki in 1899. The pageant was a protest against the press censorship imposed by Nikolai Bobrikov, the ironfisted Governor General of Finland. For Finland was at that time still an Autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire. Considering how well-known *Finlandia* is today – a sort of national musical emblem – it attracted surprisingly little attention when first performed. The audience were swept away by the tableaux and hardly heard the music. The version of *Finlandia* nowadays performed and differing only slightly from the original one dates from 1900. It quickly became an independent concert number as the musical symbol of Finland's struggle for independence, finally won in 1917. It is easy to understand why *Finlandia* is so famous. It is stirringly patriotic. Being so popular, it has, however, at times almost endangered Sibelius's international reputation as a composer to be taken seriously. Its defiant brass and its ultimately triumphant drama have all the solidity of the Finnish bedrock, while the hymn-like interlude expresses more tranquil sentiments. Words have been set to this hymn many times, so that *Finlandia* has become a sort of unofficial national anthem. This again says something of its lasting significance, transcending any particular period in history.

Programme notes by **Osmo Tapio Rähilä** and **Kimmo Korhonen** translated (abridged) by **Susan Sinisalo**

HANNU LINTU

Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra since August 2013, Hannu Lintu previously held the positions of Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and Artistic Director of the Helsingborg Symphony and Turku Philharmonic orchestras.

Highlights of Lintu's 2016/17 season include appearances with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Staatsorchester Stuttgart, Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, Luzerner Sinfonieorchester and Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, and in North America with the St Louis Symphony and the Toronto Symphony, Baltimore Symphony and Detroit Symphony orchestras. Recent engagements have included the The Cleveland and Gulbenkian orchestras, the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, and the BBC Scottish Symphony, Iceland Symphony and Seoul Philharmonic orchestras. In 2015 he conducted a complete cycle of Sibelius' symphonies in Tokyo with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the New Japan Philharmonic, and toured Austria in January 2016 with violinist Leila Josefowicz and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Lintu returns to Savonlinna Opera Festival in July 2017 to conduct Aulis Sallinen's *Kullervo*, and in May 2017 he conducts Sibelius' *Kullervo* in a special project with Finnish National Opera and Ballet with director and choreographer Tero Saarinen. Previous productions with Finnish National Opera have included *Parsifal*, *Carmen*, Sallinen's *King Lear*, and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in spring 2016. Lintu has also worked with Tampere Opera and Estonian National Opera.

Hannu Lintu has made several re-cordings for Ondine, Naxos, Avie and Hyperion. His recording of Prokofiev Piano Concertos with Olli Mustonen and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra was released in September 2016, while other recent releases include recordings of Mahler's *Symphony No. 1*, a selection of works by Magnus Lindberg, and Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony* with Angela Hewitt and Valerie Hartmann-Claverie. Lintu has received several accolades for his recordings, including a 2011 Grammy nomination for Best Opera CD plus Gramophone Award nominations for his recordings of Enescu's *Symphony No.2* with the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra and the *Violin Concertos* of Sibelius and Thomas Adès with Augustin Hadelich and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Hannu Lintu studied cello and piano at the Sibelius Academy, where he later studied conducting with Jorma Panula. He participated in masterclasses with Myung-Whun Chung at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy, and took first prize at the Nordic Conducting Competition in Bergen in 1994.

ANU KOMSI

Anu Komsu continues to be praised internationally for her versatile musicianship and dynamic coloratura voice. Regularly performing at leading concert halls and opera houses the world over, she is a versatile recitalist and chamber musician with a repertoire ranging from Renaissance to contemporary music and also taking in jazz. She has been the soloist with numerous major orchestras, among them the New York, Berlin and Los Angeles Philharmonics, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Vienna, Sao Paolo, San Francisco and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras, working with such illustrious conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Sir Roger Norrington, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Sakari Oramo, Oliver Knussen, Mikko Franck and Alan Gilbert.

In addition to the Finnish National Opera Anu Komsu has sung opera at New York City Opera, the Bastille in Paris, the Stuttgart, Frankfurt and Bremen opera houses, and elsewhere. The upwards of 60 roles in her repertoire include Alban Berg's *Lulu*, Zerbinetta in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Nannetta in his *Falstaff*. The English contemporary composer George Benjamin wrote the soprano role in his opera *Into the Little Hill* especially for her. Other critically-acclaimed performances have included the title role in Heinz Holliger's opera *Snow White* and Eva in Karl-Heinz Stockhausen's opera *Donnerstag aus Licht*, voted best production of the season by the prestigious

magazine *Opernwelt*. Among her forthcoming engagements are appearances as soloist with the Orchestra of La Scala, Milan, the Vienna and New York Philharmonics, and the French Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Recent releases by Anu Komsu include a Gramophone Award-winning CD of Nielsen's Symphony no. 3, the *Leino Songs* by Kaija Saariaho, *Being Beateous* (Alba) of works by Britten and Schönberg, *Coloratura* (BIS), and *Echo* (Alba) of music by Merikanto. The recording of Hofman's opera Ahti Karjalainen was nominated for an Emma Award in 2016.

Anu Komsu is Artistic Director of the West Coast Kokkola Opera founded by her and responsible for planning the Kokkola Opera summer festival and its ensemble's tours. Next year, the centenary of independent Finland, the company will be giving the first performance in Finland of Meyerbeer's opera *The North Star*. The story is set in Finnish Karelia and the heroine is a Finn, Katariina from Viipuri. The opera will also be performed at the Helsinki Music Centre in autumn 2017.

THE FINNISH RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra (FRSO) is the orchestra of the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle). Its mission is to produce and promote Finnish musical culture and its Chief Conductor as of autumn 2013 has been Hannu Lintu. The FRSO has two Honorary Conductors: Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Sakari Oramo.

The Radio Orchestra of ten players founded in 1927 grew to symphony orchestra strength in the 1960s. Hannu Lintu was preceded as Chief Conductor by Toivo Haapanen, Nils-Eric Fougstedt, Paavo Berglund, Okko Kamu, Leif Segerstam, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Sakari Oramo.

In addition to the great Classical-Romantic masterpieces, the latest contemporary music is a major item in the repertoire of the FRSO, which each year premieres a number of Yle commissions. Another of the orchestra's tasks is to record all Finnish orchestral music for the Yle archive.

During the 2016/2017 season the FRSO will premiere five Finnish works commissioned by Yle and feature such pioneers of Finnish Modernism as Väinö Raitio and Uuno Klami. The programme will also include orchestral works by Stravinsky, symphonies by Mahler and Bruckner, Haydn's The Seasons oratorio and concertos by contemporary composers. Among its guest artists will be soprano Karita Mattila and mezzo-soprano Michelle DeYoung,

conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen, Teodor Currentzis and Gustavo Gimeno, and pianist Daniil Trifonov.

The FRSO has recorded works by Mahler, Ligeti, Sibelius, Hakola, Lindberg, Saariaho, Sallinen, Kaipainen, Kokkonen and others, and the debut disc of the opera *Aslak Hetta* by Armas Launis. Its discs have reaped some prestigious distinctions, such as the BBC Music Magazine Award, the Académie Charles Cros Award and a MIDEM Classical Award. The disc of Sibelius's *Lemminkäinen and Pohjola's Daughter* was Gramophone magazine's Critic's Choice in December 2015 and brought the FRSO and Hannu Lintu a Finnish Emma award in the Classical Album category. Music by Sibelius, Prokofiev and Fagerlund will be among the repertoire recorded during the 2016/2017 season.

The FRSO regularly tours to all parts of the world. During the 2016/2017 season its schedule will include a tour in Finland, taking in concerts conducted by Hannu Lintu in Suomussalmi, Kajaani, Mikkeli and Kuopio.

The home channel of the FRSO is Yle Radio 1, which broadcasts all its concerts, usually live, both in Finland and abroad. Its concerts can also be heard and watched with excellent live stream quality on the FRSO website (www.yle.fi/rso), and the majority of them are televised live on the Yle Teema channel.