

8 JANUARY

FRIDAY SERIES 7

Helsinki Music Centre at 19.00

Hannu Lintu, conductor

Leila Josefowicz, violin

John Adams: Short ride in a fast machine 6 min

John Adams: Scheherazade.2, a dramatic symphony 50 min
for violin and orchestra, (fpF)

I Tale of the Wise Young Woman – Pursuit by the True Believers

II Long Desire (Love Scene)

III Scheherazade and the Men with Beards

IV Escape, Flight, Sanctuary

INTERVAL 20 min

Dmitri Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, Op. 47 45 min

I Moderato

II Allegretto

III Largo

IV Allegro non troppo

Interval at about 20.10. The concert ends at about 21.25.

Broadcast live on Yle Teema, Yle Radio 1 and online at yle.fi/rso.

JOHN ADAMS (1947–): SHORT RIDE IN A FAST MACHINE

Sometime in the 1970s, minimalism seemed to be about limited means combined with unlimited subjects. As a genre, “minimalism” has long been an insufficient label for expressive devices that are now mainstream rather than marginal, and the composers who use them.

One of these, John Adams, has grown from being a representative of alternative or counterculture into the leading prophet of postmodern music, and the declaimer of great artistic manifestos. Whether he likes it or not, his music is nowadays performed more than that of any other living “art” composer or trendsetter in the USA.

Adams wrote *Short ride in a fast machine* (1986) at a time when he was just making a name for himself as the composer of throbbing, minimalist rhythms and music bursting with optimistic energy. He wrote it for the Great Woods Festival in Massachusetts and it is the second movement of a “fanfare” for large symphonic orchestra.

“You know how it is when someone asks you to ride in a terrific sports car, and then you wish you hadn’t?” asks Adams in speaking of this delirious rhythmic spin. But the listener safely seated in the concert hall is not likely to regret belting up for this top-speed circuit round a race track strewn with syn- copations.

JOHN ADAMS: SCHEHERAZADE.2

John Adams has not been afraid to address politically delicate topics. *Nixon in China* (1987) exposed the grotesque, operatic nature of superpower politics; *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), dealing with terrorism, brought accusations of defending the Palestinians, and *Doctor Atomic* (2005) examined the possible end of the world from the bomb-maker’s perspective. *Scheherazade.2* is a dramatic symphony for violin and orchestra dedicated to Leila Josefowicz, a violinist whom Adams describes as his ideal contemporary Scheherazade and as an empowered and fearless artist.

Like Rimsky-Korsakov, Adams uses a solo violin to symbolise his Scheherazade, but it is also the leading character from the very beginning – the *Tale of the Wise Young Woman*. A jangling cimbalom evokes images of the Orient, where the solo violin, under siege from the large orchestra, has to fight for her life. The independent-minded violin provokes *Pursuit by the True Believers* rising from the orchestra’s low register and the percussions.

After a restless beginning, the slow movement opens out into *Long Desire* in which the strings and cimbalom set the mood for a solo violin song. This bursts into flames before dying away at the end. Adams describes this movement as a love scene, adding, “Who knows... perhaps her lover is also a woman?”

The third movement, *Scheherazade and the Men with Beards*, contrasts an angry orchestra with a calm solo violin.

As Adams puts it, it is “a scene in which she is tried by a court of religious zealots during which the men argue doctrine among themselves and rage and shout at her only to have her calmly respond to their accusations.”

The closing *Escape, Flight, Sanctuary* begins with surging figures before the heroine takes flight and the solo violin, as with Rimsky-Korsakov, finds safety in a place that must, according to Adams, “be the archetypal dream of any woman importuned by a man or men.”

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975): SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN D MINOR, OP. 47

Instead of completing his fourth symphony, Dmitri Shostakovich put it aside for nearly 30 years and instead composed his fifth in 1937, obsequiously subtitled it “A Soviet Artist’s Response to Just Criticism”. It restored his reputation first in the artist community and later with the regime and assured his status as the country’s leading composer. It also got a favourable reception in the then somewhat conservative cultural climate of the West.

The symphony sows the seeds of conflict right at the beginning, before proceeding towards an Eastern European melancholy tinged with weary submission. It then heats up to boiling point in a ferocious march intensified by blaring brass. A drop into the void is followed by a bright duet on flute and horn, after

which the movement ends with a meditative, unresolved coda.

The clumsy tread of the scherzo does not seek to create a refined image of the jubilant masses. The stomping double basses lay the foundations for comic escapades that forge ahead, devilish and bureaucratic, but without the neuroticism of Mahler’s scherzos. The counterpoint in this movement is effective, while the bare instrumentation makes sharp slashes in everyday life.

The economical instrumentation enhances the introspective melancholy of the slow movement. The internalised approach is evocative of Tchaikovsky, but the flight into the private domain does not bring peace for Shostakovich either. The melodic motifs are vaguely reminiscent of his slightly earlier *Rebirth*, Op. 46/1, a *Romance on a poem of Pushkin*; its message of genius re-emerging in its former beauty from beneath the dross that has accumulated with the years does not seem to be a mere coincidence in this context.

The profound idea meanders along without the customary thematic guidance only to erupt in a fit of despair intensified by a piano and percussions. At the end, the movement tries to recover from the blow, but all is darkness until the last notes of the celesta begin to shed a ray of light.

The finale comes in with a bang that seems to sweep aside the problems with its sheer volume. The movement is rhapsodic and impulsive, calming down in a serene melody accompanied by tremolo strings. In the very last bars the initial aggressiveness is curbed and channelled into a powerful desire to win.

It is over these closing bars that interpreters of the symphony have tended to disagree. Mstislav Rostropovich, for example, was of the opinion that the slow tempo suggests a parody of the official line or a forced celebration of victory, but a quick tempo might seem tragic. Just who the victor is ultimately remains for the listener to decide.

Programme notes by **Antti Häyrynen**
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 2015/16 season include appearances with the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Orchestre national de Lille, Gulbenkian Orchestra, and the Iceland Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Moscow State Symphony and Seoul Philharmonic orchestras. He conducts the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra on tour in Japan in autumn 2015 – as part of his complete cycle of Sibelius' symphonies with the New Japan Philharmonic – and on tour in Vienna, Salzburg and Innsbruck in January 2016 with violinist

Leila Josefowicz. Recent engagements have included the Philharmonia, BBC Scottish Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Cleveland and St Louis Symphony orchestras; the Houston Symphony, MDR Sinfonieorchester Leipzig and the Orchestre national de Lyon; and debuts with the WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, the Hallé, and the Detroit Symphony and Minnesota orchestras.

In May 2016 Lintu returns to Finnish National Opera to conduct Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, having previously conducted them in *Parsifal* - directed by Harry Kupfer, *Carmen*, and Aulis Sallinen's *King Lear*. Other recent operatic projects include Sallinen's *Kullervo* at the 2014 Savonlinna Opera Festival and *Tannhäuser* with Tampere Opera in 2012. Lintu has also worked with Estonian National Opera, recording Tauno Pylkkänen's *Mare* and her son.

Hannu Lintu has made several recordings for Ondine, Naxos, Avie and Hyperion. In summer 2015 he recorded Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concertos with Fumiaki Miura and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin for Avex, while other recent recordings feature works by Ligeti, including the Violin Concerto with Benjamin Schmid, and Messiaen's *Turangalîla* Symphony with Angela Hewitt and Valerie Hartmann-Clavierie – both for Ondine with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. 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.

LEILA JOSEFOWICZ

Known especially for her performances of contemporary music, Leila Josefowicz has had works composed for her by many composers, among them John Adams, Colin Matthews, Luca Francesconi, Steven Mackey and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Her disc of Salonen's Violin Concerto (Deutsche Grammophon) with the FRSO and the composer won her a Grammy nomination in 2014.

Recent engagements have included appearances with the Chicago, Baltimore and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, the French RSO, the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra and the Lucerne Symphony, and at the BBC Proms. This season she can, among others, be heard as the soloist with the London and Cleveland Symphony Orchestras, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the St. Louis Symphony. She will be giving

solo recitals in New York, Berkeley and Denver.

Leila Josefowicz has released a number of discs on the Deutsche Grammophon, Phillips / Universal, Warner Classics and other labels. She was awarded a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 2008.

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 2015/2016 season it will premiere six Finnish works commissioned by Yle. The programme will also include Piano Concertos by Beethoven and Prokofiev, Symphonies

by Schumann and Brahms, and Mendelssohn's oratorio Elijah. Among its guest artists will be pianists Murray Perahia, Nelson Freire and Andrés Schiff, conductors David Zinman, Tugan Sokhiev and Manfred Honeck, soprano Karita Mattila and mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter.

The FRSO has recorded works by Ligeti, Eötvös, Nielsen, 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 the Sibelius and Lindberg Violin Concertos was Gramophone magazine's Editor's Choice in February 2014.

The FRSO regularly tours to all parts of the world. One of the many highlights of the 2015/2016 season will be tours to Japan and Austria with conductor Hannu Lintu.

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.