

13.12.

WEDNESDAY SERIES 8

Helsinki Music Centre at 19:00

Hannu Lintu, conductor

Gerald Finley, baritone

Uuno Klami: Suite from the ballet Whirls 23 min

Prelude: The Boy of the Day and the Maidens of the Day

Ronde IV

The Boy of the Moon

Ronde V

Finale: Farewell Dance of the North Star and the Boy of the Moon

Kaija Saariaho: True Fire, fpF 30 min

1. *Proposition I*

2. *River*

3. *Proposition II*

4. *Lullaby*

5. *Proposition III*

6. *Farewell*

INTERVAL 20 min

*Igor Stravinsky: Petrushka, a ballet burlesque
in 4 scenes (1947)*

35 min

*Scene 1: At the Shrovetide Fair – The Crowds – The Charlatan’s
Booth – Russian Dance*

Scene 2: Petrushka – Petrushka’s Room

*Scene 3: The Moor’s Room – Dance of the Ballerina – Waltz:
The Ballerina & the Moor*

*Scene 4: The Shrovetide Fair (Evening) – Dance of the Wet
Nurses – Dance of the Peasant and the Bear – Dance of the
Gypsy Girls – Dance of the Coachmen – The Mummers –
The Fight between the Moor and Petrushka – Petrushka’s Death
– The Policeman and the Juggler – Petrushka’s Ghost*

Interval at about 20:05. The concert will end at about 21:10.

Broadcast live on Yle Radio 1 and streamed at yle.fi/arena.

The concert will be shown on Yle Teema in the programme RSO Musiikkitalossa (The FRSO at the Helsinki Music Centre) on 17.12. and 21.1. with a repeat on Yle TV 1 on 23.12. and 27.1.

A QUEST FOR RICHES AND HAPPINESS

There is no denying the iconic role in Finland of the national epic, *Kalevala*. More than any other work, it has had an impact on just about every genre of the arts and beyond. Uno Klami, a Finnish composer born in 1900 who sought urban inspiration in Paris, also immersed himself wholeheartedly in the world of the epic. When the Wihuri Foundation held an opera composition competition in 1957, Klami spotted a great opportunity and he was awarded the ballet prize for the piano score of Act I of a work entitled *Pyörteitä* (Whirls). This was unfortunately far from complete when he died of a heart attack in 1961.

Whirls tells the story of the miraculous Sampo, so the leading character is Ilmarinen, the smith who forges items from it in his quest for riches and happiness. He discards a sword because weapons do not bring happiness. So how about a boat – could the secret lie in trade? No. Slaves are not the solution either, because industry and manufacturing are not the answer. Nor is agriculture. Ilmarinen finally forges a young girl, a symbol of love and life; here at last is the real source of happiness and prosperity.

Like so much ballet music, that of *Whirls* is expressive even without the dancing, and sections from it can be performed on their own as a stand-alone suite. The items for tonight's performance were selected by conductor Hannu Lintu. A French horn begins the Prelude: *The Boy of the Day and the*

Maidens of the Day. There is something very archaic, very Kalevalaic, in its modal simplicity. Towards the end of the movement a trumpet also plays a bright, lucid melody.

Ronde IV leaps into action in Stravinskyan manner. It bears a clear affinity with *The Infernal Dance of King Kastchei* in Stravinsky's *Firebird*, and the stepwise accompaniment could be straight out of *The Rite of Spring*. *The Boy of the Moon* is the slow movement in the suite, and fairly short. The melodies on cellos and violins are once again slightly reminiscent of folk songs, and the tinkling celesta bathes the music in moonlight. *Ronde V – Dances of the Night* is livelier; trumpets and horns engage in dialogue with little comments from a piccolo.

Farewell Dance of the North Star and the Boy of the Moon is the finale to Act 2. It begins slowly, and the melodies are again assigned to the winds, with a sizeable solo for the flute. A mellow, serene orchestral sound gradually emerges until an organ-like C-major chord announces that the end has been reached.

A COMPOSER AS PART OF NATURE

The works of Kaija Saariaho nowadays receive plenty of performances worldwide, one reason being that they are commissioned jointly by two or more orchestras. *True Fire* for orchestra and baritone is one such work. It was composed in 2014 as a joint commission from the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the NDR, BBC Symphony and French

National Orchestras. It was first heard in Los Angeles in May 2015, with Gustavo Dudamel conducting. The soloist was baritone Gerald Finley, who sings it to-night and to whom it is dedicated.

Choosing a text is not easy, says Kaija Saariaho – a problem encountered by many composers, who may have music in mind before looking for texts. This time, Saariaho solved it by including six texts: by Seamus Heaney and Mahmoud Dawish, and words from a Traditional Indian folk song embedded in three short fragments by Ralph Waldo Emerson. The title of the work, *True Fire*, is taken from the last of these.

The first *Proposition* begins in contemplative mood. Lyricism alternates with pillar-like orchestral chords and the baritone almost imperceptibly reaches the work's highest climax. *River*, to words by Seamus Heaney, begins to flow and meander at a slightly faster tempo. *Proposition II* is, according to Saariaho, the heart of the piece and is calm and expressive. *Lullaby* is based on a traditional American Indian song and is concerned not so much with getting the child to sleep as with telling a good story. And the rocking, mysterious atmosphere could very well be straight from the thrilling, fairytale world of the nursery.

Farewell is in sharp contrast to the *Lullaby*. It is dark and heavy, and the vocal line regularly breaks down into slow speech. The third *Proposition* closes this suite lasting just on half an hour. Short and quick, it has hardly got going before fading away into silence.

Kaija Saariaho says that it was only after completing the suite that she

saw the ideas common to all the texts. Though different, they all share the theme of our being surrounded by nature, our perception of this and of being part of it.

PUPPET ON A MUSICAL STRING

Petrushka was originally to have been a work for piano and orchestra, but Sergei Diaghilev, director of the Ballets Russes in Paris, persuaded Stravinsky to adapt it as a ballet. Stravinsky looked around for a theme before hitting on an old Russian folk tale about a puppet called Petrushka that, he recalled, represents the universal tragic clown.

Petrushka is a puppet who comes to life at a Shrovetide fair and gets caught up in a drama with a Moor. Both have their eye on the same ballerina. In the resulting conflict, the Moor kills Petrushka, who comes back to haunt the fair.

The music of *Petrushka* was not only a montage of numerous folk tunes; it was new, enthralling and exciting. At some points, Stravinsky superimposes themes in what amounts to an early form of the dissonance and bitonality that were already in the air in 1911.

The ballet is in four scenes, the first and last at the fair, the second in Petrushka's room and the third the Moor's. Stravinsky marks off the scenes with tom-tom and snare-drum rolls. The story of Petrushka is full of symbolism. Despite being only a puppet, he has very human traits. He is a scapegoat who meets only injustice, persecution

and injury. Some have seen him as a symbol of the Russian people suffering under tyranny and serfdom.

The premiere of *Petrushka* in June 1911 was a resounding success. The team was the same as that for *The Rite of Spring* two years later: Tamara Karsaniva and Vaslav Nijinsky danced the leading roles, the choreographer was Michel Fokine and the conductor Pierre Monteux. The music paints a fitting picture of the events, the instrumentation is crystal-clear, the melodies sparkle and the rhythms fire the imagination even without the dancers. Naturally, *Petrushka* therefore also works as an orchestral suite. Stravinsky actually arranged two suites, the second of which (1947) is probably the one more often performed. Originally designed for piano and orchestra, *Petrushka* thus returned to its roots as concert music after making a detour as one of the most impressive ballet scores of all time.

Programme notes by

Osmo Tapio Räihälä translated
(abridged) by Susan Sinisalo

HANNU LINTU

The 2017/18 season marks Hannu Lintu's fifth year as Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. A concert tour to Russia and a performance of Väinö Raitio's Princess Cecilia at the Helsinki Festival – part of celebrations marking 100 years of Finnish independence – were among last season's highlights, and on 6 December 2017 the

orchestra honours both its 90th anniversary and 100-year-old Finland with premieres of newly commissioned works by longtime FRSO collaborator Magnus Lindberg and Lotta Wennäkoski. Other forthcoming engagements include performances of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and a concert tour to Spain and Germany with cellist Sol Gabetta.

The 2017/18 season sees Lintu return to the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Washington's National Symphony Orchestra, and the Dallas Symphony and Detroit Symphony orchestras, among others. Lintu also makes his debut with the Naples Philharmonic, Singapore Symphony and Hiroshima Symphony orchestras. Recent engagements include the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Luzerner Sinfonieorchester, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, and the St Louis Symphony, Baltimore and Toronto Symphony orchestras, as well as three acclaimed European debuts: Staatsorchester Stuttgart Opera, Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien and NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester.

A regular in the pit, Lintu returns to the Savonlinna Opera Festival in July 2018 to conduct Verdi's *Otello* – in 2017 he conducted Aulis Sallinen's *Kullervo* at Savonlinna as well as Sibelius's *Kullervo* for the Finnish National Opera and Ballet as part of their special collaborative project with director/choreographer Tero Saarinen. Previous productions with Finnish National Opera include *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.

GERALD FINLEY

Gerald Finley is one of the leading singers and dramatic interpreters of his generation, in a career that has led to collaborations with numerous top orchestras and conductors. Born in Montreal, he began singing as a chorister in Ottawa, Canada, and completed his musical studies in the UK, at the Royal College of Music, the National Opera Studio and King's College, Cambridge. He is now a Visiting Professor and Fellow of the Royal College of Music.

In opera, Mr Finley has sung all the major baritone roles by Mozart, beginning with the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro* and the title role in *Don Giovanni* – both roles he has since sung the world over. Other roles in his repertoire include Hans Sachs in *The Mastersingers*, Amfortas in *Parsifal*, Iago in *Otello*, the title role in *Wilhelm Tell*, Jaufré Rudel in Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de loin* and J. Robert Oppenheimer in John Adams' *Doctor Atomic*. The DVD of the last of these won a Grammy for Best Opera Recording 2012.

Mr Finley's work with orchestra in concert is equally prestigious, contemporary music included. He has performed works by such composers as Mahler, Shostakovich, Mark Anthony Turnage and Einojuhani Rautavaara. In recent years, he has taken up invitations to appear with, for example, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Los

Angeles Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony. As a recitalist, he works regularly with Julius Drake, and together they have garnered numerous awards.

A singer keen to uphold and develop vocal tradition, Mr Finley holds masterclasses worldwide. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in July 2014 and a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 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. His predecessors as Chief Conductor were Toivo Haapanen, Nils-Eric Fougstedt, Paavo Berglund, Okko Kamu, Leif Segerstam, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Sakari Oramo.

The FRSO celebrates its 90th anniversary in the 2017/2018 season, for the Radio Orchestra of ten players made its first appearance on September 1, 1927, at the Aleksanterinkatu 46 studio in Helsinki. It began giving public concerts a few years later and grew to symphony orchestra strength in the 1960s, during Paavo Berglund's term as Chief Conductor.

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 2017/2018 season, the FRSO will premiere six Finnish works commissioned by Yle. The programme will also include concert performances of three operas, the FRSO's first festival of its own and major 20th-century violin concertos.

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. Its 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, Lindberg, Bartók and others will be recorded during the 2017/2018 season.

The FRSO regularly tours to all parts of the world. During the 2017/2018 season its schedule will include a European tour under Hannu Lintu. The home channel of the FRSO is Yle Radio 1, which broadcasts all the FRSO concerts, usually live, both in Finland and abroad. Its concerts can also be heard and watched with excellent live stream quality in the web (yle.fi/areena).