

5.9. 19:00
HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE

HANNU LINTU
CONDUCTOR

MARTIN GRUBINGER
PERCUSSION

Louise Farrenc:
Overture No. 2 in E-flat Major, Op. 24
7 min

Fazıl Say:
Concerto for Percussion, fpF
25 min

I Waterphone
II Rototoms · Timpani
III Vibraphone · Campana
IV Marimba · Boobams

INTERVAL 20 MIN

Hector Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14*
54 min

Dreams – Passions (Largo – Allegro agitato e appassionato assai)

A Ball (Valse. Allegro non troppo)

Scene in the Fields (Adagio)

March to the Scaffold (Allegretto non troppo)

*Dream of a Witches' Sabbath – Dies Irae – Ronde du Sabbat – Dies Irae
et Ronde du Sabbat ensemble (Larghetto – Allegro)*

*Interval at about 19:45. The concert will end at about 21:10.
Broadcast live on Yle Radio 1 and Yle Areena.*

2 PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOUR MOBILE PHONE IS SWITCHED OFF!

Photographing, video and sound recording are prohibited during the concert.

LOUISE FARRENC: OVERTURE NO. 2 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 24

Among the first women composers of the Romantic era to spring to mind are Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel and Clara Schumann, their surnames being already familiar thanks to their husbands. Another, and one increasingly quoted, is Louise Farrenc (1804–1875). And so it should be, for here was a lady composing such major Classical-Romantic works as a symphony and a piano quintet at a time when women were mainly expected simply to provide a little music in the home, and not to become a celebrated pianist and serve for decades as a professor of the piano at the Paris Conservatoire. Schumann and Berlioz admired her music, and again and again she impressed contemporary musical circles with her merits.

The public at large could drum up no enthusiasm for unknown composers, and a female one, in particular, was hard put to make a name for herself when a woman with a public career was an oddity indeed. But Louise was an unusually plucky lady, and her success is an impressive milestone in the history of gender equality. Her status was not easily won, however. For years, the Paris Conservatoire paid her less than her male colleagues, even though she was greatly respected as a teacher. Not until after the premiere of her Nonet, Op. 38 in 1850 did the Conservatoire directors no longer have the audacity to deny their piano professor's demand for a pay rise. The Nonet starred Joseph Joachim the violinist, and

it was an out-and-out hit.

Louise Farrenc, née Dumont, grew up in a family of artists and her parents did nothing to curb her ambition. Right up until the 20th century, many women composers had to fight tooth and nail for tuition, but Louise was only 15 when she began taking composition lessons from Professor Reicha at the Paris Conservatoire. Reicha had been an old friend of Beethoven's and could count Berlioz and Liszt among his pupils. Louise could not officially enrol for the Conservatoire's composition class, because until 1879, women were not allowed to study composition. A woman with a command of counterpoint would have been a threat to public order.

The music of Louise Farrenc differed sharply from the contemporary French mainstream dominated by opera and little salon pieces. She loved the abstract forms of Beethoven and German music. That anyone – and a woman at that – even composed large-scale chamber music, concert overtures and (in Farrenc's case three) symphonies in early 19th-century France is astounding in itself. Though her orchestral works were not published in her lifetime, they did all receive more than one performance. Her two concert overtures date from 1834. Shortly before, Mendelssohn had launched a new sort of overture with a programme, and Farrenc was undoubtedly aware of what was being said about it. Her overtures nevertheless follow more along the path mapped out by Beethoven. She was not overawed by his shadow and confidently carried his legacy on into the Romantic era. The overture on today's programme races along with unstoppable energy. After a serious beginning, it casts care aside,

swinging from mood to mood as if to tease the sullen, gloomy opening.

FAZIL SAY: CONCERTO FOR PERCUSSION

Fazıl Say (b. 1970) has made a name for himself as both an eminent pianist and a distinctive composer. He has also spoken out on behalf of human rights and expressed his views on the present situation in his homeland, Turkey, to the annoyance of those in power. In January this year, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan nevertheless decided to make his peace with the famous artist and attended, with a retinue of ministers, a Say recital.

Typical features of Say's compositions are a spontaneous, fantasia-like structure and a spirited, dance-like beat. He also draws on the folk music of Turkey and neighbouring regions. He has written four symphonies and several concertos, for the piano, violin, clarinet, *ney*-flute and other instruments.

The latest Say concerto is for percussion. It is dedicated to Martin Grubinger, was premiered this spring in Dresden and was written while Say was Composer-in-Residence with the Dresden Philharmonic. A battery of percussion instruments was an inspiring medium for his spirited idiom. Some of the instruments are pitched, melodic ones and for them he wrote fast-flowing rhythmic figures. Turkish folk music adds spice at many points, while at others the orchestra might imitate the walking bass of jazz or Beatbox sounds. All in all, Say enhances the rhythmic aspect of his concerto with snappy wind timbres and piz-

zicato and *col legno* string sounds (*col legno* meaning hitting the stings with the wooden part of the bow).

Say uses a particular percussion or pair of instruments to give each movement its own characteristic sound. The soloist is always in the forefront. The first, strictly rhythmic movement is dominated by a waterphone from which the soloist conjures forth throbbing and gong-like sounds, with either sticks or a bow. In the second, the tempo picks up and the percussionist turns to the timpani and a rotating rototom drum. The orchestra provides a swinging accompaniment and the timpani get a rattling cadenza. The wowing timpani glissandos spread to the strings as well. The wistful third movement featuring a vibraphone and bells is a calmer interlude before the dramatic finale in which the solo instruments are now a bubbling marimba and boobams – tube-like drums spanning two octaves. The allusions to historical *köçek* male dancers, belly dancing and the string instrument called a *kanun* (or *qanun*) add Turkish colour. The concerto comes full circle with the return of the waterphone.

HECTOR BERLIOZ: SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE, OP. 14

Romanticism hit France with possibly greater force than anywhere else. The arts in the 17th to 18th century had been dominated by Classicism with its strict adherence to rules; this was brushed away by the French Romantics as the Revolution swept through society. Where Classicism favoured balance and humanity, the Romantics were entranced by the wild,

irregular and unique. An experimental trend testing extremes, delving deep into the human mind and wavering between the sublime and the mundane raged in French literature of the 1820s–1830s.

Capturing the *Zeitgeist* to perfection in French music was the best-known work by Hector Berlioz (1803–1869), the *Symphonie fantastique* he composed when he was 26. It received its first performance in December 1830. The word 'fantastic' here alludes both to the workings of the mind and to the symphony's format.

Berlioz attached a programme to his symphony, heading it "Episode in the life of an artist in five movements", though he later said the listener did not necessarily need the commentary. The inspiration for the symphony was entirely personal: Berlioz was head-over-heels in love with an actress called Harriet Smithson and he used a giant orchestra to tell the world of his hopeless passion, paranoia and self-destructive tendencies. The symphony's hero ends up overdosing on opium, but Hector and Harriet did actually marry. They did not, however, live happily ever after, for their marriage soon fell apart.

The beloved – or rather the lover's vision of her – takes the form of a melody. He cannot get her out of his mind and his passion becomes an obsession – an *idée fixe*. The *idée fixe* melody torments him in all the movements. It first appears around half way through the opening movement: as the *Dreams* give way to the rollercoaster of *Passions*, love strikes like a bolt from the blue in the orchestra in a melody idolising the beloved.

The mood is most positive in the second movement, as glittering harps set the scene for a ball. From then onwards, everything starts to go wrong. Instead of

the slow movement of a traditional symphony Berlioz chooses a psychologically potent *Scène aux champs*, extending the sense of space by shepherd's calls (a dialogue between a cor anglais and an off-stage oboe). At first, the hero's mind is at rest, but the pressure grows as he takes a walk. His obsessive love holds him in its grip, and at the end, the now solitary cor anglais offers no consolation at all. Thunder rumbles ominously in the distance.

Even at night, his obsession gave Berlioz no rest, and not even opium succeeded in sending him to sleep. Opium played a major role in the work of many a Romantic artist, manifest in hallucinations and psychedelic visions. According to Berlioz's programme, the climax of the symphony acts out an opium-induced hallucination: the hero is marched to the scaffold and, after witnessing his own execution, he finds himself taking part in a grotesque witches' Sabbath. Such shocking imagery was popular with the French Romantics.

As if this nightmare were not enough, the obsession has a grisly end in the finale, when the beloved's theme appears in a ghostly, distorted screech while she herself, transformed into a witch, pops up in a demonic orgy. Berlioz further subscribed to the Romantics' love of the gothic: the medieval *Dies irae* hymn hinted at in the finale has the same blood-curdling effect as the haunted monastery ruins in novels of the period.

Programme notes by Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen translated (abridged) by Susan Sinisalo

HANNU LINTU

Hannu Lintu took over as the eighth Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in August 2013, after years of highly-acclaimed collaboration with the orchestra. During the 2019/2020 season he will conduct the FRSO in 14 concerts at the Helsinki Music Centre and take it on tours to Central Europe and Japan.

In addition to his post with the FRSO, Hannu Lintu will this season be making guest appearances with the symphony orchestras in Montreal, Detroit, Chicago, Boston, with the Orchestre de Paris and the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra. Last season included debuts with the Boston Symphony and the Hungarian National Philharmonic, guest appearances with the Baltimore, St. Louis and Cincinnati Symphonies, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Singapore Symphony and the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg.

Hannu Lintu studied the cello and piano at the Sibelius Academy in his native Finland and later orchestral conducting in the class of Jorma Panula. He attended masterclasses with Myung-Whun Chung at L'Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena and was the winner of the Nordic Conducting Prize in Bergen in 1994. He has recorded on the Ondine, BIS, Hyperion and other labels.

MARTIN GRUBINGER

“My main focus is on contemporary classical,” said Austrian percussion wizard Martin Grubinger in a Bachtrack interview in February 2019, “but I also like African drumming, Afro-Cuban music,

Taiko drumming, salsa, samba, tango, funk, rock, pop, jazz, fusion... there are so many, and in all of them percussion has a main role. I love to improvise, to develop new instruments... With percussion there's always a new goal to reach.”

Hailed even as “the world's best multi-percussionist”, Martin Grubinger has performed the world over, in recital, in chamber repertoire and as the soloist with top orchestras.

“I was born with percussion,” he explains. “We always had instruments at home and my father is a real enthusiast.” He nowadays lives surrounded by his collection of around 500 percussion instruments, some 400 of which he knows how to play.

After receiving his first instruction from his percussionist father, Martin continued his studies at the Bruckner Conservatory in Linz and the Mozarteum in his native Salzburg. He was awarded the Leonard Bernstein award by the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in 2007 and the Jeunesses Musicales Deutschland Prize of the Würth Foundation in 2010. He has been the soloist with such prestigious orchestras as the Berlin, Vienna, Los Angeles, New York and BBC Philharmonics, performs chamber music with his own Percussion Planet Ensemble and with pianists Ferhan and Ferzan Önder, Yuja Wang and others. The public at large became aware of him as the star of the Eurovision Song Contest interval act in Vienna in 2015.

Many contemporary composers have written works for Grubinger. Examples are Avner Dorman's *Frozen in Time*, Friedrich Cerha's *Concerto*, Tan Dun's concerto *Tears of Nature*, Peter Eötvyös's *Speaking Drums* and the Percussion Concerto by Fazil Say.

Daniel Bjarnason is also writing a work for him. Finnish audiences may remember him as the soloist in the percussion concerto *Seidi* by Kalevi Aho.

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 Radio Orchestra of ten players founded in 1927 grew to symphony orchestra proportions in the 1960s. Its Chief Conductors have been Toivo Haapanen, Nils-Eric Fougstedt, Paavo Berglund, Okko Kamu, Leif Segerstam, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Sakari Oramo, and taking over from Hannu Lintu in 2021 will be Nicholas Collon.

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 2019/2020 season, the FRSO will premiere four works commissioned by Yle. Also on the programme are a large-scale collaboration between **Yle** and the **Helsinki Festival: Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust***. The symphonies and concertos of **Dmitri Shostakovich** will occupy special status during the season, while the RSO Festival now to be held for the second time will

feature new and large-scale works by **Magnus Lindberg**. Among the visiting conductors will be **Esa-Pekka Salonen**, **Herbert Blomstedt**, **Jukka-Pekka Saraste** and **Sakari Oramo**, and a host of young Finnish artists will make their debut as FRSO soloists.

The FRSO has recorded works by Mahler, Bartók, Sibelius, Hakola, Lindberg, Saariaho, Sallinen, Kaipainen, Kokkonen and others. It has twice won a Gramophone Award: for its disc of Lindberg's Clarinet Concerto in 2006 and of Bartók Violin Concertos in 2018. Other distinctions have included BBC Music Magazine, Académie Charles Cros and MIDEM Classical awards. Its disc of tone poems and songs by Sibelius won an International Classical Music Award (ICMA) in 2018, and it has been the recipient of a Finnish EMMA award in 2016 and 2019.

The FRSO regularly tours to all parts of the world. During the 2019/2020 season its schedule will include tours to Central Europe and Japan under Hannu Lintu.

The FRSO concerts are broadcast live on the Yle Areena and Radio 1 channels and are recorded and shown later on Yle Teema and TV 1.