

**22.11. AT 19:00**  
**HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE**

**OLARI ELTS**

**CONDUCTOR**

**ANDREA MASTRONI**

**BASS**

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Sergey Rachmaninov:

*The Isle of the Dead, Op. 29* 20 min

Modest Mussorgsky (orch. Kalevi Aho):

*Songs and Dances of Death* 18 min

*Lullaby*

*Serenade*

*Trepak*

*The Field Marshal*

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**INTERVAL 20 MIN**

Modest Mussorgsky:

*Pictures from Crimea (orch. B.A. Zimmermann)* 5 min

Dmitri Shostakovich:

*Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 54* 30 min

*Largo*

*Allegro*

*Presto*

Also playing in this concert will be five students from the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, chosen for the Helsinki Music Centre's Orchestra Academy: **Marija Räsänen**, violin I, **Beata Kavander**, violin 2, **Liisa Orava**, viola, **Antto Tunkkari**, cello and **Saga Söderström**, French horn.

The Helsinki Music Centre Orchestra Academy is a joint venture by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, the FRSO and the Sibelius Academy aiming at training that is of an increasingly high standard and with a more practical and international orientation.

Interval at about 19:50. The concert will end at about 20:55, the late-night chamber music at about 21:40. Broadcast live on Yle Radio 1 and Yle Areena.



The LATE-NIGHT CHAMBER-MUSIC will follow in the Concert Hall after an interval of about 10 minutes. Those attending are asked to take (unnumbered) seats in the stalls.

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**LATE-NIGHT CHAMBER MUSIC:**  
Tomas Nuñez, cello / Kirill Kozlovski, piano

**Sergey Rachmaninov:**  
**Sonata for Cello and Piano in G Minor, Op. 19** 35 min  
Lento – Allegro moderato  
Allegro scherzando  
Andante  
Allegro mosso

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

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

## SERGEY RACHMANINOV: THE ISLE OF THE DEAD, OP. 29

Hanging on the wall of every self-respecting bourgeois home in Central Europe a century ago would be a black-and-white print of a painting by the Swiss symbolist Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901), and preferably his most famous: *Die Toteninsel* (1880, The Isle of the Dead). It was one such print that caught the eye of Sergey Rachmaninov (1873–1943) in Paris, and gave him the idea of capturing the scene in a work for orchestra.

4 The mysterious painting by Böcklin shows a rocky island with steep cliffs, and a little boat bearing two figures and a coffin slipping into a sheltered haven. Thanks to the painting, Rachmaninov's late-Romantic music acquired a strong symbolic charge. He completed his symphonic poem *The Isle of the Dead* in spring 1909. It begins on the border of silence, on a dark stream in swinging 5/8 time. Woven into the texture is also the medieval *Dies irae* melody adopted by Rachmaninov as his personal motto.

Having reached its climax, the music settles for a steady 3/4 time and a long, lilting theme in a major key that, according to Rachmaninov, represented life. The muffled *Dies irae* motif serves as a reminder of the power of death; the "life theme" is now in a minor key, the music reverts to the 5/8 swing and continues its journey to the isle of the dead.

## MODEST MUSSORGSKY (ORCH. KALEVI AHO): SONGS AND DANCES OF DEATH; PICTURES FROM CRIMEA (ORCH. B.A. ZIMMERMANN)

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) was the most distinctive of the 19th-century Russian composers. He was at his best as a vocal composer, combining words with music, whether it be in a compact solo song or a large-scale opera. Crowning this latter category is his only completed opera, *Boris Godunov*, while the former comprises some 50 songs and three fine song cycles: *The Nursery* (1868–1872), *Sunless* (1874) and *Songs and Dances of Death* (1875–1877). For *The Nursery* he wrote the words himself; the others are settings of poems by Count Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov.

The *Songs and Dances of Death* paint three portraits of death. Each one is like a miniature drama, with Death as the leading character. In *Lullaby*, a mother is cradling her sick infant, but Death intervenes and takes her place. In *Serenade*, Death seduces a sick young girl with his song. In *Trepak*, Death comes across a drunken peasant lost in a snowstorm, and they dance together until the man falls into a snowdrift. In *The Field Marshal*, Death harvests the battlefield strewn with the dead and dying. Mussorgsky underlines his message by quoting a Polish patriotic song.

Many composers have orchestrated this song cycle originally scored for voice and piano. The version for bass was made by Finnish composer Kalevi Aho in 1984.

A trip he made in 1879 with alto Daria Leonova brought a little sunshine to Mussorgsky's ever-darker final years and inspired him to write a few small pieces for piano. The best-known of these is *The Song of the Flea*, but more directly related to the journey are the two piano miniatures *Baidarki* (Near the Southern Shore of the Crimea) and *Gurzuf* (On the Southern Shore of the Crimea). The latter was orchestrated by the German composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann in 1949.

## **DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH: SYMPHONY NO. 6 IN B MINOR, OP. 54**

The symphonist career of Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) did not always proceed along a straight, logical line, but rather as a dialectic series of theses and antitheses. Even for him, the sixth symphony (1939) was a strange bird, far removed from the straightforward fifth (1937) and the monumental *Leningrad* seventh (1941).

The sixth symphony is an abstract work, a law unto itself. Its centre of gravity is the slow opening movement, of epic proportions and longer than the two faster ones put together. Though seemingly from two almost opposite worlds, the three movements do have some thematic links.

The slow first movement begins with a glowing, sustained melody. At times, it dies down into metaphysical embers, at others building up to a blaze, but at no point is the tragic undercurrent placed open to question.

The outward levity of the two other movements prompted Shostakovich's contemporaries to liken him to Rossini. The second movement is a lively scherzo.

Around the middle, it even calls a military march to mind. The speedy finale is spiced with irony and the occasional duskier tone. It nevertheless ends in rollicking mood.

*Kimmo Korhonen*

## **LATE-NIGHT CHAMBER MUSIC SERGEY RACHMANINOV: SONATA FOR CELLO AND PIANO IN G MINOR, OP. 19**

Sergey Rachmaninov had taken so much trouble over writing his first symphony that he felt quite empty after its premiere in spring 1897. Incapable of writing anything for several years, he only turned to composing again after undergoing therapy in spring 1900.

In autumn of that year, he set to work on what was to prove his successful second piano concerto. This was premiered in November 1901, the month in which he finished his *Sonata for Cello and Piano*. Himself a virtuoso pianist, he concentrated on the piano, the cello capping its mounting energy with singing melodic lines. The sonata is clearly cut from the same cloth as the second piano concerto. But if the concerto is unashamedly wistful, the sonata addresses the same experiences in a meditative and – even in its passionate moments – intimate way. The slow movement in particular is nothing short of a personal confession.

*Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen*

*Programme notes translated (abridged) by Susan Sinisalo*

## OLARI ELTS

Winner of the international Jorma Panula Conducting Competition in 1999 and the Jean Sibelius Conductors' Competition the following year, Olari Elts studied conducting in Estonia and Vienna and in masterclasses with Esa-Pekka Salonen and others. He regularly finds time in his busy international schedule to conduct in Finland and has been Artistic Advisor of the Kymi Sinfonietta since 2018. He has also been Principal Guest Conductor of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra since 2007. He was Principal Guest Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra from 2007 to 2010 and of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra from 2011 to 2014, in addition to guest appearances worldwide.

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At home in Estonia, Olari Elts has also conducted opera, including productions of Britten's *Albert Herring*, Puccini's *Il trittico* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Idomeneo*. Guest appearances have also taken him to Rennes and Hungary.

In 1993, Olari Elts founded the contemporary NYYD Ensemble and is still its Artistic Director. With NYYD he has conducted a lot of Estonian music addition to works in the international contemporary repertoire. He has had a particularly close working relationship with Erkki-Sven Tüür, and the CD of Tüür's music conducted by him won an Estonian Music Award in 2019.

## ANDREA MASTRONI

Italian Andrea Mastroni has in recent years become one of the world's greatest *basso profundo* singers, excelling in opera, orchestral repertoire and Lied alike.

The 2017/2018 season featured his debut at both London's Covent Garden and the New York Metropolitan, soon to be followed by debuts in Rome and at the Vienna State Opera. He has already been heard at such prestigious venues as the opera in Zurich, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Théâtre des Champs Élysées in Paris and the Teatro Massimo in Palermo.

His personality as a singer has, Mastroni claims, been moulded especially by Handel and Mozart, though his repertoire stretches from Monteverdi via the Baroque and Classical eras to the Romantics (Verdi, Puccini, Wagner) and the music of today.

Andrea Mastroni's discography includes Verdi's *Sicilian Vespers*, Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*, Rossini's *Semiramide* and songs by Henri Duparc. Among his most recent releases are Handel's opera *Serse*, and *Melancholia* – Handel arias for bass.

# 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 TV1.