

6.12.

INDEPENDENCE DAY GALA CONCERT

Helsinki Music Centre at 15:00

Hannu Lintu, conductor

Johanna Rusanen-Kartano, soprano

Ville Rusanen, baritone

Helsinki Music Centre Choir, coach **Jani Sivén**

Joonas Kokkonen: Requiem 38 min

Requiem aeternam (Andante)

Kyrie eleison (Allegro)

Tractus (Andante)

Domine Jesu Christe (Moderato)

Hostias et preces (Allegretto)

Sanctus et Benedictus (Allegro moderato)

Agnus Dei (Moderato)

In Paradisum (Andante)

Lux aeterna (Adagio)

INTERVAL 20 min

Sebastian Hilli: Snap Music, fp (Yle commission) 15 min

Jean Sibelius: Symphony No. 3 in C, Op. 52 30 min

Allegro moderato

Andantino con moto, quasi allegretto

Moderato – Allegro con tanto

Interval at about 15:40. The concert will end at about 17:00.
Broadcast live on Yle Areena and Yle Teema.

JOONAS KOKKONEN: REQUIEM

Joonas Kokkonen (1921–1996) ended all his works with the dedication S.D.G.L.D. (Soli Deo Gloria, Laus Deo – Glory to God alone, Praise be to God). In some way, even his abstract instrumental works therefore have a spiritual element. For his religious ones he turned to the universal texts in Latin and a motif technique derived from instrumental music.

His opera *The Last Temptations* of 1975 may be regarded as Kokkonen's greatest opus. It tells of the revivalist Finnish preacher Paavo Ruotsalainen and its musical themes radiated on into his later works. This applies especially to his *Requiem* of 1981. Kokkonen originally intended to compose an "ecumenical mass" embracing various facets of the Christian faith, but instead it became a *Requiem in memoriam Maija Kokkonen* of 1981 following the long illness and finally death of his wife. This possibly explains the *Requiem's* open expression of emotion and the stylistic freedom that began with the opera.

Structurally, Kokkonen's *Requiem* for soprano and baritone, choir and orchestra differs slightly from its historical models. The Second Vatican Council of 1962–1965 removed the *Dies irae* sequence proclaiming the Last Judgement from the Catholic Requiem Mass, as did Kokkonen in his *Requiem*. Instead, he replaced it with a more peaceable *Tractus*, which also has historical antecedents.

Musically, the *Requiem* incorporates themes from *The Last Temptations*, but its reliance on core motifs is above all symphonic. The *Requiem* was to be Kokkonen's last great composition, for he never finished the fifth symphony he drafted in the 1980s.

Kokkonen's *Requiem* is a work of mostly moderate tempos and contrasts. The opening *Requiem aeterna* expresses a serene but weary longing for eternal rest, introduces the soloists (the soprano as bringer of perpetual light) and builds up to a Hallelujah climax.

The *Kyrie's* pleas for mercy are made in a restless *Allegro*, but the major-key outburst at the end indicates an underlying optimism. The *Tractus* ignores the threats of *Dies irae* but in seeking release from the chains of our sins also reminds us of the error of our ways. The dissonant shouts from the orchestra remind us that reflection on the error of our ways is in our own hands.

Domine Jesu Christe is a vision of Christ the Redeemer in which the soloists itemise pleas expressed by the choir. Closely linked with this are the sacrifices and prayers offered up by the choir with light, dancing steps in the *Hostias*. As far as our souls are concerned, we are now over the worst: in the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* we can now relax and praise the Lord, even though the soprano is taxed to extremes in reaching up to the heights. It remains for the baritone to convince us that "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" in the *Benedictus*. All then join together in "Hosanna".

In the *Agnus Dei* the Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world with an innocence and insubstantiality at which the choir, soloists and orchestra join in wonder. *In Paradisum* was originally part of the funeral service and used by Gabriel Fauré in his *Requiem* of 1888. For Kokkonen, it is a personal hymn accompanying his beloved to the gates of heaven.

The *Requiem* ends with *Lux aeterna*, a movement bathed in E-major sunlight and birdsong and the hope of perpetual light and rest. Rather than tragedy and finality, Kokkonen's *Requiem* reminds us of the fullness of life, of memories of our loved ones and the hope of salvation.

Antti Häyrynen

SEBASTIAN HILLI

Sebastian Hilli (b. 1990) studied with Veli-Matti Puumala at the Sibelius Academy, in Vienna with Michael Jarrell, and in masterclasses with Jukka Tiensuu, Jouni Kaipainen, Hans Abrahamsen, Simon Steen-Andersen, Philippe Manoury and others. His *Reachings* (2014) for orchestra won first prize in the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award in 2015 and in the 'Composers under 30 category' at the 64th International Rostrum of Composers in Palermo, Italy in 2017. In September 2018, Hilli won the Gaudeamus Award in Utrecht, the Netherlands. In 2017, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra premiered *Affekt* for choir and orchestra, his largest work to date.

The focus in Hilli's output was initially on chamber music, in which he concentrated on sonorities and performance techniques, and on contrasts between energetic textures and quiet, delicate moods. His approach to subjects and styles is fresh, but he "has a very personal aesthetic that is underlying all of his music, and he possesses the technical knowledge and imagination to realise what he is driven to create," as the Jury of the Gaudeamus Award reported.

SEBASTIAN HILLI: SNAP MUSIC

The piece was inspired by the English 'snap' – a word that can be translated into Finnish in close on 90 ways. The musical material, gestures and characters evolved from this, right down to the details.

"And then I just snapped."

In terms of dramatic structure and emotion, the salient element of the piece is "snapping", i.e. psychological loss of control. A series of events in which feelings gradually swell to chaotic mental proportions finally culminates in loss of control. What happens when the sense of control vanishes and all that remains is a dizzy emptiness?

Though the underlying idea is a psychological, long-term process and onward drive, there are also episodes based on the idea of 'snaps' in the sense of 'shots' or 'takes'. These are manifest as types of textures made up of shortish, flashing gestures/snaps, producing sometimes abrupt musical cuts.

My aim in my handling of the orchestra was to make wide-ranging use of its potential. Its sonorities vary from rich and expansive to small and delicate; there are both dense, multilevel textures on the full orchestra and comments by individual instruments and groups or solos. The orchestra also travels a path of its own, the instrumentation expressing the background emotional process – feelings that gradually grow from, say, light to heavy, from control to the lack thereof, and from emptiness to chaos.

Sebastian Hilli

JEAN SIBELIUS: SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN C, OP. 52

After composing his second symphony, Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) deliberately tried to get away from the National-Romantic idiom. One sign of this was his move from Helsinki to Ainola, his house in Järvenpää, because the commotion and intrigues of the Finnish capital were, he said, killing all the song in him. Only in the forest or in a metropolis could he nurture his creativity.

According to Sibelius, he finished his third symphony in London in 1907. More important than the physical distancing was the spiritual: on the surface, the symphony is almost classical in the spirit of Haydn, and as one French critic wrote at the time, only God nowadays writes in C major. Its rhythms seem to draw on a very free conception of folk music and a modern approach to thematic development.

Instead of the declamatory themes of the Romantic era, Sibelius began taking his symphonic architectural principles in a more organic direction. A process necessitating an abundance of time, wine and cigars, it produced an original, multidimensional symphony that pointed far ahead to his late works.

The very opening indicates what lies ahead: out of a rhythmic, ostinato-like motif on the cellos and basses, twisting and turning around C major, a cheerful march branches off along a new track. The wistful second theme sets a new course into uncharted territory, and from then onwards more and more impulses emerge from the rhythmic motifs. At the end, an unexpected pizzicato episode leads to a fervent hymn-like melody that gives the orchestra's closing comment a solid solemnity.

The folk song-like melody of the second movement seems at first to swing along in the manner of an old court dance. The key is a distant G-sharp minor and the main theme is examined from very different angles; for this reason, the structure of the movement is to some extent open. The concept of tempo is also fluid, and Sibelius seemed to hear it slower than he marked it. Around the middle of the movement, time relaxes its pace in the dusky summer night to the meditative strains of a cello.

The finale is the most Sibelian of the symphony's three movements and, in its telescopic construction, looks ahead to the fifth and even the seventh symphonies. It seems to rely on "the crystallisation of thought from chaos," as Sibelius put it.

The scherzo-like beginning presents brief flashes of melody and rhythmic fragments. A hymn melody on violas and cellos then stealthily emerges. The hypnotic final build-up gathers force in the brass and the symphony ends on an assertive C-major chord.

Antti Häyrynen

Programme notes translated
(abridged) by Susan Sinisalo

HANNU LINTU

Hannu Lintu has been Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra since August 2013. During the 2018/2019 season, his schedule will include appearances with the Baltimore, St Louis and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Singapore Symphony, the NDR Symphony Hamburg and other orchestras. Further highlights of the season will include his debut with the Boston Symphony and the Russian National Orchestra. In particular, he has worked in recent times with the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, the Washington National Symphony and the Symphony Orchestras of Dallas and Detroit.

Maestro Lintu also conducts regularly at the Finnish National Opera and the Savonlinna Opera Festival. He conducted Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello* in Savonlinna in July 2018 and his schedule for spring 2019 includes a production of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* in Helsinki.

Hannu Lintu studied the piano and cello at the Sibelius Academy before joining the conducting class of Jorma Panula. He attended masterclasses with Myung Whun Chung at L'Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena and won first prize in the Nordic Conducting Competition in Bergen in 1994. He has recorded on the Ondine, BIS, Hyperion and other labels.

JOHANNA RUSANEN-KARTANO

Making her operatic debut at both the Finnish National Opera and the Savonlinna Opera Festival in 1997, Johanna Rusanen-Kartano has also had solo engagements at the various Finnish regional operas, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, the Moscow Bolshoi, the Teatro Regio Torino and the Teatro Municipal in São Paulo. Among the roles in her core repertoire are Leonora in Verdi's *Forza del destino*, the title roles in Puccini's *Tosca* and *Turandot*, Venus in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Ortrud in *Lohengrin*, and Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde*. Her performances at home in Finland in the past few years have included the parts of Ida Lankinen and Kitty Linder in Kantelinen's opera *Mannerheim* at the Ilmajoki Music Festival, Kullervo's Mother in Sallinen's *Kullervo* at the Savonlinna Opera Festival, Queen Elizabeth II in Markus Fagerudd's opera *Silvia and I* at the Tampere Biennale and the Soprano in Iiro Rantala's opera *Sanatorio Express* at the Finnish National Opera.

Johanna Rusanen-Kartano is also one of the most-in-demand Finnish singers of concert and oratorio repertoire. Outside Finland she has appeared in many European countries (including the BBC Proms in London), Japan, Chile and the United States. Her extensive repertoire also takes in operetta, musicals, film music and jazz standards.

In 2001, Johanna Rusanen-Kartano was awarded the Karita Mattila Prize. She was one of the soloists on the Penderecki disc conducted by the composer himself that won a prestigious Grammy in 2017.

VILLE RUSANEN

Baritone Ville Rusanen first hit the headlines on winning the prize for men in the Lappeenranta Singing Competition in 2004. He has made many guest appearances at the Finnish National Opera and was a member of its solo ensemble from 2014 to 2016. At the Finnish National Opera he has been heard in such roles as Papageno, Guglielmo, Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*, Pelléas, the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, the Phantom in Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*, Jussi in Madetoja's *The Ostrobothnians*, the young Aleksis in Rautavaara's *Aleksis Kivi*, and the title role in Linkola's *Robin Hood*.

Highlights of Ville Rusanen's international career have included his La Scala, Milan debut in 2013 (in Raskatov's *A Dog's Heart*), and appearances with Vladimir Ashkenazy in Australia and under Paavo Järvi in Tokyo. He has also been heard at, among others, Lyon

Opera, the Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam, Scottish Opera, the BBC Proms in London, Grant Park Music in Chicago, and solo appearances with the Bordeaux National Opera and the Liège Philharmonic Orchestra.

Ville Rusanen has sung in many contemporary works, including the premieres of Linkola's *Robin Hood*, Puumala's *Anna Liisa*, Kortekangas's *My Brother's Keeper*, Micha Hamel's *Snow White* at the Dutch National Opera and most recently Alexander Raskatov's *GerMANIA* in Lyon in spring 2018.

THE HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE CHOIR

The Helsinki Music Centre Choir of about 90 singers – all experienced and sharing a passion for vocal music – can, as required, divide up into a male or female choir. Founded in autumn 2011 on the initiative of Hannu Lintu, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and John Storgårds, it works in close partnership with the main Helsinki Music Centre occupants: the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and the Sibelius Academy. Its Artistic Director from 2011 to 2016 was Tapani Lämsä, whose successors, Nils Schwegendiek and Jani Sívén, took over in January.

The HMCC repertoire, planned jointly by the main Helsinki Music Centre occupants, consists primarily of symphonic choral and orchestral works and unaccompanied music for large choir,

not forgetting contemporary music. The Choir appears in concert from eight to ten times a year, mainly at the Helsinki Music Centre but also at festivals.

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 is Esa-Pekka Salonen. The Radio Orchestra of ten players formed in 1927 later grew to symphony orchestra size in the 1960s. Over the years, its Chief Conductors have been 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 2018/2019 season, the FRSO will premiere four Finnish works commissioned by Yle.

The FRSO has recorded works by Mahler, Ligeti, Eötvös, Sibelius, Lindberg, Saariaho, Sallinen, Kaipainen, Kokkonen and others, and the debut disc of the opera *Aslak Hetta* by Armas Launis. Its

disc of the Bartók violin concertos with Christian Tetzlaff and conductor Hannu Lintu won a Gramophone Award in 2018, and that of tone poems and songs by Sibelius an International Classical Music Award. It was also Gramophone magazine's Editor's Choice in November 2017 and BBC Music Magazine's Record of the Month in January 2018. Its forthcoming albums are of music by Lutosławski, Fagerlund and Beethoven.

The FRSO regularly tours to all parts of the world. During the 2018/2019