

7.2.

WEDNESDAY SERIES 11

Helsinki Music Centre at 19:00

Klaus Mäkelä, conductor
Víkingur Ólafsson, piano

Robert Schumann: Overture, Scherzo and Finale 15 min

W. A. Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor K 491 30 min

I Allegro

II Larghetto

III Allegretto

INTERVAL 20 min

Jean Sibelius: Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 43 42 min

I Allegretto

*II Tempo andante, ma rubato – Andante sostenuto – Allegro –
Andante sostenuto*

III Vivacissimo – Lento e suave – Largamente (attacca)

IV Allegro moderato

Interval at about 20:00. The concert will end at about 21:15. Broadcast live on Yle radio 1 and streamed at yle.fi/arena. The recorded concert will be shown in two parts on Yle Teema, in the programme RSO Musiikkitalossa (The FRSO at the Helsinki Music Centre) on 11.2. and 18.2., with repeats on Yle TV1 on 17.2. and 24.2.

ROBERT SCHUMANN: OVERTURE, SCHERZO AND FINALE, OP. 52

Early in his career, Robert Schumann (1810–1856) had an unusual tendency to concentrate on one genre at a time. Until 1839, it was piano music; 1840 was the famous “year of songs”, after which he turned first to orchestral music in 1841 and then to chamber music in 1842. He did not, however, confine himself strictly and systematically to one particular genre; he had, for example, developed an interest in orchestral music in 1839 already, stimulated by Schubert’s great C-major symphony which he discovered in Vienna, and which Mendelssohn conducted in the spring of that year. In the song year, 1840, he made a serious attempt to compose a symphony, but he put it aside and did not return to it in earnest until 1841. In a spurt of great enthusiasm, he completed it in the spring. Mendelssohn conducted it in March and it was a great success.

Schumann began composing a new orchestral work only a fortnight or so after the symphony’s highly-acclaimed premiere, and by May 1841 it was finished. He originally called it a Suite, but when published, it bore the title *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*. Had he added a slow movement, he could well have called it a Symphony, but this was precisely what he did not wish to do. Instead, he wanted to create a unique, personal composition. To Friedrich Hofmeister the publisher he stressed the “light, friendly character” of the work. He also said that despite the the-

matic links between the movements, they could be performed separately.

Kimmo Korhonen

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART: PIANO CONCERTO NO 24. IN C MINOR K 491

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) was in the middle of writing *The Marriage of Figaro* when he completed Piano Concerto No. 24 in 1786, five weeks before the opera’s premiere. He probably played it at one of his own subscription concerts at Vienna’s Burgtheater. No reports of the occasion have been preserved, but many in the audience were probably somewhat taken aback. For instead of the customary light, brilliant entertainment, they heard stern music in a minor key, coloured with anguished chromatics and only a fleeting ray of major-key sunlight.

Mozart here uses a larger orchestra than in any of his other piano concertos. It is the only time he has clarinets and oboes playing at the same time, and all in all his writing for woodwinds is rich and poetic. They do not just reinforce or add colour to the strings, as in most music at that time, and instead have an independent role.

The concerto begins in 3/4 time, which is rare for the first movement of a Mozart concerto. The opening unison motif is restrained and intense, as if just waiting to be let off the leash – in a mighty *fortissimo*. When the piano

enters, Mozart lets it introduce another theme all of its own. He then uses his copious material to produce an unusually rich opening movement.

In contrast to this first movement, the slow middle one is a simple, sunny rondo on the scheme ABACA, though the B section begun by the oboes and bassoons does introduce a few minor-key shadows. The woodwind passages in this movement evoke memories of Mozart's serenades.

After the idyllic slow movement, the finale sounds even more resolute. A set of variations (somewhat rare as the closing movement of a concerto), it has two major-key sections amid the elegiac and darker minor-key ones. The profound fifth variation, embellished with Bach-like counterpoint, is begun by the piano, the strings merely adding some cautious comments. In the last variation, after the cadenza, the time shifts to 6/8 and builds up to a heated conclusion. On hearing the work – or at least the final twist – issuing from a nearby house, the young Beethoven is reputed to have exclaimed to his pianist-composer colleague Johann Baptist Cramer: "Cramer, Cramer! We shall never be able to do anything like that!"

Kimmo Korhonen

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957): SYMPHONY NO. 2

Jean Sibelius completed his second symphony, Op. 43, in early 1902, in a frenzied burst of activity. He had decided that the premiere concert in March would be devoted exclusively to his works. At least the *Impromptu* for female choir and orchestra and the *Overture in A Minor* did not steal the limelight and the occasion was the biggest public success of his career.

The emphasis at the beginning of the symphony is on abstract motif technique. The ear picks out a three-note core motif the handling of which seems to sound so natural. The first movement begins with a rhythmic string motif that, like many of Schubert's works, rises above its task of accompanying to dominate the mood and action. Dancing above it is the bright main theme on the woodwinds, with comments from the French horns.

The first movement as a whole is one of Sibelius's most streamlined sonata Allegros, its mechanisms open to many interpretations. The exposition introduces further thematic motifs that are later combined and dramatized in the development. Fiery unison strings, screeching trills, plunging scales and aggressive brass carry the music far away from the initial pastoral mood before returning to it, slightly the worse for wear, at the end.

Just how much of the original inspiration for the second movement remains in the final version is difficult to

say. The music gives the impression of being personal, and of bearing messages of accusation, judgement and mercy. The timpani open the door to gloom, and the cello and bass pizzicatos add to the feeling of unrest over which a choir of bassoons strikes up a bleak litany.

Classical clarity is again a dominant feature of the Scherzo. The tempo marking is *Vivacissimo* – extremely fast – but Sibelius frowned at any signs of poor articulation in the strings (in the recap the trumpets and trombones). The spirited main section is contrasted, as might well be expected, in the Trio, with a back-to-nature-sounding oboe tune that harks back to the pastoral bliss of the opening movement.

The Trio is repeated (cf. Beethoven), but it no longer leads to a repeat of the main section and instead proceeds with a fine bridge passage straight into the finale. Sibelius does not yet here fuse the different movements of the symphony as he would later do in his third, fifth and seventh symphonies, but the blurring of the border does forge a special link between the Trio section of the Scherzo and the hymn in the finale.

The magnificent build-up in the last movement is to some extent reminiscent of the closing movements of Tchaikovsky's fifth and Mahler's third symphonies. A happy ending is inescapable, but Sibelius ritualises it by first piling up grinding minor-key ostinatos in its path, until at last there is no stopping the melody, highlighted with fanfares in fighting spirit, from breaking through.

Antti Häyrynen

KLAUS MÄKELÄ

Klaus Mäkelä (b. 1996) is one of the most recent links in the illustrious chain of Finnish conductors. This season, he makes his debut with leading orchestras across Europe, in the Nordic countries, the United States, Canada and Japan. In autumn 2018, he takes over as Principal Guest Conductor of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and as Artist in Association with the Tapiola Sinfonietta. This evening's concert also marks his conducting debut with the FRSO.

Engagements next season include guest appearances with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, the NDR Radiophilharmonie and the Philharmonic Orchestras of Stockholm, Helsinki and Tampere.

In December, Mäkelä conducted Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the Finnish National Opera, and he has been appointed assistant to Esa-Pekka Salonen for the production of Wagner's Ring cycle beginning in 2019.

VIKINGUR ÓLAFSSON

Juilliard graduate Vikingur Ólafsson (b. 1984) is one of the most exciting pianists of his generation. *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini hailed him as Iceland's Glenn Gould after a concert in New York in August, while Gramophone described his recording of works by Philip Glass as both technically brilliant and highly individualistic.

Having won every possible music prize in his native Iceland, Ólafsson made his international breakthrough on signing a major recording agreement with Deutsche Grammophon in 2016. A disc of piano works by Bach is to be released this year.

Engagements this season include appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Hamburg Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Japan Radio Symphony Orchestra and the orchestra of the Konzerthaus Berlin. Víkingur Ólafsson will further be giving recitals at, among others, the Cologne Philharmonic Hall, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, the Vienna Konzerthaus and in London. He is also Artistic Director of the Vinterfest event in Sweden, Reykjavik Midsummer Music and the Icelandic Weekend at Liepaja.

Known for his performances of contemporary music, Víkingur Ólafsson has collaborated closely with Philip Glass, Daniel Bjarnason and other composers. Last season he performed the new concerto by Haukur Tómasson with the Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

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/arena).