

10.9. AT 20:00
HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE

HANNU LINTU
CONDUCTOR
KARITA MATTILA
SOPRANO

Igor Stravinsky:
Symphonies of Wind Instruments

Richard Wagner (ork. Mottl / Wagner):
Wesendonck Lieder WWV 91
I Der Engel
II Stehe still!
III Im Treibhaus - Studie zu Tristan und Isolde
IV Schmerzen
V Träume

Paul Hindemith:
Konzertmusik op. 50

No interval. The concert will end at about 21:15.

IGOR STRAVINSKY: SYMPHONIES OF WIND INSTRUMENTS

This little work composed by Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) in 1920 has the same primitive drive as *The Rite of Spring* (1913), or the ballet *Les Noces* drawing on Russian folk customs he wrote throughout the 1910s and on into the 1920s. These years marked a transition from his early Russian-oriented period to the Neoclassicism that became a very personal frame for his expression. *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* straddles these two periods.

With its repetitions and wind motifs, *Symphonies* has a distinctly antique feel yet without the abstract aspect of

Neoclassicism. The closing chorale, composed as a tribute to Claude Debussy, who died in 1918, is shrouded in ritual mystery. The winds have congregated: one hums an ancient tune, another tells a dodgy story and a third mutters a chant. Together they intone age-old litanies that call to mind the sound world of the *Symphony of Psalms* (1930). The music seems to exist for itself: the winds form a circle and chat to one another while we listeners eavesdrop.

2 RICHARD WAGNER: WESENDONCK LIEDER

The opera *Tristan und Isolde* is inevitably associated with the drama being acted out in the lives of its composer Richard Wagner (1813–1883) and poetess Mathilde Wesendonck, for it is an opera about forbidden love. The lives of not only Wagner but also to a great extent of those closely connected with him were ruled by his art. His amorous affair with Mathilde Wesendonck was therefore the consequence of and not the stimulus for *Tristan*.

The wealthy Zurich silk merchant Otto Wesendonck was one of the generous patrons who took Wagner, then up to his eyes in debt, under his wing. And his young wife Mathilde was one of the many (often married) ladies with whom Wagner boosted his ego.

Wagner had fallen under the spell of the hero of his opera on acquainting himself with the philosophy of Schopenhauer,

causing him to view this death-instinct-driven hero in a new light. He put his major *Ring* project aside, and began working flat out on a new kind of opera. Taking Mathilde on board as his muse was a bit like testing his theories in the field, part of a process in which he saw himself as Tristan. One gets the impression that for Mathilde, too, it was a sort of role play.

Work on *Tristan* got under way in the autumn, but was interrupted in November by a one-off little job: a cycle of songs to words by the beloved Mathilde. *The Five Poems for a Female Voice*, better known as the *Wesendonck Lieder*, is one of the few works by Wagner that is not an opera. It is nevertheless organically linked with *Tristan*, and simmering in its music is the chromatic world of the opera, its ecstasy and torment. “In the Greenhouse” and “Dreams” were sketches for *Tristan*; the

former ended up in the prelude to Act III, while the musical material of the latter provided the basis for the heady love scene in Act II.

The poems show just how enchanted Mathilde was with her lover's operas, but they also say something about her inner world. Their messages are more veiled than the doom-laden philosophy of *Tristan*.

The speaker in "In the Greenhouse" is stifling in her brilliant glasshouse. "Dreams" heaves and surges in a romantic idyll, but admits that in the end, all is but fantasy.

The original songs are with piano accompaniment, but they are often performed in the orchestration by conductor-composer Felix Mottl (1856–1911).

PAUL HINDEMITH: KONZERTMUSIK OP. 50

The music of the highly versatile German composer Paul Hindemith (1895–1963) draws heavily on Bach and Baroque counterpoint. Yet the strident lines of expressionism and intoxicating, atonal melodic beauty are never far away.

Hindemith wrote a number of works in the nature of orchestral concertos in which symphonic thinking joins hands with the Baroque concertante tradition. This is particularly audible in, for example, the four pieces titled *Konzertmusik* he wrote for a fairly small orchestra in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Op. 50 of 1930 forms the strings and brass into teams and in this sense is somewhat akin to the polychoral music of the early Baroque and the concerto grosso of the full Baroque.

Konzertmusik Op. 50 draws its strength from contrast and dialogue. The first half marries a solid first movement such as that of a romantic symphony with a meditative slow movement. The second half is a collision of scherzo and finale: Hindemith inserts a lively string fugue in his scherzo, with a dreamy trio section that expands into calm, Wagnerian chromatic waters. The finale is an ingenious closing statement that bursts organically out of the earlier material.

Konzertmusik was premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra during its 50th anniversary season in 1931.

HANNU LINTU

Hannu Lintu has been Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra since autumn 2013. He takes over as Chief Conductor of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet in January 2022.

During the 2020/2021 season, Maestro Lintu will, pandemic permitting, make his debut with the New York Philharmonic and Tokyo NHK Symphony Orchestra and make return appearances with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, and the Symphony Orchestras of Baltimore, Detroit and Chicago. Recent highlights have included debuts with the Montreal and Chicago Symphony Orchestras and the Hungarian National Philharmonic, and concerts with the Boston and St. Louis Symphonies, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Singapore Symphony and the NDR Elbphilharmonie.

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

KARITA MATTILA

Karita Mattila is one of the world's greatest sopranos, praised for the intensity of her interpretations, her profound ability to make her characters come alive, and her highly-charged stage presence. When Musical America named her Musician of the Year in 2005, it described her as "the most electrifying singing actress of our day, the kind of performer who renews an aging art form and drives the public into frenzies."

Since winning the BBC Singer of the World title in Cardiff in 1983, Karita Mattila has sung on the world's leading opera stages (Covent Garden, the New York Metropolitan, the Vienna State Opera, Munich, Paris, etc.) and as the soloist with top orchestras under such celebrated conductors as Claudio Abbado, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, Bernard Haitink and Esa-Pekka Salonen. She also gives regular Lieder recitals.

In the early years of her career, Karita Mattila sang many of the Mozart roles. Later, her core repertoire has comprised leads in operas by Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, Strauss, Tchaikovsky and Janáček, and she is constantly adding new roles.

Karita Mattila's extensive discography (on the Philips, EMI, Sony, Deutsche Grammophon and Ondine labels) encompasses both complete opera recordings (for which she has received two Grammy awards), discs of arias, solo songs, and solos in concert repertoire.

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.

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 2020/2021 season its schedule will include a tour to Spain 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.