

**8.9. AT 19:00
HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE
INAUGURATION CONCERT**

NICHOLAS COLLON
CONDUCTOR

Thomas Adès:

Dawn

W. A. Mozart:

Symphony No. 41 "Jupiter" KV 551

- 1. Allegro vivace*
- 2. Andante cantabile*
- 3. Menuetto. Allegretto - Trio*
- 4. Molto allegro*

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INTERVAL 20 MIN

Lili Boulanger:

D'un matin de printemps

Lotta Wennäkoski:
Flounce

Igor Stravinsky:
Petrushka (1947)

1. *The Shrovetide Fair*
2. *Petrushka's Room*
3. *The Moor's Room*
4. *The Shrovetide Fair (Toward Evening)*

NICHOLAS COLLON WANTS EVERY CONCERT TO BE AN EVENT

How did you decide to become a conductor?

I knew from a very early age, about from the age of ten, that I wanted to become a conductor. My instruments were the piano, organ and viola, which I played in a good youth orchestra. After that I went to Cambridge University to be an organ scholar. I have been very lucky that I've had a very diverse musical education.

What part does one's personality play in your profession?

There is clearly not one single type of personality that works as a conductor, because we conductors are all so different personalities. As a conductor, you have to be sure that you have the ability and desire to take people along with you in your musical vision. You need to have the desire to stand up and shape the piece of music and to bring the musicians along the journey with you.

What are your plans for the coming season?

I hope that each concert will be an event, a special thing to go to. In terms of the voices within the season, we have talked about three new strands. First of all, we are celebrating Igor Stravinsky. Stravinsky is a linchpin as we say, a huge figure in twentieth century music.

The second thread during the season is Thomas Adès. We have built a three weeks mini-festival around him. Thomas Adès is one of the great voices of this and

the last century, an absolute genius.

The third strand is Lotta Wennäkoski. She creates a distinctive, colourful, and very unusual sound world, which I think is a really nice fit to the orchestra.

On top of that, some of the finest violinists in the world will visit along with a long list of violin concertos they are playing with us, ranging from the standard traditional ones to some really unusual ones.

I want to introduce the orchestra and the audience to some new repertoire that they either have not done in a long time or sometimes never before, like Elgar's first symphony. Also, we are doing a continuation of the orchestra's Lutostawski project, and alongside that I want to spotlight some new names from the past that perhaps have been forgotten, such as Grażyna Bacewicz.

How would you describe your principles of programming?

It's important to have some backbone structural ideas that group programmes together. And of course you need to make sure that you have the right combination of new and old, music that the orchestra has not played in a while and music that it knows very well. Also you need to balance different styles.

I naturally have got my personal loves, music that I want to really explore with the orchestra. I want to make sure we invite soloists and conductors that the orchestra and the audience love, but also bring in new names to try out new people and fresh faces.

How do you see your role as a Chief Conductor?

It's a responsibility for the functioning of the orchestra as a body of musicians. I want to make sure that they enjoy the journey they are going on, and that they are happy and comfortable, but at the same time that they are pushed to play at the absolute top limits that they can convey as an ensemble.

What are your thoughts about the Finnish audience?

Their love and enthusiasm for music is quite unusual – they turn up to hear the most extraordinary and adventurous programmes.

Interview by Lotta Emanuelsson

STRAVINSKY THE LINCHPIN

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Russian cosmopolitan, modernist and classicist, radical yet conservative – Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) was a man of many parts. One of the greatest influences in 20th-century music, he set an example for more than one generation of composers. Many have likened him to another great trailblazer, Picasso, in his spiritual fluidity.

The works of Stravinsky are conventionally divided into three main periods: Russian, Neoclassical and Serial. But his stylistic development was in reality far less clear-cut, the focus varying even within each period.

Stravinsky first made an international name for himself as the spearhead of early 20th-century Modernism with three ballets in increasingly trenchant style commissioned by the founder of the Ballets Russes in Paris, Serge Diaghilev: *The Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913). Whereas the first of these, steeped in colour and magic, still reflected the influence of Stravinsky's teacher Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, the music of the other two is radical to say the least. Stravinsky's Russian period continued

throughout the 1910s, as represented by the burlesque *Renard* (1916) incorporating singing and dance.

The ballet *Pulcinella* of 1920 in the spirit of the Italian 18th-century commedia dell'arte tradition and drawing on music of that time marked a turn towards the Neoclassicism in which Stravinsky found his stylistic home. "*Pulcinella* was my discovery of the past," he said, "the epiphany through which the whole of my late work became possible. It was a backward look, of course, but it was a look in the mirror, too."

The works of Stravinsky's Neoclassical period are sparse in their expression and he often reverted to familiar forms such as the concertos and symphony. The Classical element is further manifest in works such as the powerful opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* (1928). In his late period, he began applying the row technique of composers such as Arnold Schönberg, though his music never lost his characteristic flavour.

Kimmo Korhonen

THOMAS ADÈS: DAWN

Dawn (2020) by Thomas Adès (b. 1971) is subtitled “Chacony for orchestra at any distance” and was a commission from the BBC for the London Proms. Due to uncertainty around the number of players permitted (because of Covid) at the time of performance, it is designed to work with an orchestra of flexible size, and with the players placed around the hall in any way.

“Chacony” alludes to the Baroque and was a type of composition relying on the variation of a recurring theme familiar to composers such as Henry Purcell. Adès’s *Dawn* is nevertheless timeless music floating in a pure world all of its own in which the main element is a descending wind motif traced over a crisp, clear soundscape. *Dawn* breaks in the final bars in a shower of arpeggios evocative of Ravel.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART: SYMPHONY NO. 41 IN C MAJOR KV 551 “JUPITER”

The three symphonies (KV 543 in E flat major, KV 550 in G minor and KV 551 in C major) composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) in summer 1788 would appear to have been composed with a view to marketing his seemingly new, ‘popular’ style. From the 19th century onwards they have been regarded as his artistic testament. That in C major was named “Jupiter” by his English publisher, who was impressed by its regal demeanour and Olympian grandeur.

The idea of contrast and opposites is established in the very first movement. The Romantics often spoke of a “masculine” main theme and a “feminine” second one. The main theme of the “Jupiter” consists of ceremonial gestures, forte/piano effects, trumpet fanfares, drum beats and string arpeggios, but it already sows the seeds of an inner tension when the exposition ends with the elegant, singing second theme on the strings. The development section assigns the leading role to the second theme and a pretty wind vari-

ation of the first paves the way for a long recapitulation in which the main theme is pronounced the victor.

The slow movement begins with a tentative question and comments from the woodwinds until the main theme bursts into full flower, passing through the most varied of emotions, from doubtful optimism to blissful happiness. The theme itself is reminiscent of a Sarabande dance.

The resolute third movement begins in graceful vein before focusing more on what it has to say, and the rhythms become positively dance-like in the middle section.

The four-note motif with which the finale begins has been identified as taken from the Credo of a Gregorian mass and was used by Mozart in other works as well. Tossing the motif up and down, in and out, backwards and forwards, the movement is a magnificent demonstration of Mozart’s command of a Baroque form of composition, the fugue.

Antti Häyrynen

LILI BOULANGER: D'UN MATIN DE PRINTEMPS

Lili Boulanger (1893–1918) was born into a musical family: her father was a composer, her mother a singer and her big sister Nadia one of the 20th century's most celebrated French teachers of composition. In 1913, Lili was the first woman composer to win the prestigious Prix de Rome, for a cantata entitled *Faust et Hélène*. In her music, she was inspired by her teacher and supporter Gabriel Fauré, and by Claude Debussy. She mainly composed chamber and vocal music, her few settings of Psalms with orchestral accompaniment

being among the best known. *D'un matin de printemps* (Of a morning in spring) exists in many versions dating from 1917–1918 and was her last sizeable work. She thereafter finished only the chamber music-like vocal *Pie Jesu* she had begun nearly a decade earlier.

D'un matin de printemps is a bright, sunny scherzo-like piece tripping lightly along. There are, however, also some foreboding, shimmering timbres evocative of Debussy and more melodic and impassioned passages.

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LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI: FLOUNCE

The BBC commissioned Lotta Wennäkoski (b. 1970) to compose an opening number for the last night of the Proms in 2017. Conducted by Sakari Oramo, it was called *Flounce*, got a brilliant reception from audience and critics alike and gave its composer a magnificent boost in her already budding international career.

The titles of Wennäkoski's works are important. In this case, she had had the

word "flounce" in mind as the possible title of a work even before she received the commission. For the word carried so many meanings, both as a verb and as a noun.

Flounce is zippy and capricious; it operates at various levels and shows flashes of vivid colours. It draws on a constant array of performance techniques, but though short, it also has a section that breathes more calmly.

IGOR STRAVINSKY: PETRUSHKA (1947)

Petrushka (1911) signified a shift in the "Ballets Russes" trilogy of the young Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) towards a primitive Modernism. It was already a masterpiece in its own right and introduced a new voice in the ongoing late-Romantic, Impressionist and Expressionist trends. It had begun life as a concert piece for

piano and orchestra. While composing it, Stravinsky had in mind a vision of the puppet-like figure, *Petrushka*, familiar from Russian folklore and, in various guises, in many other countries. When Stravinsky played his concert piece to the ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev, founder of the Ballets Russes in Paris, the latter

was very taken with it and suggested that Stravinsky expand it into a full-length ballet. Stravinsky therefore set to work, and the premiere in Paris in June 1911 was a great success.

The ballet is set in a Shrovetide Fair in St. Petersburg. A magician (The Charlatan) brings three puppets to life: Petrushka, a Ballerina and a Moor. Petrushka has fallen in love with the Ballerina, who nevertheless throws herself into the arms of the uncouth Moor. Petrushka is jealous and gets into a fight with the Moor, who kills him with his scimitar. At the end, Petrushka's ghost returns to haunt the Charlatan.

The ballet is in four tableaux performed without a break and tied together by drumrolls – also heard in the middle of tableaux one and three. Contrasting one another in the music are the colourful Shrovetide revels of real people and the three more caricature-like puppets. The big crowd scenes with their catchy

rhythms are during the first and last tableaux, whereas the three puppets act out their love triangle in the shorter second and third.

The ballet has a strong rhythmic drive and draws on cuts and the effective repetition of short scenes and twists. The concert-piece history of the music can also be detected, and the piano plays an important role in the first half of the ballet.

The influence of folk music is particularly marked in the revels; the closing episode of the first tableau goes by the name of a "Russian dance". In the dance of the Ballerina and the Moor in the third tableau Stravinsky quotes two waltz melodies by Joseph Lanner, and the Modernist element is spiked with bitonality.

In 1946, Stravinsky produced a new, "1947" version of *Petrushka* for an orchestra slightly smaller than the original one.

Kimmo Korhonen

NICHOLAS COLLON

Nicholas Collon, one of the most sought-after conductors of the younger generation, took over as the ninth Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in August 2021. Each season, his programming will feature different theme composers, beginning with Igor Stravinsky, Lotta Wennäkoski and Thomas Adès.

The young British conductor and the FRSO first crossed paths four years ago: "I was blown away by its technical brilliance, astonishing precision and musical depth," he says. The players were in turn impressed by his trust in them and his spontaneous and natural approach to music.

Nicholas Collon has guest conducted a host of celebrated orchestras. In addition to the top British ones, these have included the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Tonhalle Orchestra, Zurich, the Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Orchestre National de France and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. He first conducted the FRSO in March 2017.

Commanding a broad repertoire, Nicholas Collon has also made his mark in opera. He has conducted more than 200 new works, among them a number

of world and UK premieres, by such composers as Unsuk Chin, Philip Glass, Colin Matthews, Nico Muhly, Olivier Messiaen, Krzysztof Penderecki and Judith Weir.

Collon's disc *Road Trip* with the Aurora Orchestra (Ives, Copland, Adams and Muhly) won the 2015 Echo Klassik ohne

Grenze award. He also conducted the same orchestra for its CD *Insomnia* of music by Britten, Brett Dean, Ligeti, Gurney, Lennon & McCartney, and he has further recorded with the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia and Hallé.

THE FINNISH RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra (FRSO) is the orchestra of the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle), and its mission is to produce and promote Finnish musical culture.

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, Sakari Oramo, Hannu Lintu, and as of autumn 2021 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. During the 2021/2022 season it will premiere six new works.

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, MIDEM Classical awards and Grammy nominations in 2020 and 2021. 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.

FRSO concerts are broadcast live on the Yle Areena and Radio 1 channels, and later on the same evening on the Yle Teema TV channel. Recordings of the concerts are also shown on Yle TV 1.