

15.10. AT 19:00
HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE

RSO FESTIVAL THOMAS ADÈS
THE DARING DUCHESS

NICHOLAS COLLON
CONDUCTOR

TOMAS NUÑEZ
CELLO

Thomas Adès:

Hotel Suite from the opera Powder Her Face

1. Overture
2. Scene with Song
3. Wedding March
4. Waltz
5. Finale

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Thomas Adès:
Lieux retrouvés

INTERVAL 20 MIN

Igor Stravinsky:
The Firebird

Introduction

First tableau

The Enchanted Garden of Koschei – Appearance of the Firebird, pursued by Prince Ivan – Dance of the Firebird – Capture of the Firebird by Prince Ivan – Supplication of the Firebird – Appearance of the Thirteen Enchanted Princesses – The Princesses' Game with the Golden Apples. Scherzo – Sudden Appearance of Prince Ivan – Round Dance of the Princesses – Daybreak – Prince Ivan Penetrates Koschei's Palace – Magic Carillon, Appearance of Koschei's Monster Guardians, and Capture of Prince Ivan – Arrival of Koschei the Immortal – Dialogue of Koschei and Prince Ivan – Intercession of the Princesses – Appearance of the Firebird – Dance of Koschei's Retinue, Enchanted by the Firebird – Infernal Dance of All Koschei's Subjects – Lullaby – Koschei's Awakening – Koschei's Death – Profound Darkness

Second tableau

Disappearance of Koschei's Palace and Magical Creations, Return to Life of the Petrified Knights, General Rejoicing

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.

LATE-NIGHT CHAMBER MUSIC:

Thomas Adès:

The Four Quarters

- 1. Nightfalls*
- 2. Morning Dew*
- 3. Days*
- 4. The Twenty-fifth Hour*

PETRI AARNIO

VIOLIN

JUKKA POHJOLA

VIOLIN

TOMMI AALTO

VIOLA

TUOMAS LEHTO

CELLO

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Interval at about 19.45. The concert will end at about 21, the late-night chamber music at about 21.40. Broadcast live on Yle Radio 1 and Yle Areena and later, from 20:00, on Yle Teema. Repeat on Yle TV 1.

THOMAS ADÈS

English composer Thomas Adès (b. 1971) began making a name for himself in musical circles in the first half of the 1990s, when he was still only in his early twenties. They reckoned he would go far, and have not been disappointed – but probably not quite as anticipated. His first great work was the chamber opera *Powder Her Face* (1995), a fanciful tale about the notorious, decadent Duchess of Argyll. Its success lent his breakthrough a suitably scandalous edge, but his art soon became more profound, as demonstrated by his orchestral *Asyla* (1997).

Success has not resulted in a loss of integrity for Adès. Drawing on fine-tuned harmonies, rhythmic details and masterly orchestration, he has succeeded in endowing even traditional gestures with idiosyncratic ambiguity. Light and darkness, barbarity and tenderness, irony and gravity live side by side.

Conscious and subconscious stand in a balanced relationship in Adès's composition: "The music in my mind is a sort of underground river that flows on all the time, and it's looking for a channel," he once said. "So in a piece, for example, with an idea, text and character, they are just the channel and I have to let them dig out, if you like, the piece from the rock." (*BBC Music Magazine* July 2013)

His many great works for orchestra have stood out like fixed points in Thomas Adès's career: *America: A Prophecy* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra (1999), the violin concerto *Concentric Paths* (2005), *Tevot* (2007), *In Seven Days* for piano and orchestra (2008), *Polaris* (2010), *Totentanz* for mezzo-soprano, baritone and orchestra (2013) and the piano concerto of 2018. He has, however, also written works for smaller ensemble that are equally important in his portfolio.

Since *Powder Her Face*, Thomas Adès has composed two operas: *The Tempest* (2004) inspired by Shakespeare's play, and *The Exterminating Angel* (2016) based on the film written and directed by Luis Buñuel. His three-parts ballet *Dante*, after the classic *Divine Comedy*, was to have been premiered at Covent Garden in May 2020 but the pandemic intervened.

Another vital aspect of Adès the composer is his all-round musicianship: he is also a fine pianist and conductor. He has been Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival and Britten Professor of Composition at London's Royal Academy of Music.

THOMAS ADÈS: HOTEL SUITE FROM THE OPERA POWDER HER FACE

Thomas Adès was 24 when his chamber opera *Powder Her Face* was premiered at the Cheltenham Festival. Most of the reviews were favourable, but some were disgusted at the picture it presented of a decadent English upper class. Beneath the surface, the opera nevertheless has a tragic undercurrent.

Adès arranged three suites of music from *Powder Her Face*, expanding the original small ensemble to symphony orchestra size. The three-movement *Three-piece Suite* (No. 1) dates from 2007, the eight-movement *Luxury Suite* (No. 2) from 2017, and the five-movement *Hotel Suite* (No. 3) from 2018.

Some claim to detect in the music of *Powder Her Face* hints from such wide-rang-

ing sources as Berg, Britten, Weill and Piazzolla, and popular 1930s tunes, but all blend together in a pure Adès style. Right from the tango rhythms of the *Overture*, the *Hotel Suite* adopts an attitude as it might be seen in a convex mirror, thus reflecting the double-standards portrayed in the opera. Associations with popular music also suggest themselves in the *Scene with Song*. The *Wedding March* is painted in darker hues, and the *Waltz* enters a zany dream world with diaphanous timbres and almost Mahlerian quirky rhythms. The *Finale* returns to the tango rhythms of the *Overture*, but now with greater restraint.

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THOMAS ADÈS: LIEUX RETROUVÉS

Where Marcel Proust found time again in the closing volume, *Le Temps retrouvé*, of *In Search of Lost Time*, Thomas Adès found both places and inner sanctums again in *Lieux retrouvés* for cello. The idea of “finding again” runs deepest in his ability to pick out elements of music in the past and embed them in his personal idiom.

He wrote *Lieux retrouvés* as a duo for cello and piano in 2009 and arranged it for cello and small orchestra in 2016. The two versions are basically the same, but naturally the sounds and colours are richer in the latter.

The original version may be thought of as a sort of sonata with a programme and the latter as a concertino with a pro-

gramme. The opening movement, *Les Eaux*, grows from a stagnant pool to a rippling stream. *La Montagne* could be a climber as much as an actual mountain. This movement, beginning with cello pizzicatos, is a Scherzo with spiky timbres softened by a Trio section and, after bursts of adrenaline, it arrives, mute, at the top. *Les Champs* is a moment of inner reflection in dreamy Arcadian fields.

The romping finale, *La Ville – cancan macabre*, is like a portrait of a tipsy city that, judging from the cockeyed allusions to Offenbach’s can-can, is Paris.

IGOR STRAVINSKY: THE FIREBIRD

The premiere of his ballet *The Firebird* in 1910 was a tremendous boost for the young Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971). All of a sudden he was famous. Over the next few years he would go on to compose *Petrushka* (1911) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913), thereby cementing his place in the forefront of contemporary music.

The Firebird is based on a Russian fairy-tale. Young Prince Ivan Tsarevich has strayed into the garden of King Koschei. He captures the magical Firebird and is about to kill her, but she begs him not to and by way of thanks offers him an enchanted feather that he can use to summon her should he ever be in dire need. He meets 13 princesses on whom Koschei has cast a spell and falls in love with one of them. The King's monster guards capture him, but the Firebird tells him the secret of the King's magic. The prince kills the egg containing the King's soul; the spell is broken and the princesses are freed.

Stravinsky dresses his tale in brilliant colours. Though the music is already in his own distinctive style, it still bears echoes both of Impressionism and of the Late-Romanticism of his teacher, Rimsky-

Korsakov. It was his teacher's idea to make a musical distinction between the human and fairytale characters: Stravinsky therefore gives the former (the prince and princesses) simpler, diatonic music with folk-like motifs and the latter (the Firebird and Koschei) often music with a chromatic touch to enhance the exotic impression.

The ballet begins deep in a mysterious introduction. The web of flute sounds on violins and cellos was entirely new at the time of composition and even astonished Richard Strauss, to Stravinsky's great gratification.

Other highlights of the ballet are *The Dance of the Firebird*, *The Supplication of the Firebird* (with its oriental whiffs), the scherzo-like *Princesses' Game with the Golden Apples*, the *Round Dance of the Princesses* embroidered with wind solos, the *Infernal Dance of All Koschei's Subjects*, which already looks ahead to *The Rite of Spring* and leads to the *Firebird's Lullaby* on a bassoon. Koschei dies when the secret of his spell is discovered, and the music proceeds via string tremolos to a jubilant final scene heralded in by a French horn.

THOMAS ADÈS: THE FOUR QUARTERS

The title of the string quartet *The Four Quarters* by Thomas Adès may be construed in several ways: it could, for example, refer to the four times of day, or to the painting of the four quarters by Camille Corot (c. 1858).

The quartet begins with *Nightfalls*. The viola and cello have a texture of their own supporting the lustrous violins, but some of the sturdy timbres also call to mind an organ. The time signature of *Morning Dew*, the scherzo-like second movement

with its pizzicatos, shifts almost from bar to bar. *Days* breathes calmly and converges on strong chord ostinatos before crumbling away. The *Twenty-fifth Hour* rounds up material from the previous movements and leads to a “time beyond time” in a time signature – 25/16 – that must surely be any player’s nightmare (2/4 + 3/16 + 2/4 + 6/16).

Programme notes by Kimmo Korhonen translated (abridged) by Susan Sinisalo.

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.

TOMAS NUÑEZ

Tomas Nuñez (b. 1984) has been playing the cello since he was six and studied at the Sibelius Academy and in masterclasses at home in Finland and abroad. In 2010, he was awarded both the first and the audience prize in the XI National Turku Cello Competition, along with the prize for the best performance of the commissioned work. In spring 2010, he joined the orchestra of the Finnish National Opera, first as 2nd solo cellist and from autumn 2011 as 1st. He was principal cellist in the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra 2015–2018 and has occupied the seat in the FRSO since autumn 2017.

Tomas Nuñez has performed as a soloist with the Helsinki Philharmonic, the Finnish National Opera Orchestra, the Turku Philharmonic, the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra and the Lahti Symphony Orchestra. He is a member of the Postiglione Quartet that won the international Night and Sun string quartet competition in Rovaniemi, Finland in 2009.

Tomas Nuñez plays a Lorenzo & Tomaso Carcassi cello from 1779 owned by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) Pension Fund.

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.