

22.1. AT 20:00
HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE
WE WELCOME CONRAD TAO

HANNU LINTU
CONDUCTOR

CONRAD TAO
PIANO

LOTTA EMANUELSSON
PRESENTER

Igor Stravinsky:

Concerto in D

1. *Vivace*
 2. *Arioso (Andantino)*
 3. *Rondo (Allegro)*
-

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Ludwig van Beethoven:

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, Op. 58

1. *Allegro moderato*
 2. *Andante con moto*
 3. *Rondo (Vivace)*
-

György Ligeti:

Concert românesc

1. *Andantino*
2. *Allegro vivace*
3. *Adagio ma non troppo*
4. *Molto vivace*

CONRAD TAO - "SHAPING THE FUTURE OF CLASSICAL MUSIC"

"Excess. I find it to be for me like the most vividly human aspect of musical performance," says pianist Conrad Tao (b. 1994). And "excess" really is a good word to describe his superb technique, his profound interpretations and his emphasis on the human aspect in general.

Tao has a wide repertoire ranging from Bach to the music of today. He has also won recognition as a composer, and one who, he says, views his keyboard performances through the eyes of a composer. His many talents and his ability to cross traditional borders have indeed made him a notable influencer and a model for others. Music is, for him, not something isolated from the rest of the world, and his choice of repertoire may sometimes suggest deliberate statements.

The New York Magazine once described him as "the kind of musician who is shaping the future of classical music".

From wunderkind to mature artist

The son of Chinese parents, Conrad Tao had not even reached his second birthday when he began picking out familiar nursery-rhyme tunes on the keyboard. He first appeared in public when he was

four, and performed Mozart's A-major piano concerto at the age of eight. He was nine when the family moved to New York, where he nowadays lives. Beginning his piano studies in Chicago, he continued at the Juilliard School, New York, and attended Yale for composition.

Tao has had a manager ever since he was twelve. As a youngster, he also learnt the violin, and several times in 2008/2009 played both the E-minor violin concerto and the first piano concerto by Mendelssohn at one and the same concert, but he soon gave up the violin.

Despite having all the hallmarks of a wunderkind, Tao has gone on to become a sovereign mature master. But one of the good things about his early fame is, he says, that he did not need to travel the gruelling composition circuit in order to get established.

Now 26 years old, Tao has won many of music's most prestigious prizes and awards. Improvisation is another major element of his work as an artist. Just recently, he has also appeared on stage as a pianist in the experimental chamber opera *the loser* (2016) by David Lang – further proof of his constant desire to branch out into new fields.

IGOR STRAVINSKY: CONCERTO IN D

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) first made a name for himself as a musical innovator in the ballets of his “Russian period”, but he then turned his gaze back to the past. For more than three decades beginning with his ballet *Pulcinella* (1920), his music would be predominantly Neoclassical.

He finished the *Concerto in D* in August 1946. He had moved to the United States in 1939, and the concerto for Swiss Paul Sacher and the Basel Chamber Orchestra directed by him was his first European commission for ten years.

The *Concerto in D* is a light work in the manner of a divertimento, combining a refined string texture using a variety of

performance techniques with soloist passages. Scored for a chamber ensemble, it belongs in the same category as two other works of his Neoclassical period: *Dumbarton Oaks* (1938), and the *Ebony Concerto* (1945) seasoned with elements of jazz.

The *Concerto in D* is in three movements performed without a break, each built round an interval of a minor second. The first movement contrasts determined, active episodes with slower ones that savour the moment. The shortish middle movement sings, and melodic lines soar above a perpetual beat in the finale.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: PIANO CONCERTO NO. 4 IN G

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The fourth is regarded by many as the finest and best-loved piano concerto by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827). Breaking with the early 19th century practice, it begins with a gentle, balanced five-bar statement on the piano. The orchestra then replies, with equal restraint and in a key (B major) far removed from the home G major. Before Beethoven, only Mozart had let the piano have its say in the opening bars of a piano concerto (the E-flat major K 271). This opening avoids all outward show and remains calm and collected for over 20 bars. All in all, the first movement is lyrical and poetic, acquiring a touch of drama only in the development

section. Piano and orchestra are as one, yet the piano is still the undisputed soloist.

In the slow movement, defiant statements by the strings meet with pacifying replies from the piano, like characters in a musical mini-drama. Some claim to hear Orpheus (the piano) taming the Furies (the strings) with his playing. The conflict gradually abates, leading straight into the finale.

As in the first movement, the music of the third is for a long time quiet before bursting out in a full *forte*. The piano part is most dazzling in this movement, with added brilliance from the trumpets and timpani.

GYÖRGY LIGETI: CONCERT ROMÂNESC

In December 1956, György Ligeti (1923–2006) said goodbye to his homeland in the aftermath of Hungary’s abortive uprising and sought refuge in the West. Up to then, he had been obliged to attune his compositions to Hungary’s official demands, but he was now free to write just as he wished. The premieres of his *Apparitions* and *Atmosphères* for orchestra in the early 1960s were a sensation and established him as one of the leading figures on the modern music scene.

Though Ligeti is best known for the works he wrote after leaving Hungary, his earlier ones also merit a hearing. The *Concert românesc* (Romanian Concerto, 1951) was something of a border case: having initially rejected it, he gave his permission for it to be performed after revising it in the mid-1990s.

Like the older Hungarian masters Bartók and Kodály, Ligeti applied elements of folk music in his *Concert românesc*, supplementing them with music of

his own in a style that imitated that of the village folk players. Even before his formal musical education, he had studied the folk music of his native Transylvania. One frequent feature of the folk music was, he said, its use of dissonant harmonies that broke with tradition. It was a feature he likewise applied in his *Concert românesc*.

The Romanian Concerto is in four movements. It begins with a slow, lyrical-pastoral one and follows this with a quick, rhythmically weighty one. The imitation of natural horns in the slow third movement is evocative of shepherds’ horns signalling to one another in the Carpathian Mountains. The striking, increasingly energetic *Molto vivace* finale bears echoes of Bartók, whom Ligeti greatly admired throughout his career.

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

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.

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.