

28.5. AT 20:00
HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE

HANNU LINTU
CONDUCTOR

HELENA JUNTUNEN
SOPRANO

LOTTA EMANUELSSON
PRESENTER

Maurice Ravel:

Tombeau de Couperin

1. *Prélude. Vif*
2. *Forlane. Allegretto*
3. *Menuet. Allegro moderato*
4. *Rigaudon. Assez vif*

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Samuel Barber:

Knoxville, Summer of 1915, Op. 24

Sebastian Hilli:

Miracle, fp (an Yle commission)

Ludwig van Beethoven:

Symphony No. 2

1. *Adagio molto – Allegro con brio*
2. *Larghetto*
3. *Scherzo: Allegro*
4. *Allegro molto*

TIME TO SAY 'THANK YOU'

The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra has always been fortunate in its appointment of outstanding conductors to mastermind its development. The term of Hannu Lintu, from 2013 to 2021, has been a wonderful stage in this journey and will go down in history as a major success in many ways.

The Chief Conductor and the General Manager work closely together, so a brief look over the past is, I feel, in order.

Hannu “thinks big”. His artistic vision is marked by a feel for drama and boldness. He is quick to spot “big pictures”, is able to make decisions and is not afraid to speak out. He has a lightning sense of humour and lives in the moment. Whether it be an interview, a planning or a discussion session, he comes fully prepared and knows his business inside out.

The sold-out halls, numerous international disc awards and the orchestra’s presence on the Yle channels are concrete examples of the success reaped by the FRSO with Hannu as its figurehead. It has been rewarding to receive enthusiastic messages such as “We leap to our feet at home and applaud” from across the country after Yle’s live concert broadcasts.

Highlights of these years that spring to mind are the Mahler cycle in 2018/2019 and the many large-scale choral works such as Mendelssohn’s oratorio *Elijah*. It

was Hannu who introduced the FRSO Festival and who developed various major co-projects with Yle Drama, most recently *Schumann’s Scenes from Goethe’s Faust*.

The work done by Hannu at the helm of the FRSO has strengthened the position of new music in Finland. I recall numerous evenings when our international guest artists have been amazed to see that Hannu’s dynamic performances of modern music, from cult works such as the Lutosławski symphonies or the *Soldaten* symphony by B.A. Zimmermann and, above all new Finnish music were immediate hits with the audience in a packed hall. I am not surprised that he is the conductor to whom many contemporary composers turn first of all.

The time has come to say “Thank you, Hannu”. I warmly congratulate the Finnish National Opera and Ballet on appointing him its new Chief Conductor and wish him some illustrious years with his great passion, opera. Luckily, his new post means a journey of only a kilometre northwards up Töölö Bay.

At the beginning of May, the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) and the FRSO surprised Hannu with a little musical gift, *Encore* by Magnus Lindberg. Its message is: we want more; this is not the end!

Tuula Sarotie, General Manager

MAURICE RAVEL: LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) composed his piano suite *Le Tombeau de Couperin* between 1914 and 1917, in the shadow of the First World War. He dedicated each movement to a friend who had died in combat, but it is also a mark of respect for French music of the 18th century.

The original suite is in six movements, after the Baroque model. It begins with a Prelude, followed by a Fugue and three dance movements, and ends with a spirited Toccata. When Ravel arranged the suite for small orchestra in 1919, he omitted the Fugue and Toccata and changed the order of the last two movements. They do not sound like arrangements of music originally intended for piano, and

both versions are nowadays performed.

In its stylisation of long-ago musical forms and textures, *Le Tombeau de Couperin* was one of the first works to be composed in the new Neoclassicism vein. It is bright, plastic music and gives no hint of any fearful wartime emotions. If anything, Ravel seems to have sought relief from the horrors of war.

The suite begins with a lively, richly-orchestrated Prelude. The *Forlane* that follows is based on a Renaissance North Italian dance. The third movement is a wistful Minuet, and the spirited final *Rigadoun* is offset by a melancholy middle section.

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SAMUEL BARBER: KNOXVILLE, SUMMER OF 1915

In the middle of the Modernist century, Samuel Barber (1910–1981) remained firmly rooted in his own brand of Neo-Romanticism. His lyrical language and nostalgia for a time in the past are most movingly expressed in *Knoxville, Summer of 1915*, Op. 24 (1947) for soprano and orchestra. It is his best-loved vocal work and an American classic of its kind.

For his text, Barber chose fragments from a prose poem (1935) by James Agee (1909–1955) in which the speaker recalls his childhood and relatives in Knoxville, Tennessee on a lazy summer evening in 1915. The poem evoked a strong personal resonance in Barber and he dedicated his work to the memory of his father.

Knoxville, Summer of 1915 begins in languorous mood on a hot southern evening and acquires more profound overtones with a growing bitter awareness of the fleeting nature of life. The music subtly picks up nuances in the text as the melodies flow through the limpid soundscape.

Recurring through the piece is a rocking motif in 12/8 time, a sort of lullaby to a time in the past that is twice recalled. Then a screeching streetcar shatters the peaceful evening and, with its iron moan, is evocative of an irksome disturbance in the modern world. The narrator later recalls his childhood family. “May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother,

my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away." Sleep softly engulfs

him, but his memories are tinged with sadness: no one will ever tell him who he is.

Kimmo Korhonen

SEBASTIAN HILLI

4 Sebastian Hilli (b. 1990) is one of the most original young Finnish composers and his career has been boosted by success in a variety of international competitions and reviews. At the beginning of 2021, he signed an agreement with the prestigious publisher Schott. His music has a powerful inner drama and is often inspired by other arts or human experiences; it nevertheless heeds an inner musical logic all of its own that may sometimes take some surprising turns. The listener may thus encounter rhythmic euphoria and sharp twists, or again surrealistic timbres and pensive brittleness.

Hilli is open to stimuli from other genres of music – Baroque, Romantic, jazz, house – smoothly incorporating them in his personal idiom. Above all, he is an instrumental composer. His catalogue so far contains only one vocal work, the 45-minute *Affekt* for large choir and orchestra.

Sebastian Hilli studied composition with Lauri Kilpiö and Veli-Matti Puumala at the Sibelius Academy, graduating with a Master's in 2016. He spent the academic year 2013–2014 as a pupil of Michael Jarrell in Vienna.

Kimmo Korhonen

SEBASTIAN HILLI: MIRACLE

The idea of *Miracle* came to me in 2019 – the concept of something unexpected and wonderful that could happen. I finally started composing it in spring 2020, as the pandemic hit the world. Two weeks into writing, the tragedy came close, when I, too, lost a loved-one to the disease within the space of a week. I wrote *Miracle* with grief, longing, trauma yet a sense of great love and the power this gives, of life, strong presence and empowerment in my breast.

The piece begins with a 'hunch', a sense that something is about to happen. Everything is fine, yet something ominous seems to be trying to surface. The steady tick on the strings represents waiting and

the oppressive sense of things progressing inexorably towards the unknown. The spurts of individual instruments and sections reflect animals that, with their keen senses, apprehend danger and flee.

Then comes 'the shock' – something unexpected, traumatic and earth-shaking that shatters your whole being to the point of numbness. Then, the mourning, the emptiness, the pain, the handling of the shock and its repercussions. Sadness, nostalgia and a longing for love. But love invites hope, and melancholy gradually turns into healing. Healing brings gratitude, joy, and a desire to move on in life and to experience happiness. Eventually, comes euphoria. The feeling of something

bigger, something marvellous, uncontrollable and inexplicable. *Joie de vivre*, the celebration of life, dance and ascent into the heights.

The piece ends in the finding of peace. Accepting that something has changed for ever, and the reverberation remains

with you. The sturdy chords stand for power and powerlessness in the face of something bigger. The brass chorale at the end represents a link with the past and the memory of a love that will never fade.

Sebastian Hilli

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN D

Whereas the first symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) followed much along the lines of the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, the second, Op. 36, composed in 1799–1800, struck off in a new, more vigorous direction. This may have been due to the emotional turmoil caused by his increasing deafness, as poured out to his brother in a letter known as the Heiligenstadt Testament in autumn 1802. The crisis may perhaps have influenced the character of the symphony, but above all it was a call to battle, not a surrender to fate.

Beethoven's new ideals are evident at many levels: in the weighty, dynamic expression, the bolder details, the larger scale and the stricter concentration on the music's inner structure.

The first movement already shows signs of the heroic composer of the third sym-

phony, the *Eroica*. The slow introduction is more edgy than that of the first symphony, and the quick main section is one of the weightiest first movements of any previous symphony by any composer. The second theme does not introduce the traditional singing element, being more in the nature of a march, and the development is likewise spirited.

The slow second movement counterbalances the sharply-etched first. For the first time in the history of the symphony, Beethoven called his third movement, spiced with dynamic contrasts, a scherzo.

The capricious main theme of the last movement has a touch of Haydnish humour, building up to a fiery final section.

Kimmo Korhonen

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 concerts are broadcast live on the Yle Areena and Radio 1 channels and are recorded and shown later on Yle Teema and TV 1.