

14.9. 2022
WEDNESDAY SERIES¹
HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE AT 19:00

SAKARI ORAMO
CONDUCTOR

YESONG SOPHIE LEE
VIOLIN

Ludwig van Beethoven:
Egmont Overture, F Minor, Op. 84

9 min **17**

Pyotr Tchaikovsky:
Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35

33 min

- 1. Allegro moderato*
 - 2. Canzonetta: Andante*
 - 3. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo*
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INTERVAL 20 MIN

Jouni Kaipainen:
Symphony No. 2, Op. 44

31 min

- 1. Andante*
- 2. Allegro ardente*
- 3. Adagio*
- 4. Vivace*

Interval at about 20:00. The concert will end at about 21:05. Broadcast live on Yle Radio 1 and Yle Areena and, delayed, from 20:00 on Yle Teema.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: EGMONT OVERTURE

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) wrote his incidental music for Goethe's play *Egmont* in 1810. The play tells the story of the Netherlands' 16th-century fight for freedom from Spain and the despotic Duke of Alba. The uprising was led by Lamoral, Count of Egmont (1522–1568), who refused to flee the country, was captured and sentenced to death.

In Goethe's play, Egmont was executed in the Grand Place in Brussels in June 1568, as the Duke of Alba tried to drown his final speech with fanfares. This speech and his martyr's death incite the people to rise up and fight for freedom.

Beethoven's concept of freedom rested on the ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity of the French Revolution, and his overture is a stirring tone poem. Woven into it are the themes of tyranny, vulnerable love and triumphant freedom, but Beethoven had no need to follow any plot in order to parallel the conflicts at personal (love – patriotism) and universal (submission – freedom) level. Although the outcome is a personal tragedy, the jubilant coda proclaims that the sacrifice was not in vain.

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PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY: VIOLIN CONCERTO IN D MAJOR

The Violin Concerto shows Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) in light and lyrical vein. It is a work brimming with flowing melodies, a ballet for nimble fingers, and golden strains. Tchaikovsky was a master at dramatizing his narrative in a dialogue between skilful role play and temperamental mood shifts.

The first movement is one of grand gestures. The soloist takes the limelight only after a thorough orchestral introduction. The tension steadily works up towards a big solo cadenza that acts as the development section of a movement in sonata form. In the post-script to the cadenza, Tchaikovsky builds up steam to bring both his themes to a resounding conclusion.

The slow movement is a ballad, a Canzonetta, the muted simplicity of which prevents the soloist from getting too sugary. The finale comes in with a bang after the pianissimo notes of the slow movement, setting a fiery dance in motion with a boisterous forte. The music gathers speed as soloist and orchestra toss the ball to one another right up to the brilliant final crescendo. The finale is a real test for the violinist's bowing arm. Many violinists more or less manage to fit in all the notes, but only the sovereign virtuosos succeed in doing so while still maintaining a noble sound.

JOUNI KAIPAINEN: SYMPHONY NO. 2

It seemed to the young generation of composers in the early 1980s that the symphonic tradition had virtually been milked dry. Jouni Kaipainen (1956–2015) approached the idea of the symphony intuitively – more from the perspective of content than of heading. His first symphony (1985) was a long time in the making and only acquired its generic title when Esa-Pekka Salonen quipped that ‘symphony’ was as good as any.

The second symphony (1994) came as something of a surprise to its listeners, with what they considered to be its traditional idiom and its opening reference to Sibelius and the beginning of his fifth symphony. In addition to this nod in a colleague’s direction, the reference speaks of motifs, their origin and the way the sections of the symphony grow out of one another. And as Witold Lutosławski demonstrated in his third symphony, a modern symphony can mean just about anything.

Kaipainen’s Symphony No. 2 sounds simpler and plainer than his earlier music, and focuses more closely on the symphonic process. The initial calm grows tense and yields as the orchestral forces – the strings and winds each in their own way – group together to face what lies ahead. A fiery gesture sparked off by the strings untiringly seeks out new forms and colours. The inherent feel for melody grows richer in the shifting soundscape and the head-on rhythms in the polyphonic handling.

The wind solos calling in the broad second movement create a mood of expectation. The strings introduce a senti-

mental cantilena the impact of which is softened by the smooth part writing. A deep-breathing episode rises majestically before retreating in solitary solos (bassoon, oboe).

Though determined, the busy finale avoids being one-dimensional: energetic breakaways are followed by beautiful backwaters, humorous comments and showy splashes by aggressive snarls. Towards the end, the orchestra works up a primitive rhythmic drive that forges ahead. The ending retires on a note of mystery and wonder.

Antti Häyrynen

SAKARI ORAMO

Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra since 2013, Finnish maestro Sakari Oramo was Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra 1998–2008. He was Chief Conductor of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra 2008–2021 and now its Honorary Conductor, and Music Director of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra 2003–2012. He was Artistic Director of the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra 2013–2019 and for many years Principal Conductor of West Coast Kokkola Opera.

Maestro Oramo has guest conducted a host of the world's leading orchestras (the Vienna, Berlin and New York Philharmonic, the Chicago, San Francisco and Paris orchestras, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra and others). He has an

extensive discography and has conducted not only standard repertoire but also rarities and premieres. Many of these have won awards (BBC Music Magazine, Gramophone and others). In 2015, the Royal Philharmonic Society presented him with its prestigious Conductor of the Year award.

Oramo began his career as a violinist, as leader of both the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra, of which he was a founding member, and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra before turning to conducting, but he sometimes still appears as a violinist. He studied conducting in the class of Jorma Panula at the Sibelius Academy and in January 2020 embarked on a five-year tenure as the Academy's Professor of Orchestral Conducting.

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YESONG SOPHIE LEE

In May 2022, US violinist Yesong Sophie Lee was a finalist and the youngest competitor in the international Jean Sibelius competition. Only 18 at the time, she was praised for her virtuosic technique, her broad expressive range and her ability to spot the essentials in a work.

Beginning her violin studies at the age of four, Lee was only seven when she made her debut with an orchestra, as the soloist in the Bach A-minor concerto, and a year later appeared as the soloist with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. At the age of 12 she won first prize in the Menuhin International Junior Violin Competition in London and three years later, in 2019, received the Salon di Virtuosi's Charlotte White Career Grant. Her teachers have included Simon

James, Shmuel Ashkenazi and Arnold Steinhardt, and she has been studying at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia since 2021.

Lee is already launched on a distinguished career that has brought invitations to perform with leading orchestras. In addition to the Seattle Symphony, these have included the London Philharmonia, Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Detroit Symphony. Lee is also an active chamber musician and has appeared at festivals across Europe and the United States.

In 2020, Yesong Sophie Lee was granted the long-term use of the "Ex Bello" Stradivarius from 1687.