

**24.5.2023**  
**WEDNESDAY SERIES<sup>15</sup>**  
**HELSINKI MUSIC CENTRE AT 19:00**

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**NICHOLAS COLLON**  
CONDUCTOR

**JONAS SILINSKAS**  
TRUMPET

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**Väinö Raitio**

*The Waterspout, a ballet intermezzo (1930)* 18 min

**Mieczysław Weinberg**

*Trumpet Concerto, Op. 94* 24 min

1. Etudes

2. Episodes

3. Fanfares

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**INTERVAL 20 MIN**

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**Leonard Bernstein**

*Symphonic Dances from West Side Story (1960)* 24 min

1. Prologue (*Allegro moderato*)

2. "Somewhere" (*Adagio*)

3. Scherzo (*Vivace leggiero*)

4. Mambo (*Presto*)

5. Cha-cha (*Andantino con grazia*)

6. Meeting Scene (*Meno mosso*)

7. "Cool" Fugue (*Allegretto*)

8. Rumble (*Molto allegro*)

9. Finale (*Adagio*)

**Maurice Ravel**

*La valse (1919–1920)* 12 min

*Interval at about 19:55. The concert will end at about 21:05. Broadcast live on Yle Radio 1 and Yle Arena and, delayed, from 20:00 on Yle Teema.*

# VÄINÖ RAITIO: THE WATERSPOUT

“Music is colour,” Väinö Raitio (1891–1945) is recalled as saying. This thinking in terms of colour seemed to have been a legacy of Scriabin, with whom Raitio also shared an idealistic striving towards the great unknown. This “active drive, sometimes to the point of pathos” (Sulho Ranta), or “rugged, forthright and masculine ethical-dramatic streak” (Einojuhani Rautavaara) won Raitio acceptance in the conservative artistic climate of the 1920s. Yet he was never really fully understood.

Raitio’s *The Waterspout*, a ballet in two sections or scenes with a libretto by Danish Poul Knudsen, was premiered at the Finnish Opera in 1929 paired with his opera *Jephthah’s Daughter*. In the ballet, a young man of noble birth falls in love with a fisherman’s daughter, Marianne, but when a storm raises a terrifying waterspout in the sea, he runs away, leaving her in danger. Luckily, a plucky young fisherman comes

to her assistance and the story ends with some merry jinks. *The Waterspout* got good reviews but was then forgotten for decades until Jukka-Pekka Saraste recorded it with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1992.

The ballet marked a turn away from Raitio’s gloomy expressionism to a rhythmically and colourfully flamboyant style. It also bears signs of streamlined neoclassicism, but the uppermost impression is of an idiom free from constraint. The age-old tale gets swamped by the wealth of ideas but there are ample reminders in the fleeting episodes that this is, after all, a ballet. The intimate scenes are in the nature of chamber music but the large orchestra well captures the story’s pathos. Raitio brings out the feeling and humour in the topic and envelops it all in an exotic veil. The ballet ends in what one critic described as “an absolutely ripping” tango.

# MIECZYŚLAW WEINBERG: TRUMPET CONCERTO

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919–1996) was born in Warsaw but in 1939 fled from the Nazis to Minsk, where he qualified as a composer in 1941. In his new Soviet homeland he won the approval of Shostakovich, but not of the regime, and only just managed to escape the persecution of the Jews in the early 1950s. He became one of the major symphonists of the Soviet era, but not until the present century, after his death, has his music won the recognition it deserves.

The *Trumpet Concerto* of 1967 is one of the most original of its kind and was tailored specifically for Ukrainian-born Timofei Dokshitzer – a frequent visitor to Finland known for his virtuosity, deft technique and sharp, Russian-style trumpet sound.

Weinberg's *Trumpet Concerto* has an unusual structure that prompted Shostakovich to call it a “symphony for trumpet and orchestra”. The first movement is

titled *Etudes*. The orchestra keeps throwing spanners in the works, but things calm down towards the middle and the trumpet takes a momentary rest with a muted melody. An angry trounce brings the movement to a speedy conclusion.

The orchestra launches the second, *Episodes* movement in dramatic vein. The trumpet pours out elegiac melodic motifs to which the orchestra adds its own comments. A solo flute and snare drum build a solemn bridge to the finale.

In the 1960s, pastiche and quotation technique became a hallmark of Russian postmodernism. As the finale leads in, the trumpet picks out the beginning of Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, which soon gives way to Mendelssohn's *Wedding March*. Then come flashes of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Golden Cockerel* and Bizet's *Carmen*. The orchestra follows like a shadow, though tempering the music with a little waltz beat. The end is restrained.

# LEONARD BERNSTEIN: SYMPHONIC DANCES

The premiere of *West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) in 1957 was soon followed by a film adaptation and world fame. Bernstein did not resort to operatic excesses, the breezy jauntiness of an American musical or saccharine Hollywood sentiment. Instead, he transferred Shakespeare's love story *Romeo and Juliet* to a bleak inner city, playing out the enmity and love of youngsters raised in harsh circumstances – a love that refuses to be squashed.

The *Symphonic Dances* are a taut résumé of the events in *West Side Story*. The *Prologue* triggers the tension between two sparring gangs. The music flexes its muscles, sneaks through the shadowy alleyways and taunts its opponents in brassy showdowns. The beat of the asphalt jungle drums gathers momentum in a chase and a skirmish cut short by a policeman's whistle.

Tony, in *Somewhere*, dreams of a world in which love and friendship have a chance, but there is still an ominous bass undercurrent. The following *Scherzo* again inhabits a dreamland in which the young lovers escape the slum to a vast and sunny world.

These opening fantasies end with a mambo, a fashionable dance at the school gym. The frenzied tempo spurs the gangs into an urban fight for survival. Tony, in a song arranged as a tender cha-cha, recalls how, a Jew, he first met Cuban-Catholic Maria.

The gangs are out on the prowl again and end up in a fight in which Tony kills the leader of the enemy gang, Maria's brother. In the final scene, street law prevails and Tony is murdered out of revenge. No one appreciated Maria's heartbreak until it was too late, but Tony's body is borne away on a note of hope (*Somewhere*).

# MAURICE RAVEL: LA VALSE

The uneasy ballet collaboration between French composer Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) and Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev bore a couple of fine fruits. In 1920, French pianist Marcelle Meyer played fellow-Frenchman Poulenc, Russian composer Stravinsky, and Diaghilev a new waltz rhapsody by Ravel called *Vienna*, at which impresario exclaimed: “Ravel, it’s a masterpiece...but it’s not a ballet...It’s the painting of a ballet.”

Renamed *La Valse*, the piece was premiered in 1920 but not as a ballet until 1928. The roots of Ravel’s “choreographic poem” stretched back to at least 1906, when the Strauss waltzes set him thinking about composing a waltz of his own. The idea began to acquire symbolic weight after the First World War and the collapse of the Austrian Empire. *La Valse* was, said Ravel, a sort of “apotheosis” of the Vien-

nese waltz. He denied that it was a memorial to a Europe ravaged by war, but audiences hear a clear connection.

Attached to the score is a slightly more detailed plot: “Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually scatter: one sees an immense hall peopled with a whirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth. An imperial court, about 1855.”

Ravel accentuates the conventions and formal steps of a Viennese waltz to such an extent that the passions hidden within them – power and sensuality – get out of control in a salacious dance of death the ecstasy of which lingers until the very last notes have died away.

*Programme notes by Antti Häyrynen  
translated (abridged) by Susan Sinisalo*

# NICHOLAS COLLON

British Nicholas Collon is one of the most sought-after and most celebrated conductors of the younger generation. He has been Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra since autumn 2021 and is to continue his term until summer 2028.

Each FRSO season, Collon is highlighting a few theme composers; for the 2022/2023 season he has chosen György Ligeti, Outi Tarkiainen and Sergei Rachmaninov. He has also invited Brett Dean as the FRSO's Composer-in-Residence. In addition to the regular FRSO concerts at home in Helsinki he will be conducting the orchestra on tour – at the London Proms with Pekka Kuusisto as the soloist and in Estonia and Germany with violinist Hilary Hahn.

22 Founder (in 2004) and Principal Conductor of the British Aurora Orchestra, Collon has also been working with the Residentie Orkest in The Hague since 2016 – initially sharing the post with Jan Willem de Vriend 2018–2021 and since then as the orchestra's sole Principal Conductor. He has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Gürzenich Orchestra in Cologne since autumn 2017.

The many top orchestras guest conducted by Collon have included the front-

line British ones, 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, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Collon's extensive repertoire also includes opera. He has conducted over 200 new works, both world and country premieres, by composers such as Unsuk Chin, Philip Glass, Colin Matthews, Nico Muhly, Olivier Messiaen, Krzysztof Penderecki and Judith Weir.

During the 2021/2022 season, the FRSO under Collon recorded works by Sibelius, Thomas Adès and Lotta Wennäkoski. The disc *Road Trip* (Ives, Copland, Adams and Muhly) he made with the Aurora Orchestra won the prestigious Echo Klassik Award for 'Klassik ohne Grenzen' in 2015. The Aurora Orchestra's first release on the Deutsche Grammophon label was *Music of the Spheres* (Mozart, Max Richter, Adès, Dowland/Muhly and Bowie) in 2020. Collon has also recorded works by Haydn, Ligeti, Britten and Delius, and with the Hallé Orchestra several discs of modern repertoire.

## JONAS SILINSKAS

Jonas Silinskas was born in Vilnius, Lithuania in 1989. His father played principal trombone in the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra and his mother taught the piano. Jonas entered the national Ciurlionis music school to study the trumpet when he was eight and after graduating there moved to Finland in 2009 to continue his studies with Aki Välimäki in Tampere. Here in Finland he has worked

in a number of orchestras and was leader of the trumpets in the Tampere Philharmonic from 2010 to 2019. His father later joined him in Finland and played in the same orchestra. Jonas has been the soloist with the Turku Philharmonic, the Tampere Philharmonic and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and is now the FRSO's first solo trumpet.

*The concerts on May 24 & 25 are the last in which  
**Pekka Pulakka, viola,**  
will be playing in the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra  
before he retires. He has been a member of  
the FRSO since 1979.*

# THE FINNISH RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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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. 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, Saari-aho, 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.