



أوركسترا قطر الفهارمونية
Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra

عضو في مؤسسة قطر
Member of Qatar Foundation

NORTHERN EUROPEAN IMPRESSIONS BY GRIEG AND SIBELIUS

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Programme

NORTHERN EUROPEAN IMPRESSIONS BY GRIEG AND SIBELIUS

Katara Cultural Village - Opera House
Saturday, June 25, 2022
7:30pm

Elias Grandy, conductor

Jean Sibelius :
(1865-1957)

Finlandia, Op. 26

Edvard Grieg :
(1843-1907)

Peer Gynt Suite No 1, Op. 46

Morning Mood
Death of Aase
Anitra's Dance
In the Hall of the Mountain King

Intermission

Jean Sibelius:
(1865-1957)

Symphony No.2 in D-Major, Op. 43

Allegretto
Tempo andante, ma rubato
Vivacissimo—Lento e suave—Tempo primo
Finale : Allegro moderato

Out of respect for the musicians and fellow audience members please silence your mobile phones. Applause between movements is not customary. Please also refrain from flash photography. Seating begins 30 minutes before performances. Latecomers cannot be seated during the concert. Children 6 and over are welcome at Philharmonic concerts. The Philharmonic retains the right to expel anyone disturbing other. Food and beverages can be consumed in the lobby only.

Composers and Programme Notes



Jean Sibelius

Herbert von Karajan described Sibelius' music as "out of this world," and the importance he accorded to it is such that he insisted that his *Fourth Symphony* would figure on the programme of his first concert with the Berliner Philharmonic. He is undoubtedly one who best understood and interpreted the music of the Finnish, relatively unfamiliar composer. Sibelius had a teeming life, rich in travel and in encounters with artists such as Claude Debussy and Gustav Mahler among many others. Born to post-Romanticism and to the end of the nineteenth century, he experienced the emerging musical modernity, the birth of contemporary music and atonality which left him skeptical.

Sibelius' place of birth was Hämeenlinna, located few kilometers to the North of Helsinki. It was part of the Grand Duchy of Finland, governed then by the Russian Empire. Sibelius was only two years old when his father, doctor and military surgeon, died of cholera. The young Sibelius was raised by his uncle, an amateur musician. He started learning music at a very young age, played the violin and started practicing chamber music with his family members. At age 10 he wrote his first composition (*Goutte d'eau, for Violin and Cello*). After composing few chamber music pieces in the classical Viennese style, piano pieces and a string quartet in E Major in 1885, he joined the Martin Wegelius musical institute. He abandoned very fast the law programme he had started at the Helsinki University to follow his musical

aspirations, taking additional composition classes with Albert Becker in Berlin and Karl Goldmark and Robert Fuchs in Vienna.

After the Berlin and Vienna stays and encounters with composers Ferruccio Busoni and Robert Fuchs, Sibelius' creative energy found its flow, bringing many of his musical projects to maturity. The strong nationalistic Finnish current against Russia encouraged the composer to finish in 1892 the tone poem *Kullervo*, inspired by the Kalevala Nordic epopee, a piece that marked the birth of Finnish orchestral music. Sibelius' body of works was to be vastly inspired by the folklore, sagas and legends of his motherland. His mastery of the symphonic genre made his fame in his country and abroad. He wrote in 1892 the tone poem *En Saga*, the *Karelia Suite* in 1893 and, in 1895, the colossal *Lemminkäinen*, a suite of tone poems. Year 1899 saw the creation of the symphonic poem *Finlandia*, a symbol of resistance against the Russians that became the most famous of the composer's.

Sibelius's seven symphonies are also at the core of his work. They are today considered as those of a grand symphonist. Among them, the Second, Fourth and Seventh are masterpieces. Sibelius also composed works in other musical forms such as his *Violin Concerto in D Minor*. After the nationalistic fire, Sibelius' art expression became more inward (*Valse Triste*-1903, *Pelléas et Mélisande*-1905), meditative (the string quartet *Voce Intimae*-1909 and his *Fourth Symphony*-1911) or impressionist (*The Dryade*-1910, *The Océanides*-1914). His last works (the 5th, 6th and 7th Symphonies) are characterised by their tonal balance and formal density. Sibelius stopped composing and conducting in the 1930s after his last 1926 tone poem *Tapiola*. His *Eighth Symphony* was never finished and was destroyed by the composer.

Finlandia, Op. 26

Jean Sibelius' tone poem *Finlandia* became the composer's most enduring work in part because of the political climate in Finland at the time of its creation. Russia imposed a strict censorship policy on the small nation in 1899. In October of that year, Sibelius composed a melodrama to Finnish writer, Zachria Topelius' poem *The Melting of the Ice on the Ulea River*, which is marked by a particularly patriotic fervour. The following month saw a fund-raising gala organised by the Finnish press. While its ostensible purpose was to raise money for newspaper pension funds, it was in fact a front for rallying support for a free press at a time when the czarist hold on the country was tightening.

Innocuously titled *Music for Press Ceremony*, the score concluded with "Finland Awakens," which Sibelius reworked into an independent symphonic poem in the following year. Following the suggestion of his artistic confidant, Axel Carpelan, he retitled this rousing patriotic essay *Finlandia*; since that time, the work has virtually become Finland's second national anthem. Because of censorship restrictions, the work was most often performed under the not-altogether-apt title *Impromptu* until Finland gained independence following World War I.

The work opens with a questioning, vaguely ominous brass progression that evokes the "powers of darkness" from Topelius' text, setting off a colourful drama that is at turns reflective, jubilant, and militant. Most famous, though, is a hymn-like theme which makes its first appearance in an atmosphere of quiet reverence; by the end of the work, it has become a powerful statement of triumph. Indeed, *Finlandia* is a clear precursor to the composer's symphonies, in which the orchestra so often assumes the role of an ever-strengthening, defiant juggernaut.

Edvard Grieg

Edvard Grieg was a Norwegian composer and pianist from the Romantic period. He was particularly attached to his country's folklore and tried to explore it through his music.

Grieg was born in a family of musicians: his father played in a local orchestra as an amateur while his mother gave him his first piano classes. In 1858, Grieg moved to Leipzig to continue his musical education in its conservatoire. He discovered there the music of Schumann and Wagner and wrote for the final exam his first piano composition in 1862. Having started his career as a pianist, Grieg traveled in Europe for few years. During a stay in Copenhagen, he met the Norwegian writer Nordraak who was fascinated by the history and legends of his country. Their strong friendship was sadly cut short by Nordraak's death two years later, but it contributed to Grieg's engagement in the Nationalistic Romanticism movement. In 1867, Grieg moved back to Christiania where he established the Norwegian Academy of Music. He conducted concerts regularly and composed many pieces like his *Humoresques* and his Piano Concerto in A Minor, especially after he was granted a life annuity by the state.

It is in 1876 that Edvard Grieg found success with the incidental music he wrote to *Peer Gynt*, a play by Henrik Ibsen. The big success of the piece brought him to the international scene. Celebrated all around Europe, his concert tours multiplied. Grieg concentrated them in autumns and consecrated his summers to composing. In 1877, he wrote several lovely pieces like his *String Quartet*. In 1884, he composed his *Holberg Suite*



(originally written for the piano, but adapted for string orchestra a year later). In 1888 and 1891, Grieg arranged two orchestral suites from *Peer Gynt's* music and he wrote in 1896 *Four Symphonic Dances* for piano four hands that he arranged for orchestra in 1898. The same year, he established a festival of Norwegian music in Bergen revealing little-known Norwegian composers. His declining health allowed him to undertake an ultimate concert tour in 1906 and to compose his last piece: four psalms inspired by Norwegian melodies, as many of his pieces are.

Grieg was surnamed the "Chopin of the North" by dint of the subtle blend of lyricism and Nationalism that we find in his music. Grieg drew his melodies and rhythms from Norwegian popular music. The quality of his pianistic writing was inspired by Liszt and the audacity of his harmonies was new to his era. All these elements came to make of him a major composer of Norway, one who will inspire Debussy or Ravel. Grieg's body of works comprises essentially piano pieces and lieder with chamber music works in smaller number. His *Peer Gynt* incidental music (1876) and his *Piano Concerto* (1868) are still widely performed to the present day.

Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Op. 46

Grieg's incidental music score for *Peer Gynt* received an enthusiastic acclaim from the critics. Grieg saw in that an opportunity to establish a separate identity for the music itself and he drew from the more than two dozen numbers of the complete work two concert suites, Op. 46 and 54, Suites No. 1 and 2, which became universal favourites.

Peer Gynt Suite No. 1 comprises four movements. The first and fourth movements are written for full orchestra, but the second and third are scored without wind instruments. The first movement evidently typifies the awakening of day among the mountains and the reverie of Peer Gynt, who in his sublime silliness fancies he is monarch of all he surveys. It is of a bright and cheery character, consisting of the free elaboration of a single pastoral theme, with which is interwoven a cantabile theme in the cellos.

The second movement is an elegy, or, practically, a funeral march, describing the solitary death of Aase on the mountain side. It is made up of a gloomy yet haunting harmonisation, and the reiteration of its phrases is a fitting expression of the monotony of grief.

The third movement gives the agility, grace, and suppleness of Anitra in the dance. It is in mazurka time. The cello has an independent melody running through the movement, and the use of the triangle with the string instruments gives it an Oriental effect of colour.

The last movement represents the episode of Peer Gynt's visit to the cavern of the gnomes and their grotesque incantations and dances. It is constructed upon a single motive, begun in the bassoons and gradually extended in full orchestra. The entire movement, with the exception of the first few bars, is a repetition of a four-measure phrase from pianissimo to fortissimo, continually increasing in intensity.

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43

Sibelius started writing his *Symphony No. 2, Op. 43*, during a stay in Italy in 1901. Consequently the symphony is often referred to as the *Italian*. The draft of the project he started in Rapallo and then in Florence was meant to become a symphonic poem in four parts narrating the life of Don Juan. But Sibelius changed the score and when he brought it back to Helsinki in May 1901, he restructured it into the weft of a *Second Symphony* that he completed around the end of the same year. The symphony carried no trace of the original Don Juan programme he envisaged at the start. It was created on March 8, 1902 in Helsinki, conducted by the composer himself to make a big, popular success. Very romantic in conception, the *Second Symphony* does not yet carry the voluntary dissonances of the following symphonies. It is characterised by its rhapsodic conception, a contrasting structure that pursues, with lots of success, an authentic expression that incorporates a universal symphonic language where most of the nationalistic features are toned down.

The *Symphony* is composed in four movements. It lasts around 45 minutes. The first movement begins with a gentle song for strings in D major. After an alternation between the wind instruments and the French horns, the thematic material develops gradually until the movement comes to his end, idyllically pastoral as in the opening.

The slow movement opens with true, sustained lyricism. Sibelius begins it with a timpani roll and a long pizzicato sequence from the cellos and the double basses from which a bassoon tune emerges slowly. The main theme grows in anxiety but is then balanced in an ethereal and peaceful counterpart. The confrontation is ended with two pizzicato strokes, exactly as in the first and last movements of the *First Symphony*.

The rushed scherzo is brief and wild. It smoothens a tad when the flute presents an unexpectedly peaceful theme and the tempo slows for the arrival of a tender trio. Then the scherzo carries on, building through repeats a highly effective bridge to the bottom line of the piece, its last movement.

The scherzo leads attacca to the finale, straight into its broad first chords. The grandiose last movement fills the thirst with what the listener was waiting for all along. It emerges to soar in ways denied the earlier movements, unfolds slowly, building up in power and majesty.

The main theme shows Sibelius in his most heroic mood. It grows and beautifies to reveal a piece of sheer happiness at the end.

Sibelius' entire *Symphony No. 2* is bold and unconventional. The work is a highly functional synthesis of classical light and romantic feeling. Its memorable melodies and heroic character present a bright witness to the composer's creativity.



Elias Grandy
Conductor

Elias Grandy has quickly established himself as one of the leading conductors of today enjoying an international career that encompasses opera and symphony concerts.

Currently in his 6th season as Music Director of the Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra Heidelberg, he has continued to grow the city's artistic reputation as one of Germany's most fascinating centers for symphonic music and opera. Programming diverse repertoire, ranging from highly acclaimed interpretations of Mozart, Beethoven, Puccini, and Janacek to widespread recognition for performances of contemporary works such as "Morgen und Abend" by Georg Friedrich Haas or Peter Ruzicka's "Benjamin", he is known for his energetic impact he brings to each performance. His contract in Heidelberg has been recently extended through the 2023/2024 season. Elias attracted worldwide attention in 2015 at the 7th Sir Georg Solti International Conducting Competition with his prize winning performance. From 2012 - 2015, he was Resident Conductor at the Staatstheater Darmstadt. Elias has and continues to enjoy a close relationship with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra.

The 19/20 season marked several notable debuts resulting in immediate re-invitations in upcoming seasons; in North America with "Elektra" by R. Strauss at the Minnesota Opera; in Japan with Bizet's "Carmen" at the Nikikai Opera, in Sapporo with the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra and in Tokyo with the renowned Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra at Suntory Hall. Back in Germany, at the Frankfurt Oper with "A Village Romeo and Juliet" by Frederick Delius, as well as concerts with the Radio Orchestra Frankfurt followed by new productions in Heidelberg of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" and Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia".

Recent and upcoming highlights include concert performances in Frankfurt with the Radio Orchestra as well as the Museumsorchester, the Bremer Philharmoniker, the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, the Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland Pfalz, the Munich Symphony, the National Youth Orchestra of Germany, the symphony orchestras of Sapporo and Yomiuri Nippon and the Weimar Staatskapelle among many others. Extensive tours of Europe with the National Youth Orchestra of Germany (Bundesjugendorchester) and a tour of China with the Qatar Philharmonic In the pit, Elias will conduct Berg's "Lulu" and Verdi's "Don Carlo" at Heidelberg Opera among other titles.

Born in Germany of Japanese and German parents, Elias studied conducting, cello and music theory in Basel, Munich and Berlin. He played as a cellist in the Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Radio and the Komische Oper Berlin.

Musicians



LIONEL SCHMIT



JOO YOUNG OH



VITALII PERVUSHYN



TOBIAS GETTE



MICHAELA LINSBAUER



TAEHYUN KIM



ANNEMARI AINOMAE



DMITRI TORCHINSKY



DINA LEINI



PAVLO DOVHAN



MARIYA MEDVEDEVA



RURIKO YAMAMOTO



MAIAS ALYAMANI



REEM KHOURY



GEORGES YAMINE



ISLAM EL HEFNAWY



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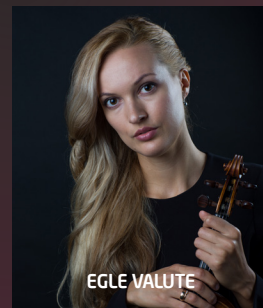
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ANNE-CATHRIN EHRLICH



MOHAMED OWEDA



EGLE VALUTE



GIOVANNI PASINI



ANCA BOLD



ANDREA MEREUTA



VICTOR SUMENKOV



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