

16 OCTOBER

WEDNESDAY SERIES 4

Helsinki Music Centre at 19.00

Peter Oundjian, conductor
Khatia Buniatishvili, piano

*Frédéric Chopin: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra
No. 2 in F Minor, Op. 21*

30 min

*I Maestoso
II Larghetto
III Allegro vivace*

INTERVAL 20 min

John Adams: Harmonielehre

40 min

*I
II The Anfortas Wound
III Meister Eckhardt and Quackie*

This concert is being held in partnership with PianoEspoo,
the International Piano Festival in Espoo.



Interval at about 19.40. The concert ends at about 20.55.

Broadcast live on Yle Radio 1 and the Internet (yle.fi/klassinen).

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849): CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA NO. 2 IN F MINOR, OP. 21

The Piano Concerto in F minor, Op. 21, usually designated No. 2, was in fact Chopin's first, because he finished it before that in E minor. The orchestral parts of the F minor were still incomplete, however, so it was not published until 1836. It got its first public performance (without an orchestra!) at the National Theatre in Warsaw in March 1830. The premiere was a success, though Chopin felt the audience cheered him only to show how highbrow they were. For his first public appearance in Paris on 26 February 1832, Chopin chose the same concerto; seated in the audience were all the leading lights in musical life at the time, Liszt and Mendelssohn included, and the innovative keyboard writing, the genius and sensitive beauty of Chopin's playing did not pass unnoticed.

The very fact that the F minor concerto could be played without an orchestra says something about the soloist's status. Although the orchestra duly states the themes of the opening movement for no fewer than 70 bars, there is to be no symphonic dialogue between orchestra and soloist in the manner of Brahms or Beethoven. Having once made its entrance, the piano reigns supreme, and the orchestra has to submit to the role of accompanist. True, Chopin's handling of the orchestra has been criticised as conventional and clumsy (but then how many 19-year-olds can claim to be a master?), his piano poetry could not

be more beautiful or so endlessly rich. So ultimately, any shortcomings in the orchestral writing are of minor significance.

Neither did Chopin take any risks with the form of his concerto: the *Maestoso* is constructed along classical sonata-form lines, and few surprises await in the forms of the other two movements. Except that the main theme of the brilliant finale is really a stylised *mazurka* and its contrasting middle section, marked *Scherzando*, is an *oberek*, a faster version of a mazurka. The most stirring movement is, however, the nocturne-like, unrestrainedly expressive *Larghetto*. Chopin once admitted in a letter that it was inspired by his tender feelings for a certain Constantia Gladowska, a young voice student at the Warsaw Conservatory "of whom I nightly dream". So far as is known, nothing came of this romance, but the fair Constantia received an unforgettable declaration of love in one of the most beautiful passages in all romantic concerto literature.

JOHN ADAMS (b. 1947): HARMONIELEHRE

Harmonielehre is German and means a study of harmony. According to Adams, it may also be understood as a search for mental harmony. For him, the expressive power of music is attached to the world of tonal harmony, the shades of major and minor, and he is particularly interested in the power of modulation.

The first movement has no name but was inspired by a vivid dream described by Adams in detail. In this dream, he was

driving across a bridge in San Francisco when he saw a huge oil tanker down below, a symbol of power and great mass. All of a sudden the tanker shot like a rocket out of the water, and the beauty of its rusty, orange-brown hull made a huge impression on him. The following morning he wrote the mighty opening bars of *Harmonielehre*, the metallic E minor chords. The form of the first movement traces a clear arch in which the vast rhythmic energy of the beginning returns at the end. In between is a section called *Sehnsucht* (Yearning) in which a melody spanning huge intervals and drawing on the expressive language of the Late Romantics wanders from one instrument to another.

The Anfortas Wound, the second movement, alludes to the medieval legend of the wounded king of the Knights of the Holy Grail, and especially Jung's interpretation of this. As Jung's archetype, Anfortas represents malady of the soul, creative impotence and depression – lack of harmony with both the world and the soul. The sorrowful call of a trumpet enters the downcast landscape, out of which rise two violent climaxes, the second of which is an allusion to Mahler's unfinished tenth symphony.

The third movement, with the Zappa-like title *Meister Eckhard and Quackie*, was inspired by a dream Adams had soon after the birth of his daughter, Emily. Meister Eckhard was a medieval theologian, and Quackie the family's nickname for baby Emily. (She is reputed to have quacked like a duck when she was tiny.) In Adams' dream, the mystic is hovering in the air with the baby on his shoulders, and she whispers the secret

of mercy in his ear. Again, this dream is like a footnote, this time to Mahler's fourth symphony, in which an innocent child speaks of heaven. Beginning as a tender lullaby, the finale gradually works up speed as increasingly forceful tonal centres vie with one another. The suite finally arrives at a triumphant affirmation of E flat major and chords clearly evocative of those that end both Beethoven's *Eroica* and Sibelius's fifth symphony.

Lotta Emanuelsson (abridged)

PETER OUNDJIAN

Peter Oundjian has been Music Director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since 2004 and last year took up the corresponding position with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He is a regular guest conductor with many orchestras, such as the SWR Symphony Orchestra Stuttgart, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, the Israel Philharmonic, the Orchestre de Paris and the Berlin RSO. He has conducted numerous orchestras in the United States, the Sydney Symphony and the Japanese NHK Symphony.

Originally trained as a violinist and for 14 years leader of the renowned Tokyo String Quartet, Peter Oundjian is now in his 32nd year as a visiting professor at the Yale School of Music. In 2009 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the San Francisco Conservatory, and in January 2013 the Samuel Simons Sanford Medal, the highest honour the Yale School of Music can bestow.

KHATIA BUNIATISHVILI

Georgian pianist Khatia Buniatishvili was only six when she gave her debut solo performance with an orchestra and since then has been invited to appear the world over. Highlights of the present season include performances with the French National Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Russian National Orchestra.

Since studying in Tbilisi and Vienna, Khatia Buniatishvili has won numerous prizes and for the 2011/2012 season she was nominated a Rising Star by the Vienna Musikverein and Konzerthaus. A BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist 2009–2011, she regularly collaborates with BBC orchestras. She has also appeared at such prestigious venues as the Wigmore Hall in London, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and the Vienna Musikverein and in 2008 made her US debut playing Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 at Carnegie Hall, New York.

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 is Hannu Lintu.

The Radio Orchestra of ten players founded in 1927 grew to symphony or-

chestra strength in the 1960s. Its previous Chief Conductors have been Toivo Haapanen, Nils-Eric Fougstedt, Paavo Berglund, Okko Kamu, Leif Segerstam, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Sakari Oramo. The FRSO has two Honorary Conductors: Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Sakari Oramo.

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. During the 2013/2014 season it will premiere six Finnish works commissioned by Yle.

The FRSO has recorded works by Eötvös, Nielsen, Hakola, Lindberg, Saariaho, Sallinen, Kaipainen, Kokkonen and others, and the debut disc of the opera *Aslak Hetta* by Armas Launis. Its discs have reaped some major distinctions, such as the BBC Music Magazine Award and the Académie Charles Cros Award. The disc of the Sibelius and Lindberg violin concertos (Sony BMG) with Lisa Batiashvili as the soloist received the MIDEM Classical Award in 2008, in which year the *New York Times* chose the other Lindberg disc as its Record of the Year.

The FRSO regularly tours to all parts of the world. During the 2013/2014 season it will be visiting Central Europe under the baton of Hannu Lintu.

All the FRSO concerts both in Finland and abroad are broadcast, usually live, on Yle Radio 1. They can also be heard and watched with excellent stream quality on yle.fi/klassinen.