

# Friday 28 April

## Programme notes

### Jean Sibelius (1865 – 1957)

**Karelia Suite, Op. 11** (1893)  
(14 mins)

**Intermezzo**  
**Ballade**  
**Alla marcia**

The *Karelia* Suite was written during the most intensely patriotic phase of Sibelius's career. In June 1892 he had married Aino Järnefelt, the daughter of a prominent Finnish nationalist, and the couple spent their honeymoon in the eastern province of Karelia, near the village of Lieksa on the eastern shores of Lake Pielisjärvi. They developed great affection for the province (which, unlike the rest of Finland, was eventually absorbed into the USSR), and when the Viipuri Student Association at Helsinki University asked Sibelius if he would provide music for an evening's entertainment to raise money for education projects in eastern Finland, the composer readily agreed.

The climax of the entertainment was a series of seven tableaux representing scenes in the history of the Karelia region. The first showed the interior of a Karelian home in 1293, where a runic minstrel was performing an ancient folk song, interrupted by the news that war had broken out. In the second tableau, the Karelian hero Torkel Knuttson was seen founding Viipuri Castle; in the third, a Lithuanian prince collected tributes from a procession of Karelian citizens. The fourth tableau showed the interior of Viipuri Castle, where the deposed Regent of Sweden, Karl Knutsson, who had returned to his Finnish estates, was shown listening to a ballad singer. The fifth tableau depicted the capture of the

town of Kakiholma by Pontus de la Gardie in 1580, while the sixth showed the siege of Viipuri Castle in 1700. The final tableau celebrated Viipuri's union with Greater Finland in the early 19th century.

Sibelius's music, which he conducted himself in Helsinki on 13 November 1893, consists of an overture, preludes to the tableaux, incidental music, a song and finally an arrangement of the national anthem, which brought the audience to its feet, shouting and cheering. The enthusiasm was so great that Sibelius complained that not much of the music could be heard at all.

In 1906 some of the *Karelia* music was published as an Overture, Op. 10, and a Suite, Op. 11. The Suite consists of three movements: an Intermezzo, whose theme was originally associated with the third tableau; a Ballade (the folk song of the fourth tableau), and finally a robust march, originally designed to accompany the war-like scenario of the fifth tableau.

*Programme notes by Wendy Thompson*  
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### Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

**Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35** (1878)  
(33 mins)

**Allegro moderato – Moderato assai**  
**Canzonetta: Andante**  
**Finale: Allegro vivacissimo**

Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto had a rather tumultuous journey from the work's conception to the popularity it enjoys today. Tchaikovsky

completed the first sketches very rapidly while holidaying in the Swiss resort of Clarens on the shores of Lake Geneva. The intended dedicatee was the young violinist Iosif Kotek, a former student of Tchaikovsky's at the Moscow Conservatory who was greatly admired by – and possibly romantically involved with – the composer, and who mediated between Tchaikovsky and Nadhezha von Meck (who would become his patroness and confidante) during the early stages of their acquaintance.

However, Kotek was not sufficiently famous to premiere the work, so Tchaikovsky approached Leopold Auer to be the dedicatee. Auer dismissed the work as “unviolinistic”, only revising his opinion in the last year of the composer's life. Eventually, Adolph Brodsky premiered the work in Vienna in 1881, but its early success was hindered when the influential critic Eduard Hanslick denounced the work with considerable vehemence. Thankfully, the concerto has outlived the criticism.

The first movement is based on two melodies that are explored and developed by soloist and orchestra. Tchaikovsky may partly have been inspired by Kotek, who played through the concerto as it was composed. The influence of Mendelssohn's Concerto is also evident in the placing of the cadenza (when the soloist takes a moment to display dazzling skill) at the end of the central section, before the main themes are reprised.

The slow movement's introduction delays the entrance of the main melody, which, as a consequence, has all the more impact when it arrives. Its title, Canzonetta, means a type of vocal movement, highlighting the singing nature of the violin part.

The finale begins with a long introduction, after which the main melody fizzles along. It is contrasted with a reference to Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*; the oboe (used for the same purpose in the opera) plays a theme that evokes Tatyana, the opera's tragic heroine. This does little to diminish the overall merriment of the finale, however; the violin writing is scintillating, and the work ends in high spirits.

*Programme notes by Joanna Wyld*  
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Interval (20 mins)

## Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

**Symphony No. 9 in E flat major, Op. 70** (1945)  
(27 mins)

**Allegro**  
**Moderato**  
**Presto –**  
**Largo –**  
**Allegretto – Allegro**

The Ninth was the third and last of Shostakovich's 'war symphonies', written between 1941 and 1945, when the Third Reich finally disintegrated. By the end of 1944 it was clear that victory could not be far off, and Shostakovich, who had already reflected the Russian stand against fascism in his *Leningrad* Symphony, and the appalling devastation of war in the Eighth, felt obliged to provide a new symphony to celebrate the end of the war.

According to Shostakovich, after the victory against Hitler, Stalin “went off the deep end”,

behaving like “a frog puffing himself up to the size of an ox”. Shostakovich was expected to provide a ‘victory symphony’, with huge choral and orchestral forces on the scale of Beethoven’s Ninth. But Shostakovich was only too well aware of the terrible cost of the war – the price that had been paid in the blood of countless millions of ordinary Russians – and that Stalin’s victory was a hollow one. As a result, he found himself struggling against creative block.

In June 1945, six weeks after the end of the war, Shostakovich overcame his problems by working on a piece for violin and piano. Within a month he had begun work on his Ninth Symphony, completing the first movement in Moscow by early August, and the remaining four shortly afterwards at a state farm reserved for composers’ use in a village near Ivanovo.

The new symphony was first performed on 3 November 1945 in the Great Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic. The conductor, Yevgeny Mravinsky, was Shostakovich’s leading interpreter, and the dedicatee of the Sixth and Eighth Symphonies. The work was repeated in Moscow on the 20th, but failed to arouse the enthusiastic reception that had met the Seventh Symphony. Shostakovich, who had already been attacked for the unacceptably “mournful” character of the Eighth Symphony, realised that he was in deep trouble.

The blow that Shostakovich feared was deferred for a couple of years while Stalin consolidated his political stranglehold on Eastern Europe. It finally fell in February 1948, with the infamous ‘Zhdanov Purge’, in which Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and a number of other prominent Soviet composers were publicly indicted as representing “most strikingly the formalistic perversions and anti-democratic tendencies

in music”, especially “the cult of atonality, dissonance and discord”. Each of the accused was forced to recant; Shostakovich and Prokofiev escaped with their lives, but others were not so fortunate.

If Stalin had expected a majestic paean to his greatness, then he had good reason to be disappointed. The Ninth is one of Shostakovich’s shortest symphonies, despite its five-movement form, and its mood is one of brittle lightness, more in the tongue-in-cheek style of Rossini or Prokofiev’s *Classical Symphony* than heavyweights such as Beethoven or Brahms.

The brief opening ‘Allegro’ is deliberately frivolous in mood, with skittering strings and woodwind creating a fairground atmosphere. The minor-key ‘Moderato’ which follows is the longest movement, opening with a mournful clarinet solo, to which the other woodwinds gradually add their voices. The heavy sighs of the strings reinforce the mood of lamentation, over which solo woodwinds pursue their elegiac melodies.

The last three movements are linked. The first is a brief scherzo. A short, declamatory ‘Largo’ follows, featuring brass chords, then a recitative-like bassoon solo that recalls the elegiac slow movement. The bassoon’s second statement metamorphoses into the first theme of the finale, a jaunty little tune which tries desperately, but ultimately fails, to raise the mood, despite enlisting the help of a battery of percussion – sidedrum, tambourine, triangle and cymbals. Shostakovich’s unquenchable sense of irony had won the day.

*Programme notes by Wendy Thompson*  
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# Santtu-Matias Rouvali

## Principal Conductor



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Santtu-Matias Rouvali first conducted the Philharmonia in 2013, aged 27. He was instantly recognised by the players as “an inspiring individual... a musician with spirit and passion akin to our own” (Cheremie Hamilton-Miller, Vice-President of the Philharmonia Orchestra and member of the Viola section).

He took up the baton as Principal Conductor in September 2021. He is just the sixth person to hold that title since the Orchestra was founded in 1945. On his appointment, he said: “This is the start of a great adventure. The players of the Philharmonia can do anything: they are enormously talented and show an incredible hunger to create great performances. There is huge possibility with this orchestra, and we will do great things together.”

He has already conducted a wide range of music with the Philharmonia, from blockbusters by Strauss and Rachmaninov to lesser-known works by his compatriots Sibelius and Lindberg. In 2020 his first Philharmonia CD, a live recording of excerpts from Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*, was released by Signum Records, followed by Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 5. During the pandemic he conducted music by Aaron Copland and Florence Price in one of our

*Live from the Southbank Centre* streamed concerts, and played with our percussion section in Steve Reich’s *Music for Pieces of Wood*. He made his BBC Proms debut with the Philharmonia in summer 2022, conducting ballet music by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev and the European premiere of Missy Mazzoli’s Violin Concerto with soloist Jennifer Koh.

This season Santtu conducts the Philharmonia in all our UK residency venues – London, Leicester, Bedford, Basingstoke and Canterbury – and takes the Orchestra on tour to Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Spain.

Santtu is also Chief Conductor of Gothenburg Symphony, and retains his longstanding Chief Conductor position with Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra close to his home in Finland. With Gothenburg Symphony he is recording an ambitious Sibelius cycle – the first two volumes both received the Choc de Classica, and the first was also named *Gramophone* magazine Editor’s Choice and Diapason D’Or ‘Decouverte’.

Throughout the season Santtu continues his relationships with orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw and New York Philharmonic as well as the Munich Philharmonic and Vienna Symphony.

When he’s not conducting, Santtu loves to spend time meditating, foraging and hunting in the forests around his home near Tampere.

“It’s a rare thing to have such an instant rapport with a conductor and we are all extremely lucky.” (Victoria Irish, member of the First Violin section).

# Randall Goosby

## Violin



Signed exclusively to Decca Classics in 2020 at the age of 24, American violinist Randall Goosby is acclaimed for the sensitivity and intensity of his musicianship alongside his determination to make music more inclusive and accessible, as well as bringing the music of under-represented composers to light.

Highlights of Randall Goosby's 2021/22 season included debuts with the Philharmonia and London Philharmonic Orchestras, the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel at the Hollywood Bowl, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under Dalia Stasevska, and Detroit Symphony Orchestra under Jader Bignamini. He made recital appearances at London's Wigmore Hall, New York's 92nd Street Y, San Francisco Symphony's Davies Symphony Hall and Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

June 2021 marked the release of Goosby's debut album for Decca called *Roots*, a celebration of African American music that explores its evolution from the spiritual to present-day compositions. Collaborating with pianist Zhu Wang, Goosby has curated an album paying homage to pioneering artists who paved the way for him and other artists of colour. It features three world-premiere recordings of music

written by Florence Price, and includes works by William Grant Still and Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson plus a newly commissioned piece by acclaimed double bassist Xavier Foley, a fellow Sphinx, Perlman Music Programme and Young Concert Artists alumnus.

Goosby is passionate about inspiring and serving others through education, social engagement and outreach activities. He has worked with non-profit organisations such as the Opportunity Music Project and Concerts in Motion.

Randall Goosby was First Prize Winner in the 2018 Young Concert Artists International Auditions. In 2019, he was named the inaugural Robey Artist by the Young Classical Artists Trust in partnership with Music Masters in London; and in 2020 he became an Ambassador for Music Masters, a role that sees him mentoring students in schools around the United Kingdom.

He is the youngest musician to have won the Sphinx Concerto Competition, is a recipient of Sphinx's Isaac Stern Award and of a career advancement grant from the Bagby Foundation and of the 2022 Avery Fisher Career Grant. An active chamber musician, he has spent his summers studying at the Perlman Music Programme, Verbier Festival Academy and Mozarteum Summer Academy, among others.

Goosby made his debut with the Jacksonville Symphony aged nine and with the New York Philharmonic on a Young People's Concert at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall at the age of 13. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Randall Goosby continues his studies there, pursuing an Artist Diploma under Itzhak Perlman and Catherine Cho. Goosby plays a 1735 Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, on generous loan from the Stradivari Society.