



CONCERT PROGRAM

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY 5

Thursday, April 5, 2018

8:00pm

Saturday, April 7, 2018

7:30pm

Sunday, April 8, 2018

3:00pm

George Weston Recital Hall

Sir Andrew Davis

conductor

Ray Chen

violin

In gratitude for their generous philanthropy, **Blake and Belinda Goldring** are recognized as Patrons of Sir Andrew Davis's and Ray Chen's April 5 appearances with the TSO.

Felix Mendelssohn

The Fair Melusina Overture, Op. 32

Max Bruch

**Violin Concerto No. 1
in G Minor, Op. 26**

I. Prelude: Allegro moderato

II. Adagio

III. Finale: Allegro energico

Intermission (Apr 5 & 8 only)

Wilhelm Stenhammar

**Intermezzo from *Sången*
(The Song), Op. 44** (Apr 5 & 8 only)

Jean Sibelius

**Symphony No. 5
in E-flat Major, Op. 82**

I. Tempo molto moderato –

Allegro moderato – Presto

II. Andante mosso, quasi allegretto

III. Allegro molto – Misterioso

THE DETAILS

Felix Mendelssohn

The Fair Melusina Overture, Op. 32

10
min

Born: Hamburg, now Germany, Feb 3, 1809

Died: Leipzig, now Germany, Nov 4, 1847

Composed: 1833; rev. 1835

The legend of the mermaid who falls in love with a mortal man and tries unsuccessfully to live among humans is an old and venerable one. It has led many authors (Ludwig Tieck, Franz Grillparzer—the source of Felix Mendelssohn’s work, Friedrich de la Motte Fuqué, Hans Christian Andersen) and composers (Reinecke, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Zemlinsky) to create their own treatments.

The background of Mendelssohn’s concert overture on the subject is a rather unusual one. He heard Conradin Kreutzer’s operatic setting of the tale in 1832. “The overture was encored, but I still disliked it quite particularly,” he wrote to his sister Fanny. “I then felt a

desire to write an overture that people wouldn’t encore but would receive more inwardly, so I took what I liked of the subject (and that corresponds exactly with the fairy tale).” He considered this beautiful, lucidly orchestrated piece one of his finest creations. He dedicated it to Fanny.

Because the first performance was scheduled to take place in London, where he felt unsure that listeners would be familiar with the tale that inspired it, he initially entitled it *Melusine, or the Mermaid and the Knight*. Ignaz Moscheles conducted the première on April 7, 1834. The lukewarm response—Mendelssohn’s friend Karl Klingemann blamed the conductor’s stodgy tempos—led Mendelssohn to revise it. He conducted the première of the definitive version himself, under the final title, in Leipzig in November 1835.

It begins with a lovely, flowing theme featuring the woodwinds—surely a portrait of the gentle mermaid Melusine and her watery domain. The other primary theme is an agitated, dramatic melody in the strings, representing the cruel human world and Melusine’s heartbreaking adventures in it. The innocent strength of her theme survives the overture’s turmoil to close it as serenely as it began.

Program note by Don Anderson



The Fair Melusine, by Julius Hübner, 1844

In his review of the 1835 version of this overture, Robert Schumann wrote that it conjures up visions of “marine abysses full of darting fish with golden scales, of pearls in open shells, of buried treasures robbed from men by the sea, of emerald castles towering one above the other....”

THE DETAILS

Max Bruch

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 26

24
min

Born: Cologne, now Germany, Jan 6, 1838

Died: Friedenau, Berlin, now Germany, Oct 2, 1920

Composed: 1868

No one could accuse Max Bruch of laziness. In addition to composing three operas, three symphonies, several oratorios, more than 40 additional pieces for chorus, and numerous works in other forms, he worked extensively as a teacher and conductor. Regarding long-term achievement, however, not one of the above-mentioned pieces has gained a foothold in the standard repertoire. Fashions in music come and go, but two of the nine works for violin and orchestra—Concerto No. 1 and *Scottish Fantasy*—plus the *Kol Nidrei* for cello, retain the popularity that greeted them from day one.

Although this concerto—his most enduringly popular composition—sounds smooth and effortless, it followed a difficult course to its final form. It won a favourable reception at its first public performance, but it still left Bruch unsatisfied. Seeking advice on how to improve it, he consulted with the widely respected Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim. Joachim gave him a long, detailed evaluation. Relieved by this expert counsel, Bruch dedicated the concerto to Joachim. He took up some of Joachim's suggested changes, to which he added second thoughts of his own. The *début* of the revised edition

drew a warm response from audience and composer alike.

Bruch entitled the concerto's opening section "Prelude", implying that it serves primarily as an introduction to the more important second movement, the *Adagio*. The Prelude opens in an air of quiet, brooding melancholy before breaking out into a full-blown and impassioned *Allegro*. It builds up to two major climaxes before dying away in emotional exhaustion. Bruch segues without pause into the heartfelt central *Adagio*. This begins in a prayer-like atmosphere, then gradually gains both in activity and expressiveness. It features some of the most beautiful writing in the entire literature for violin.

Bruch concludes the concerto with a propulsive, Roma-flavoured finale. It anticipates the last movement of the concerto that Johannes Brahms wrote 10 years later, a work also dedicated to (and *première*d by) Joseph Joachim. It is definitely a dance, but in keeping with the concerto's overall character, it is still a rather serious one. The second theme has a noble contour, more elevated than heroic.

Program note by Don Anderson

Wilhelm Stenhammar

Intermezzo from *Sången* (The Song), Op. 44 (Apr 5 & 8 only)

5
min

Born: Stockholm, Sweden, Feb 7, 1871

Died: Stockholm, Sweden, Nov 20, 1927

Composed: 1921

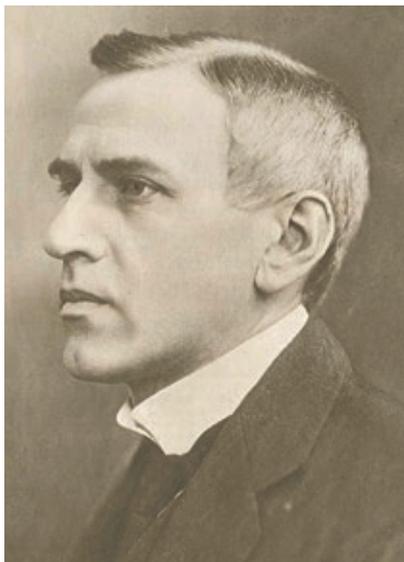
One of Sweden's most gifted musicians of the late-Romantic era, Wilhelm Stenhammar won considerable success as composer, conductor, and pianist. Major positions occupied included the directorships of orchestras and opera companies in Stockholm and Göteborg. He gave frequent piano recitals and over a thousand joint performances with the country's principal string quartet.

His catalogue of compositions included a great deal of vocal music, including

operas, cantatas, and songs. Many of his works showed the influence of Wagner, Richard Strauss, Brahms, and Liszt. In other pieces, he tempered those elements with an appealing sense of lyricism derived from Swedish folk song, although he quoted authentic native materials less often than such contemporary Swedes as Hugo Alfvén. He composed a sizeable amount of chamber music, including six string quartets.

One of the most significant works of his final period was the symphonic cantata *Sången*. He composed it for the 150th anniversary of the Swedish Royal Academy of Music, and scored it for four vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra. The text, by the Swedish composer Ture Rangström, is a tribute to the land and people of Sweden. *Grove Music* says that this 35-minute work “consists of two parts, the first seemingly recalling youthful *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress), the second austere and slightly Handelian; these are linked by an interlude (or intermezzo), which is often performed separately.” The Intermezzo is a warm and gentle piece, ennobled by majestic writing for brass.

Program note by Don Anderson



Wilhelm Stenhammar, c. 1916

THE DETAILS

Jean Sibelius

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 82

31
min

Born: Hämeenlinna, Finland, Dec 8, 1865

Died: Järvenpää, Finland, Sep 20, 1957

Composed: 1914–1919

The Fifth Symphony was a pivotal work in Jean Sibelius's career. He had come to realize that he could not keep pace with the revolutionary experiments of composers like Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky, who rejected traditional melody, harmony, and form. The Fifth, the most important product of this aesthetic crisis, was Sibelius's reply to musical modernism—an overtly Romantic and accessible work. Today, the Fifth seems less “reactionary” than *sui generis*—a unique and highly idiosyncratic rethinking of symphonic form.

The first movement is a powerful and organic conception. The opening is tentative: the tempo is slow, the main key, E-flat major, is weakly established, and the “theme” consists of fragmentary motifs. Yet, these motifs are clearly related and as the movement unfolds, they are recast and developed in such a way that the music seems to gradually cohere. At the height of this process, the music suddenly begins to dance, shifting into the tempo and metre of a scherzo, in which all the tension of the first part gradually dissipates. Motifs are further developed, the tempo progressively quickens, and in its blazing, breathless final bars, the movement achieves that unequivocal assertion of the home key so noticeably wanting at the beginning.

The second movement is naive and pastoral in character, and its genial theme (*pizzicato* strings and *staccato* woodwinds) is varied and transformed throughout. This seemingly innocent intermezzo is in fact a crucial pivot between the more dramatic outer movements, and by the end, it has generated all of the musical material out of which the finale will be forged.

Like the first movement, the finale is a goal-directed conception, in which the second half functions as an intensification of the first. The bustling opening theme, “piled up” through most of the orchestra, opens onto a broad, swinging new idea in the horns—it was inspired by the image of swans flying over the lake that adjoined Sibelius's property, and he came to think of it as the “Swan Hymn”. After a brief, dark interlude, the whole process is repeated, this time at greater length, and laced with new dissonance, tension, and ambiguity, so that the final statements of the horn theme, in an unsullied E-flat major, are all the more triumphant. At the end of it all, one of the strangest and most awesome final pages in all music: six stark chords, torn apart by long pauses, whose only function is to make a grand, definitive cadence.

Program note by Kevin Bazzana

THE ARTISTS



Sir Andrew Davis conductor

Sir Andrew Davis, now Conductor Laureate, served as TSO Music Director from 1975 to 1988.

Sir Andrew Davis is the Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Chief Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Davis's career spans over 40 years during which he has been the musical and artistic leader at several of the world's most distinguished opera and symphonic institutions, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra (conductor laureate; chief conductor 1991–2004), Glyndebourne Festival Opera (music director 1988–2000), and Toronto Symphony Orchestra (conductor laureate; music director 1975–1988), where he has also been named Interim Artistic Director from 2018 to 2020. He also holds the honorary title of conductor emeritus from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Born in 1944 in Hertfordshire, England, Maestro Davis studied at King's College, Cambridge, where he was an organ scholar before taking up conducting. A vast and award-winning discography documents Sir Andrew's artistry; he currently records exclusively for Chandos Records. In 1992, Maestro Davis was created a Commander of the British Empire, and in 1999 he was designated a Knight Bachelor in the New Year Honours List.



Ray Chen violin

Ray Chen made his TSO début in September 2013.

Winner of the Queen Elisabeth and Yehudi Menuhin Competitions, Ray Chen is among the most compelling young violinists today. He is dedicated to expanding the reach of classical music through education and social media. In 2017,

Ray signed to Decca Classics in a major new recording deal and multimedia partnership. Ray has previously released three critically acclaimed albums on Sony: *Virtuoso*, a recital program of works by Bach, Tartini, Franck, and Wieniawski, which won an ECHO Klassik award; the Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky concertos with the Swedish Radio Orchestra; and an all-Mozart album and the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra.

Ray has appeared with some of the leading orchestras around the world including the London Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, DC), Orchestre National de France, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Born in Taiwan and raised in Australia, Ray was accepted, at age 15, to the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Aaron Rosand and was supported by Young Concert Artists. He plays the 1715 "Joachim" Stradivarius violin on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation.