

# Grieg & Sibelius

## Favourites *'from fjord & forest'*

*Charles Mackerras*  
*Ermler • Schmidt • Simonov*

Wedding Day  
at Trolldhaugen  
At the Castle Gate  
Morning (Peer Gynt)  
Norwegian Melodies  
Intermezzo Karelia    Swan of Tuonela  
Valse Triste    Finlandia

## Edvard Grieg

- |     |   |      |
|-----|---|------|
| [1] | <b>Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen</b> (orchestrated by Gottfried Huppertz) | 5:51 |
|     | <b>2 Elegaic Melodies, Op. 34</b>                                       |      |
| [2] | I. The Heart Wounds   | 2:55 |
| [3] | II. Last Spring   | 4:42 |
|     | <b>Norwegian Melodies, Op. 63 No. 2</b>                                 |      |
| [4] | I. Cow-Keeper's Tune -  | 3:17 |
| [5] | II. Country Dance   | 2:12 |

## Jean Sibelius

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|------|---|------|
| [6]  | <b>Valse Triste, Op. 44</b>                     | 5:06 |
|      | from <b>King Christian Suite</b>                |      |
| [7]  | Elegie  | 5:27 |
| [8]  | Musette   | 2:22 |
|      | from <b>Pelleas and Melisande Suite, Op. 46</b> |      |
| [9]  | Entr'acte                                       | 2:29 |
| [10] | At the Castle Gate                              | 3:19 |

### New Symphony Orchestra of London

Charles Mackerras, *conductor*

## Grieg

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|------|---|------|
| [11] | from <b>Holberg Suite</b> - First Movement                    | 2:48 |
|      | <b>Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Yuri Simonov, conductor</b> |      |
|      | from <b>Peer Gynt Suite</b>                                   |      |
| [12] | Morning   | 4:21 |
| [13] | Anitra's Dance  | 3:30 |
| [14] | In the Hall of the Mountain King                              | 2:31 |
|      | <b>Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Mark Ermler, conductor</b>  |      |

## Sibelius

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|------|--|------|
| [15] | Intermezzo from <b>Karelia Suite</b>                               | 3:45 |
|      | <b>Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Charles Mackerras, conductor</b> |      |
| [16] | <b>Lemminkäinen Suite, Op. 22</b> - The Swan of Tuonela            | 8:17 |
|      | <b>Geoffrey Browne, cor anglais</b>                                |      |
|      | <b>Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Ole Schmidt, conductor</b>       |      |
| [17] | <b>Finlandia</b>   | 8:29 |
|      | <b>Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Charles Mackerras, conductor</b> |      |

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The Norway in which **Edvard Grieg** (1843-1907) grew up gave him little cultural stimulus and he studied piano and composition in Germany. He graduated from the Leipzig Conservatory in 1862 and lived for a while in Copenhagen where he met two Norwegian musicians who gave differing advice: Niels Gade (1817-90) suggested that Grieg compose a symphony in the German Romantic style; Rikard Nordraak (1842-66) encouraged Grieg to turn to folk melody for inspiration. Upon his return to Christiania (Oslo) in 1866, Grieg met Ludvig Mathias Lindeman (1812-87), whose 1853 publication of several hundred Norwegian folk melodies provided material for Grieg's *25 Norwegian Folksongs and Dances* (1869). Grieg arranged three of these for string orchestra in *Norwegian Melodies* (1895), and **Cowkeeper's Tune** and **Country Dance** form the second half of this work.

In 1874 Grieg was offered a state grant enabling him to buy a house in Bergen and that year he was approached by Ibsen to provide music for *Peer Gynt* (1867) due to be premiered in 1876. Grieg became disenchanted with the commission, saying of *In the Hall of the Mountain King* 'I can hardly bear to listen to it - it's so full of cowpats, Norwegiomania and self-complacency'. Eight extracts were arranged in 1888 and 1891 to form a pair of orchestral suites with the vocal parts omitted. Grieg originally placed **Morning** as the introduction to Act 4 Scene 5, set in the tent of an Arab Sheik in an oasis in the Sahara, and with this picture in mind one appreciates the beauty of this extract all the more. Later, the servant girl dances seductively for Peer Gynt (**Anitra's Dance**). Led on by some raunchy cowgirls, Peer finds himself **In the Hall of the Mountain King** where he becomes briefly fixated by the Troll-king's daughter. To bloodthirsty cries of 'Slay him' (played by the orchestra) the trolls' dance becomes more frenetic.

1884 saw the bicentenary of the Danish-Norwegian humanist and playwright Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754) and Grieg was commissioned to supply a cantata for the unveiling ceremony of a monument in Bergen. He began this during the summer months but had few illusions about performing in the open air in the depths of a Norwegian winter; 'snow, hail, storm, every kind of awful weather,



rain streaming into the chorus members' open mouths, myself conducting with a broly in a waterproof coat and galoshes...well, it's one way of dying for one's country!' In August he broke off work to begin a series of piano pieces 'in olden style from Holberg's time' which evolved into the **Holberg Suite**: a set of dances in the style of Bach, Couperin and Rameau. The dances, preceded by an exhilarating *Praeludium*, were given Grieg's individual stamp and were arranged for string orchestra shortly afterwards.

\In 1880 Grieg composed two songs to texts by Aasmund Olavsson Vinje and, renamed *Elegiac Melodies*, were arranged for strings the following year. *Hjertesår* (**Heart's Wounds**) is in three verses, each more passionate than the last whilst the poignant *Våren* (**Last Spring**) when sung by Grieg's wife, moved Tchaikovsky to tears and was performed at Grieg's funeral.

Edvard Grieg had married his cousin Nina Hagerup in 1867, the year in which he produced the first of ten books of *Lyric Pieces*. In 1885 they built a summer holiday home called Trolldhaugen (Troll's Hill) outside Bergen. The hugely popular **Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen** (1896), is the last of six pieces that form the eighth book of *Lyric Pieces*.

Finland's greatest composer **Jean Sibelius** (1865-1957) spoke only Swedish until he was eight; at eleven he attended a school where he had to speak Finnish and so began his interest in his national heritage. After studying music in Helsinki he lived in Berlin and Vienna (1889-91). Having received a grant from Helsinki University to study rune singing, Sibelius visited the Karelia region of Finland where he gathered ancient folk material, some of which was to find its way into his **Karelia Suite**. In 1893 Sibelius was commissioned to write music accompanying a series of tableaux depicting scenes from Karelian history; in November 1893 he conducted the *Overture* and the now familiar *Karelia Suite* in three movements of which **Intermezzo**, which contains music taken from the third tableau 'Duke Narimont of Lithuania collecting taxes in Kexholm province, 1333' is included here. Sibelius almost resentfully accepted the commission saying 'I think I have been brought down really low when I have been forced to compose for money' and was genuinely surprised when *Karelia Suite* became one of his most popular works.

Sibelius had a special fondness for his incidental music to Adolf Paul's play *King Christian II*, composed in 1898 (the 'first time I have managed to make something complete'). He conducted the suite on a number of occasions, including his last concert outside Finland (Copenhagen 1926). Sibelius' **Elegy** provided the overture to the play whilst **Musette** was a serenade for King Christian's mistress.

Within a dozen years of Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist drama *Pelléas et Mélisande* being staged in 1893, it had inspired four major musical works by Fauré, Debussy, Schoenberg and Sibelius, who was commissioned to write incidental music for the play's Finnish premiere. The initial Helsinki production ran for 18 performances, of which Sibelius conducted six. **At the Castle Gate** (BBC's 'Sky at night' theme) occurs at the very beginning of the play whilst **Entr'acte** is a round dance (seemingly an unlikely accompaniment to this play but which nevertheless emphasises the difference between the brutal Golaud and his grandfather Arkel).

Between 1893-6 some of the score of an abandoned opera *Veneen luominen* (The Building of the Boat) found its way into the *Lemminkäinen Suite*, sometimes referred to as *Four Legends*, inspired by episodes from the *Kalevala* (Land of Heroes), an extensive collection of Finnish myths and legends published in 1835. For **The Swan of Tuonela** Sibelius recycled the aborted overture and headed the score with: 'Tuonela, the land of death, the hell of Finnish mythology, is surrounded by a large river with black waters and a rapid current, on which the Swan of Tuonela floats majestically, singing'. The sombre waters are aptly represented by the darker instruments whilst the swan's song is played by the cor anglais. The suite, first performed in 1896, was not entirely successful and *The Swan* was slightly revised following the premiere.

At the beginning of the 19th century Finland was part of Sweden and by the end it was ruled by Tsarist Russia. In 1899 Sibelius became an active participant in the Finnish nationalist cause when he responded to a commission to supply music for the final tableau in a pageant to raise money for the press pension fund. Since Finnish newspapers were censored, this was seen as a bid to establish some kind of press freedom. The title of the tableau was 'Finland, awake!' and Sibelius' score, soon known as **Finlandia**, became a rallying cry.

Sibelius' brother-in-law, the playwright Arvid Järnefelt, asked him to compose incidental music for his play *Kuolema* (Death). In the event all that was published in 1903 was a single piece ***Valse Triste***. Sibelius first scored this for strings but later included parts for flute, clarinet, horns and timpani. The popularity of both *Finlandia* and *Valse Triste* has always been a slight embarrassment to critics who dismiss these works as mere trifles. Many conductors, including Beecham and Barbirolli (who called *Valse Triste* an 'exquisite miniature tone poem'), have thought differently. Sibelius might have found *Valse Triste*'s success somewhat galling since he sold his rights to his publishers for a paltry sum. In Järnefelt's drama *Valse Triste* accompanies a scene in which a sick mother attempts to gain sympathy from a group of female spirits.

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## NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

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**Sir Charles Mackerras** (1925-2010) played oboe in Sydney before moving to Britain and taking up conducting. He studied under Talich in Prague and held several Music Director posts including those at Hamburg Staatsoper, Welsh National Opera and Sadler's Wells/ENO. He made numerous recordings and was an esteemed guest conductor of many orchestras. A respected musicologist Mackerras' scholarly work and performing editions of Handel, Mozart and Janáček are acknowledged world-wide. He was also a leading expert on Sullivan, whose music he arranged for *Pineapple Poll*.

**Mark Ermler** (1932-2002) studied at the Leningrad Conservatory with Khaikin, making his debut in 1952. He joined the Bolshoy in 1957, and in 1960 he conducted the first staging of Prokofiev's *Story Of A Real Man*, making his debut as a ballet conductor in 1964. He led the Bolshoy in notable tours to the West in 1974 and 1999 and subsequently became a familiar figure at Covent Garden. In addition to being Guest Conductor with several orchestras worldwide he was at the time of his death Music Director with the Moscow Philharmonic, the Seoul Philharmonic and the Bolshoy.

**Ole Schmidt** (1928-2010) studied conducting with Celibidache and Kubelik and was Music Director of the Copenhagen Royal Theatre (1958-65) and the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra (1978-85). He was also guest conductor at the Royal Northern College of Music for many years. Schmidt (himself a well-known composer) promoted less familiar composers but is perhaps best remembered for his pioneering recordings of Carl Nielsen's works.

**Yuri Simonov** (b 1941) studied in St Petersburg and made his conducting debut aged twelve. He was appointed as the youngest ever Musical Director of the Bolshoy where he remained until 1985 when he founded the Maly Symphony Orchestra. During the following decade he cemented his reputation as a leading international concert and opera conductor, in 1998 becoming MD of the Moscow Philharmonic, since when he has toured extensively. From 1994 - 2002 Simonov held the same position with the Belgian National Orchestra.

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Tracks ⑮ & ⑯ recorded at CTS Studios, Wembley, January 1994

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Producer: **Alan Peters** • Engineer: **Dick Lewsey**

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**Musical Concepts**  
c/o ALTO Distribution  
Magnus House  
8 Ashfield Rd  
Cheadle SK81BB, UK

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