

Oakville Symphony Program Notes

April 1 & 2, 2023 at the Oakville Centre

Johann Strauss (1825-1899): Overture to *Die Fledermaus* (1874)



Strauss was already long famous as the “Waltz King” when *Die Fledermaus* (the “Bat”) became one of his first forays into stage productions. This operetta is the 19th century equivalent of a bedroom farce, with a plot full of disguises, mistaken identity, and frequent social transgressions. The overture is a medley of waltzes, polkas, and extracts from other romances and drinking songs, all taken from the operetta’s main score. *Fledermaus*’s success quickly led to Strauss gaining a second honorific title – the “Operetta King”.

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Ney Rosauro (b. 1952): Concerto from Marimba and Orchestra no. 1, op. 12 (1986)

I: Saudação (Greetings); II: Lamento (Lament); III: Dança (Dance); IV: Despedida (Farewell)



The Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra was written in 1986 in Brasilia. With the commercial success of a 1990 CD and video by Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie and the London Symphony Orchestra, the Concerto rapidly came to be regarded as part of the standard literature for percussion. It is considered to be the most popular marimba concerto of all times, and has been performed by more than 3,000 orchestras worldwide.

The concerto contains four movements – unusual for the concerto form – which follow the fast-slow-fast pattern, with the medium tempo third movement inserted before the vigorous finale. Some Brazilian motifs and jazz elements are used throughout the piece, which contains strong rhythmic patterns and catchy melodies. The marimba leads the thematic material throughout much of the piece, and it explores the many possibilities of modern four-mallet technique.

Program notes by the composer

Jean Sibelius (1865 – 1957): Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43 (1902)

I: Allegretto; II: Tempo andante ma rubato; III: Vivacissimo; IV: Finale: allegretto moderato



The territory known today as Finland had formed part of the Kingdom of Sweden for over 700 years, before it was subsequently occupied by Russia in 1809. With Finland still under Russian control, Sibelius's Second Symphony was first performed in 1902. This was a time of increasing nationalism among the Finnish people, due in part to the influence of Sibelius himself. Finland finally achieved independence in 1917, following the events of the Russian Revolution.

Sibelius employs his own unique style in this symphony, based on strong tonality, dark meditations in the winds, muted strings, and folklike themes (always maintained to be original music by Sibelius), all of which is overlaid by strong nationalistic sentiment for Finland. Ironically, Sibelius was raised in the Swedish language and only learned Finnish as an adult.

The work opens in a pastoral mood, with gently repeated notes in the strings. Other, stronger themes do emerge, but they may require the entire symphony to fully develop, such as the falling three-note motif at the opening, which eventually becomes the 'big tune' at the end of the Finale.

The second movement is turbulent. It begins with a drum roll, and leads to an ominous theme in the bassoons. The tension increases as we build to a patriotic climax in the winds and brass.

The third movement has the form of a scherzo, with energetic string passages before and after a pastoral oboe solo.

The Finale, perhaps the best known music in this work, then links with trumpets and strings directly without pause to the previous movement. Underlying are repeated two-note lines in the tuba and basses. We eventually reach the powerful chords of the three-note motif recalled from the very start of the symphony, but now inverted into a rising scale. This idea climbs from the lowest instruments to reach a powerful climax, led by the brass, finally transitioning into the major scale, with a dramatic finish.

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