

Minnesota Orchestra

Esa Heikkilä, conductor

Thursday, February 11, 2010, 11 am | Orchestra Hall
 Friday, February 12, 2010, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Jean Sibelius | *En Saga*, Opus 9 | ca. 17'

Edvard Grieg | *Peer Gynt*, Suite No. 1, Opus 46 | ca. 13'
 Morning Mood
 Åse's Death
 Anitra's Dance
 In the Hall of the Mountain King

I N T E R M I S S I O N | ca. 20'

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart | *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, K. 525 | ca. 15'
 Allegro
 Romance: Andante
 Menuetto: Allegretto
 Rondo: Allegro

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart | Symphony No. 36 in C major, K. 425, *Linz* | ca. 26'
 Adagio – Allegro spiritoso
 Poco adagio
 Menuetto – Trio
 Presto

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live Friday evenings on stations of **Minnesota Public Radio**. The concerts are also featured in **American Public Media's** national programs, *SymphonyCast* and *Performance Today*. Regional broadcasts are supported by the Minnesota Orchestra; **Patterson, Thuente, Skaar and Christensen, P.A.**; **UBS**; and **DTS Digital Entertainment**.

music up close

Sibelius and Grieg

with Courtney Lewis
2/11 at 10:30 am
2/12 at 7 pm
Orchestra Hall Auditorium



Esa Heikkilä, conductor

Esa Heikkilä is gaining recognition as one of Finland's top conducting talents. He made his Minnesota Orchestra debut in January 2008 in a screening of the film *The Battleship Potemkin*, with the Orchestra performing a live score compiled from works by Shostakovich.

Posts: He is chief conductor of Finland's Joensuu City Orchestra as well as artistic director of the Riihimäki Summer Concerts Festival. In addition, he is artistic director of Symphony Orchestra Vivo—Finland's national youth orchestra—and a senior lecturer at Lahti University's Faculty of Music.

Guest conductor: Heikkilä has led such orchestras as the Finnish Radio Symphony, Ulster Orchestra, Iceland Symphony and German Philharmonic Orchestra Rhineland-Palatinate.

Violinist: He began his career as a violinist in the Finnish Radio Symphony and later served as principal second violin of the Lahti Symphony.

Of interest: Heikkilä is a former conducting student of Osmo Vänskä.

More: patrickgarvey.com.

Sibelius' *En Saga* premieres in 1893, the year:

- The words to *America the Beautiful* are penned by Wellesley professor Katharine Lee Bates
- Norwegian artist Edvard Munch paints his best-known work, *The Scream*
- New Orleans hosts the longest-ever boxing match—110 rounds in more than seven hours

In 1783, when Mozart's *Linz Symphony* is first performed:

- The U.S. and Britain sign the Treaty of Paris, formally ending the Revolutionary War
- French chemist Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier discovers that water consists of hydrogen and oxygen
- Lexicographer Noah Webster publishes *The American Spelling Book*, forerunner of *Webster's Dictionary*

one-minute notes

Sibelius: *En Saga*

Hypnotic rhythms and dark orchestral coloring permeate this tone poem, which conveys the sense of a primordial adventure, fiercely urgent, and tragic as well as exhilarating.

Grieg: Suite No. 1 from *Peer Gynt*

Grieg paints a portrait of Peer Gynt, the reckless Norwegian traveler from Ibsen's epic poem. A sunny, serene *Morning Mood* ultimately leads to a crashing climax in which one simple theme is repeated with growing intensity.

Mozart: *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*

Mozart's most famous serenade, scored for strings alone, never strays from major keys as it offers a steady stream of simple, yet catchy, melodies.

Mozart: Symphony No. 36, *Linz*

This musical postcard, composed in Linz as Mozart traveled from Salzburg to Vienna, begins slowly with a thunderous introduction, then zips ahead with a spirited *Allegro* en route to a *Presto* finale of dazzling energy. Also of note is the graceful *Andante*, unusual for a slow movement in its deployment of trumpets and timpani.



Jean Sibelius

Born: December 8, 1865, Tavastehus, Finland

Died: September 20, 1957, Järvenpää

En Saga, Opus 9

In his mid-20s Sibelius studied for a year in Berlin, and then for another year in Vienna. He had at first intended to be a violinist, but in Berlin he heard the *Aino* Symphony of his senior compatriot Robert Kajanus (1856-1933), which was all the impetus he needed for giving a higher priority to composing, and to turn his own creative effort toward the furtherance of Finnish nationalism. *Aino* is one of the heroines of the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*; Sibelius' wife was one of the numerous Finnish women named for her. Early in 1892, in Vienna, Sibelius completed the first of his own several works based on the *Kalevala*: a vast five-part symphony with solo singers and a male chorus depicting episodes in the life of the tragic hero Kullervo. Kajanus saw to it that the *Kullervo* Symphony was performed in Helsinki that April, and its success prompted him to ask Sibelius for a shorter piece that could be performed more frequently. Sibelius responded, at about the time of his wedding, in June of that year, with *En Saga*, in which he recycled material from an octet for winds and strings he had composed in Berlin.

The new piece was not a success when the composer conducted the premiere in Helsinki, on February 16, 1893, but nine years later, when Ferruccio Busoni invited him to present *En Saga* in Berlin, he subjected the score to a major revision, which made such a positive impression when he introduced it in Helsinki on November 2, 1902, that it immediately took its place in the general repertory. (Kajanus, for his part, eventually gave up composing in order to devote himself to conducting Sibelius' works; in his last years he went to London to make the premiere recordings of several of them.)

It was not until four decades later still, when he had written the last of his works and the world had celebrated

his 75th birthday, that Sibelius said anything at all about the extra-musical significance of this work. At that time (the early 1940s) he remarked, "*En Saga* is the expression of a state of mind. I had undergone a number of painful experiences at the time, and in no other work have I revealed myself so completely. It is for this reason that I find all literary explanations quite alien." Still later, according to his most distinguished biographer, Erik Tawaststjerna, Sibelius "answered an inquiry from abroad by saying that if one had to find a literary or folkloristic source for *En Saga* the atmosphere of the piece was far closer to the [Icelandic] *Eddas* than to the *Kalevala*."

elemental forces

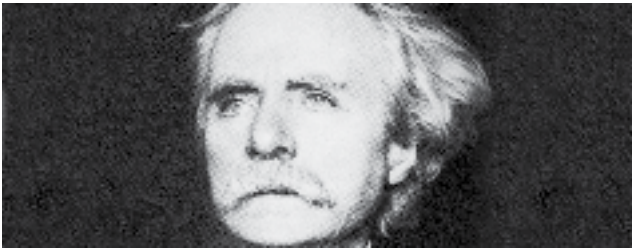
As Sibelius' early symphonies show traces of Tchaikovsky and Borodin, *En Saga* might be said to owe something to such Russian works as Balakirev's *Tamara* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Skazka*. (The latter title, in fact, has a meaning similar to that of *En Saga*, but with less fearsome connotations: "A Tale," or "Legend," or in some cases "A Fairy Tale.") The freedom Sibelius gained by *not* attempting to tell a specific story or paint a specific picture, though, gives *En Saga* a universality and directness altogether beyond the scope of those charming and colorful works. This music may not actually make us "want to wrestle a polar bear," as the enthusiastic Sibelian Olin Downes suggested some 75 years ago, but it is powerfully evocative in a more general sense, and it may touch us on deeper levels—may convey a sense of some primordial adventure—involving elemental forces rather than individuals, and both tragic and exhilarating in its fierce urgency.

The themes, strong and persistent, seem to grow directly out of one another, in the nature of metamorphoses. The rhythms are hypnotic, the darkish orchestral coloring (with a bass drum *replacing*, rather than augmenting, the timpani) as deftly achieved as anything from Rimsky-Korsakov, Strauss or Ravel. The overall effect is one of striking originality, a style as unlikely to be successfully imitated or duplicated as it is to be mistaken for that of anyone but Sibelius himself.

Instrumentation:

2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 clarinets,
2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba,
bass drum, cymbals, triangle and strings

Program note by **Richard Freed**.



Edvard Grieg

Born: June 15, 1843, Bergen, Norway

Died: September 4, 1907, Bergen

Peer Gynt, Suite No. 1, Opus 46

In 1874 the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen asked Grieg to compose incidental music for a dramatic production of his mock-heroic poem *Peer Gynt*, which had first been published in 1867. Grieg was at first unenthusiastic about the project: a devout Norwegian nationalist, he was uncomfortable with the unflattering portrait of the Norwegian national character in Ibsen's satire. But he took on the task and worked at it for two years, eventually writing twenty-three separate numbers for the new production on February 24, 1876. That production proved so successful that it ran for 36 performances.

Norwegians might well have had reason to feel uncomfortable with Ibsen's play. In rhymed verse, it tells of the adventures of the utterly irresponsible Peer Gynt, who travels through the world and seems to learn nothing from his fabulous experiences. Eventually shipwrecked, this aged and empty man returns home and is finally redeemed by the love of Solveig, who has remained faithful to him through his long absence.

a treasure of melodies

From the brief movements that make up the incidental music, Grieg drew eight numbers and assembled them in two suites. These movements do not occur in the suites in the order in which they appear in the play, and Grieg is not trying to tell any sort of story in them: his aim here is simply to present some of his *Peer Gynt* music in concert version. This music has become popular, deservedly, for its memorable melodies and for some very exciting moments.

The Suite No. 1 opens with *Morning Mood*, a depiction of the sunrise in Morocco, as Peer Gynt stands before a statue of Memnon. The poignant *Åse's Death* marks the passing of Peer Gynt's mother. *Anitra's Dance* shows us the dance of the sultry daughter of a Bedouin chief, which

Peer Gynt watches while sipping coffee in her father's tent. The suite concludes with *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, though this scene actually takes place fairly early in the play. Peer is in the mountains, visiting the trolls and elves, and the troll king's daughter falls in love with him; when he rejects her, the trolls erupt. This famous music, which simply repeats one elemental theme and lets it grow to a great climax, depicts their throwing Peer out.

Instrumentation:

2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons,
4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani,
bass drum, cymbals and strings

Program note by *Eric Bromberger*.



Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756, Salzburg

Died: December 5, 1791, Vienna

Eine kleine Nachtmusik, K. 525

For us, the title *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* is filled with an atmosphere of candlelight, Tokay and delicate erotic intrigue. Alas for illusion. To Mozart, *Nachtmusik*—"night music"—was simply a common and potentially lucrative musical genre, more familiar to us as "serenade," something for the evening.

By 1787, Mozart kept a regular catalogue of his works, and the entry for August 10, 1787, describes a "kleine Nacht Musick" in five movements, noting that a minuet came after the opening *Allegro* movement. We don't know what happened to that minuet; but even without it, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* seems complete. "Klein" it most certainly is, not only because it has fewer movements than many serenades, but because Mozart has made the movements themselves singularly "classical" and compact.

his final serenade

Eine kleine Nachtmusik was Mozart's last serenade and his

only one for strings alone. He interrupted work on *Don Giovanni* to write it. It comes near the end of an amazing four-year period in which he wrote most of his piano concertos, the *Prague* Symphony, operas including *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, and many other things—and that is not taking into account his exceedingly active life as performer and teacher. How did *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* come to be written? Was there a commission, or some other sort of external occasion? We don't know. And we are left with the paradox that this most popular, familiar, unclouded work of Mozart's, so finished and fine, is encircled by unanswered questions.

Instrumentation:
strings alone

Program note by Michael Steinberg, who contributed many notes to Showcase until his death last July; we are honored to have permission to continue publishing them.



Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Symphony No. 36 in C major, K. 425, Linz

Mozart married Constanze Weber in Vienna in August 1782, and the following summer the couple undertook, with some trepidation, a trip to Salzburg so that Constanze could meet her father-in-law. The three-month visit was not wholly successful, and the young couple was doubtless relieved to head back toward Vienna at the end of October 1783. On the way they were guests in Linz of Count Thun, the wealthy father of one of Mozart's students—and on arrival they discovered that the Count had scheduled a concert for only a few days later. Mozart wrote to his father: "On Thursday, November 4, I am going to give a concert in the theater, and as I have not a single symphony with me, I am writing at breakneck speed a new one..."

Not "a single symphony"! Even Mozart, who could write at blinding speed, must have felt a little pressed this time, as he finished the new work on November 3 and premiered

it the next day. Yet there is not the faintest trace of rush about this magnificent music, which is polished and complete in every way. In this, the first symphony Mozart wrote after moving to Vienna, some have heard the influence of Haydn—in the slow introduction, the singing *Andante* and the sturdy minuet. But the *Linz* Symphony, as it has come to be known, is pure Mozart, particularly in its perfect sense of form and expressive chromatic writing. The music glows, its sunny C-major energy propelled along at moments by dotted-rhythm fanfares.

The thunderous slow introduction (the first in a Mozart symphony) instantly rivets attention. The movement leaps ahead at the aptly-named *Allegro spiritoso*, where the first violins' opening theme has a rhythmic snap that will characterize the entire symphony; the second subject is one of those wonderful Mozart themes that changes key and character even as it proceeds.

The *Andante* is a long flow of easy melody, so graceful that it is easy to overlook the fact that Mozart does something extremely unusual here: he uses trumpets and timpani in a slow movement, and their color, beautifully restrained, gives this music rare expressive power. The minuet is forthright (and somewhat foursquare), while the trio section, with its ländler tune in the winds, beautifully overlaps phrases in its later strains.

The *Presto* finale, in sonata form rather than the expected rondo, zips along with the unremitting energy of a *perpetuum mobile*. The movement's three themes are interrelated, but the work is so dazzling that the subtlety is nearly lost in the rush. Throughout, Mozart's chromatic writing allows the music to slide effortlessly through many different moods until the symphony is rounded off with a coda that is shining, heroic—and quite brief.

Instrumentation:

2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.