

**NAXOS**

# **SIBELIUS**

## **Scaramouche**

**Complete Ballet**



**Turku Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Leif Segerstam**

## Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

### Scaramouche, Op. 71

Jean Sibelius was the most significant figure in the formation of national identity in Finnish music, to the extent that since 2011 Finland has celebrated a Flag Day on 8th December (the composer's birthday), also known as the 'Day of Finnish Music'. The seven symphonies and *Violin Concerto* lie at the centre of Sibelius' oeuvre, surrounded by tone poems often based on a Finnish folklore narrative, such as the famous epic, the *Kalevala* – the inspiration for his popular *Lemminkäinen Suite*. However, he was also prolific in other genres, not least in songs for voice and piano (which number over a hundred), incidental music (for thirteen plays), chamber and choral works, and even an opera. Despite this significant body of work, after the composition of *Tapio* in 1926, Sibelius produced no large-scale works for his remaining thirty-one years – a period often referred to as the 'Silence from Järvenpää'. Supporters say that this dearth was the result of over-stringent self-criticism, which shut down his creative faculties; critics blame a comfortable lifestyle supported by a state pension and refer to the composer's notorious consumption of alcohol, which he once described as "my truest friend". Sibelius did not stop composing altogether during this time, but focused on writing smaller-scale compositions and revising and adding to some of his earlier works.

In the autumn of 1912 Sibelius was commissioned by the Danish publisher Wilhelm Hansen to compose music for Poul Knudsen's tragic pantomime, *Scaramouche*. Several months later the composer received a new libretto, which to his surprise also included dialogue – a highly unorthodox feature for a pantomime which, in this context, is tantamount to mime. Unhappy with the addition of dialogue, he was similarly unimpressed by the drama of the pantomime, describing it as a shameless imitation of the Viennese dramatist and novelist Arthur Schnitzler's *The Veil of Pierrette*, which had been set to music by Ernő von Dohnányi just several years previously. While he admitted certain similarities, Knudsen tried to defend himself by explaining that he had actually planned

*Scaramouche* before *The Veil of Pierrette* had been completed. This offered little consolation to Sibelius, who found the work increasingly frustrating, writing in his diary on 21st June: "I ruined myself by signing the contract for *Scaramouche*. Today things became so heated that I smashed the telephone. My nerves are in tatters".

Nevertheless he persevered with the project, which required an enormous effort, not only for the reasons outlined above, but also because it proved to be far more extensive than he had imagined: music for a complete pantomime instead of just several dance pieces, with a duration of more than an hour. It was finally completed in December 1913, but a performance date had not been set. Indeed, Sibelius forgot about the score for years, until the Royal Theatre of Copenhagen eventually gave the première in May 1922. While Knudsen's pantomime was by no means hailed a masterpiece, the music received critical acclaim: according to the critic from the *Berling's Times* (Denmark's oldest newspaper), the most elevating and dignified part was the music of the performance; while the critic of *Politiken* praised the composer's resourcefulness, his *devilry* and the strange perversity of the music. Such comments must have gone some way to making Sibelius feel his hard work had not entirely been in vain, and another diary entry from this time reveals him in a more positive state of mind, stating simply: "*Scaramouche* great success in Copenhagen".

Despite its obscure status today, *Scaramouche* is significant in that, with the exception of his only opera *The Maiden in the Tower* (1896), it is Sibelius' only continuous dramatic score, causing one to speculate how an opera from the mature composer might have sounded. It is scored for a small orchestra, employing only a limited complement of brass instruments, but including a part for piano. Demonstrating his keen ear for colour, his skill in maintaining textural variety and his ability to effectively portray the drama, Sibelius divides the instruments into three sections: the musicians who are on the stage (the minstrels); the principal character, Scaramouche, who at

times plays his viola<sup>1</sup> from behind the stage, and sometimes onstage; and the main orchestra itself, commenting on the action.

As the curtain rises, a minuet is heard. A ball is under way, hosted by Leilon, who stands watching the dancers while Blondelaine, his wife, complains that he never wants to dance with her. The music soon adopts a Spanish flavour with the inclusion of a bolero (solo oboe, supported by oscillating octaves in the strings). The music breaks off, leaving only an ominous timpani toll, after which a harsh discord announces the arrival of Scaramouche, a sinister, wandering hunchbacked dwarf [5]. Leilon (solo flute) and Scaramouche (solo viola) converse in a somewhat tense atmosphere created by *tremolo* strings, and Leilon soon discovers that his mysterious guest is a musician. When asked if he would play, Scaramouche agrees, and after briefly tuning his viola, he and his fellow musicians continue with the bolero. He fixes his eyes on Blondelaine, and as he continues to play with increasing abandon, she throws herself into the dance, becoming more and more delirious. Leilon, embarrassed by this display, orders his servant to send Scaramouche out. After an awkward pause, the dwarf agrees to leave, and with a graceful waltz [6] the musicians revive the dancing of all the guests, who have watched Blondelaine's wild dance with amazement.

A servant announces that supper is served [7], but Blondelaine says she is feeling hot and will join the rest of the party shortly. In the following scene [8], she hears Scaramouche's viola calling her above a syncopated rhythm in the violins and, as if in a trance, throws away the flowers she is carrying and runs away. Leilon finds the flowers and wonders where Blondelaine could be [9], at which point he is joined by several of the guests, asking the same question. Scaramouche's viola is heard [10] and the guests start frantically searching for her, portrayed by a series of rising and falling phrases in the strings, and imitated by shorter ascending and descending chromatic phrases in the woodwind and horns, which conclude Act I.

The music continues seamlessly into Act II, opening with a chromatic *pizzicato* section in the upper strings [11] to reflect Leilon's continued restlessness. He drinks wine with a friend [12-15], who tells him that Blondelaine will never return. As the friend puts on his coat to leave, it gets caught in his belt, and he asks Leilon for his dagger to cut himself free, placing the dagger on a table as he leaves. Leilon is left alone to contemplate his fate [16] (solo flute and violins), though not for long, as a *forte-piano* chord at the start of the next scene marks the reappearance of Blondelaine [17]. Her face pale, she walks slowly towards Leilon, who is initially delighted by her return but then fearful as he looks more closely at her face and dishevelled hair. He asks her where she has been, but she makes no response. Eventually he loses his patience with her, and Blondelaine explains that she does not know where she went.

Now alone, she looks at herself in a mirror and laughs nervously [18], accompanied by nightmarish music that would not be out of place in the context of a film. Scaramouche appears behind the door (*col legno* in the double basses), and when she sees him in the reflection of the mirror, she screams and tries to flee from his grasp, but he is too strong [19]. Seeing Leilon's dagger lying on the table, she kills him. Leilon enters but does not see the dead body. Husband and wife are reunited, expressing their love for each other (to impassioned string writing), and as he plays the piano, Blondelaine dances [20-21]. However, this brief moment of happiness is short-lived, as Blondelaine is struck with horror when she hears Scaramouche calling her (long, sustained dissonances in the woodwind clashing with Leilon's cheery piano music), which Leilon cannot hear, and she asks her husband to play faster. She dances faster and faster, and working herself into a frenzy, she finally dances before the body of Scaramouche, before dropping dead to the floor.

Dominic Wells

<sup>1</sup> This is often represented by both a solo viola and a solo cello playing as one (such as in octaves or thirds).

## Bendik Goldstein



Photo: Seilo Ristimäki

Bendik Christopher Goldstein was born in Washington and started his studies on violin at the age of six and viola in his early twenties. He has a Bachelor in Music Performance from the Academy of Music in Oslo, a Masters in Music and a post-graduate Soloist Diploma degree from the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. His teachers include, Isaac Schuldman, Lars Anders Tomter, Hartmut Rohde, Tatjana Masurenko and Henrik Frendin. Goldstein is an active soloist and chamber musician and has worked as principal violist with the the Orquestra Metropolitana de Lisboa, and solo violist with the Bodø Symfonietta and KammarensembleN. He has also freelanced with leading orchestras in Norway and Sweden.

## Roi Ruottinen



Photo: Seilo Ristimäki

Roi Ruottinen began his cello studies at the age of four at the Vantaa Music Institute. In 1990 he entered the Sibelius Academy and in 1994 completed his studies with excellent grades, winning the shared first prize in the Turku Cello Competition. In 1995-1996 he studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Music. Many cello works have been composed for Ruottinen and he has collaborated with a number of important composers, including Saariaho, Penderecki, Lachenmann, Wennäkoski and Pulkkis. Since 2013 he has served as a cello teacher at the Sibelius Academy. Ruottinen's instruments are a David Pizzurnus 1769 Genoa and Pierluigi Galetti 2010 Cremona.

## Turku Philharmonic Orchestra



Photo: Seilo Ristimäki

The Turku Musical Society, which later formed the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, was founded in 1790. As the oldest orchestra in Finland, the ensemble continues to develop and flourish under the baton of renowned conductors. Since 2012, the orchestra's 74 musicians have been under the artistic leadership of Leif Segerstam. The orchestra's resident composer is Mikko Heiniö. Several of the Turku Philharmonic's recordings have won platinum and other awards. In 2009 the orchestra was awarded the EMMA Classical Album of the Year for the recording *Transient Moods* by Pehr Henrik Nordgren. The orchestra gives weekly concerts, often streamed live throughout the world, while its chamber music ensembles perform in the historical venues of Turku and the archipelago. The orchestra also organizes family concerts and performs in opera productions. The Turku Philharmonic is a pioneer in audience accessibility, providing access to concerts online in hospitals, residential care homes and schools.

## Leif Segerstam

Photo: Seilo Ristimäki



Leif Segerstam is a conductor, composer, violinist and pianist with a prominent international career. He received diplomas from the Sibelius Academy in violin and conducting, won the Maj Lind Piano Competition in 1962 and gave his first violin recital in 1963. He rounded off his studies at The Juilliard School in New York, where he was awarded a conducting diploma in 1964. Segerstam was Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Royal Opera in Stockholm from 1970-72 and Director of the Finnish National Opera in 1973-74. Since then he has conducted in most of the world's leading opera houses, including the Metropolitan

Opera, Covent Garden and La Scala. He was Chief Conductor of the Austrian Radio Symphony Orchestra from 1975 to 1982 and of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra from 1977 to 1987, served as Music Director of the Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz from 1983 to 1989 and was appointed Chief Conductor of the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1988. In autumn 1995 he was reappointed Chief Conductor of the Royal Opera in Stockholm (until 2001) and became Chief Conductor of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. In autumn 2007 he stepped down to become the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra's Emeritus Chief Conductor. Since 2012 he has been Chief Conductor of Turku Philharmonic Orchestra. From autumn 1997 to spring 2013 Leif Segerstam was Professor of Orchestra Conducting at the Sibelius Academy. He was awarded the 1999 Nordic Council Music Prize for his work "as a tireless champion of Scandinavian music" and the Swedish Cultural Foundation's Prize for Music in 2003. In 2004 Leif Segerstam was awarded the annual Finnish State Prize for Music and in 2005 the highly esteemed Sibelius Medal. He has gained wide acclaim for his many recordings with different orchestras. While pursuing his conducting career, Segerstam has also produced an extensive oeuvre as a composer.

The eloquent power of Jean Sibelius's symphonies and other core orchestral works has overshadowed his prolific output in other genres, including significant scores for the theatre. The commission to compose music for the tragic pantomime *Scaramouche* caused Sibelius much stress and frustration, but on its première the composer was able to note "great success in Copenhagen" in his diary. With the exception of his one opera, *Scaramouche* is Sibelius's only continuous dramatic score, the story of the sinister hunchbacked dwarf's bewitching musicianship and evil intent taking us from innocent charm to a nightmarish conclusion.

Jean  
**SIBELIUS**

(1865-1957)

**Scaramouche, Op. 71 (1913)**

**Act I**

<b>1</b> Scene 1: Lento assai	<b>0:57</b>
<b>2</b> Scene 2: [Lento assai]	<b>2:10</b>
<b>3</b> Scene 3: [Lento assai] – Andante con moto	<b>3:34</b>
<b>4</b> Scene 4: Tempo di bolero	<b>2:52</b>
<b>5</b> Scene 5: Lento – Tempo di bolero – Lento assai	<b>7:44</b>
<b>6</b> Scene 6: Tempo di valse	<b>3:11</b>
<b>7</b> Scene 7: Poco moderato	<b>0:49</b>
<b>8</b> Scene 8: [Poco moderato]	<b>2:20</b>
<b>9</b> Scene 9: Tempo di valse	<b>0:41</b>
<b>10</b> Scene 10: Adagio – Allegro – Adagio	<b>6:43</b>

**Act II**

<b>11</b> Scene 1: Meno tranquillo	<b>0:23</b>
<b>12</b> Scene 2: Allegretto	<b>0:28</b>
<b>13</b> Scene 3: Andantino	<b>1:27</b>
<b>14</b> Scene 4: Allegretto	<b>0:25</b>
<b>15</b> Scene 5: [Allegretto] – Andantino	<b>3:26</b>
<b>16</b> Scene 6: Tranquillo assai	<b>2:31</b>
<b>17</b> Scene 7: [Andantino] – Meno tranquillo – Lento – Moderato – Allegro moderato	<b>7:47</b>
<b>18</b> Scene 8: Allegretto – Allegro	<b>3:30</b>
<b>19</b> Scene 9: [Allegro]	<b>4:00</b>
<b>20</b> Scene 10: Andante – Lento assai – Andantino	<b>15:32</b>
<b>21</b> Scene 11: [Grave assai]	<b>0:30</b>

**Bendik Goldstein, Viola • Roi Ruottinen, Cello**

**Turku Philharmonic Orchestra • Leif Segerstam**

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