

SCANDINAVIAN
SMØRGÅSBORD

WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER
SHELDONIAN THEATRE, 7.45 PM

Jean Sibelius (1865 - 1957) Andante Festivo arr. for 2 string quartets

Jean Sibelius (1865 - 1957) Humoresque and Devotion

Lars-Erik Larsson (1908 - 1986) Sicilienne

Henning Kraggerud (*1973) Mantra Metamorphoses (World Premiere)

Kurt Atterberg (1887 - 1974) Suite no. 3 for violin, viola and string orchestra

Prelude. Adagio
Pantomim. Moderato
Vision. Allegro moderato

Daniel Bjarnason (*1979) Air to Breath for solo cello and strings

Jacob Gade (1879 - 1963) Tango Jalousie

Carl August Nielsen (1865 - 1931) Intermezzo: a waltz


Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) Solveig's Song

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) Holberg Suite

Praeludium. Allegro vivace
Sarbande. Andante
Gavotte. Allegretto
Air. Andante religioso
Rigaudon. Allegro con brio

*Jonathan Aasgaard | Jordi Carrasco Hjelm | Henning Kraggerud | Johannes Marmen |
Priya Mitchell | Minna Pensola | Paula Sundqvist | Christoffer Sundqvist | Torleif Thedéen |
Janne Thomsen | Hugo Ticciati | Antti Tikkanen | Lars Anders Tomter | Bjorg Vaernes | Alice
Zawadzki*

Concert sponsored by Robin Swailes



The two works by Jean **Sibelius** in this concert come from the end of his composing career, and they have inevitably been overshadowed by the ultimate peaks of the 6th and 7th symphonies, rarefied and awe-inspiring by turn. The *Andante Festivo* was commissioned for the decidedly mundane 25th anniversary of a sawmill, and written for string quartet; but in 1929 Sibelius made a radiant, rich version for double string quartet, to celebrate his niece Riita's wedding.

Sibelius's *Humoresques* for violin and orchestra (or piano) are an astonishing box of delights. Several are thrillingly acrobatic, but there's not the slightest hint of showing off, nor the public grandeur of Sibelius's concerto – here, the violin dazzles simply for the joy of it. There is humour, delicacy, mischief, dance, and glorious melody; and for all that, glimpses of a deeper, inner life. (It's telling that the suite ends introspectively, not with a bang.) The magic is in the quicksilver balance of all these elements.

Kurt **Atterberg** lived parallel lives. He trained as an engineer and became a full-time patents officer, while composing huge Romantic orchestral works and operas, and heading various musical institutions. His *Suite no. 3* is in effect a little double concerto from 1917, and its relative restraint suits him. It begins and ends in Nordic twilight, but in-between the violin and viola share passionate duets, take solo turns in the *Pantomime*, and lead a stomping dance in the 'oriental' style beloved of C19th Russia.

Daniél **Bjarnason's** *Air to Breath*, written in 2009, is an endless song for cello over mysterious, dusky string chords. It is the third and final movement of *Bow to string*, originally for cello and electronics.

Exactly like his great countryman Carl Nielsen, the young **Jacob Gade** played trumpet and then violin in his father's village band. To Nielsen the lasting fame; to Gade immense wealth, from this single international smash hit, the 'tango-tzigane' *Jalousie*. It was written for Gade's movie-theatre orchestra, to accompany Douglas Fairbanks' silent *Son of Zorro* – in 1925. The royalties still support young musicians to this day.

Nielsen himself wrote a potent little minor-key waltz *Intermezzo* for the work which put him on the map in 1888, a *Suite for Strings* premiered at the Tivoli Gardens. Imagine a young man's first ball... his first dance... that mixture of high spirits and anxiety!

Grieg has somehow failed to get the critical recognition he deserves for works like the *Suite from Holberg's time* (an unusually early and successful example of neo-classicism, a musical style which became all-the-rage through the twentieth century), or even for *Solveig's song* from his theatre music for Peer Gynt, the sort of perfect aria which still sustains entire operas in the repertoire. Ludvig Holberg was a comic dramatist of the 1720s, so Grieg celebrated his bicentenary by harking back to the dance suites of the 1720s, writing these five movements first for piano, then arranging them for strings. The high spirits of Holberg's comedy are superbly complemented by the fourth movement *Air*, whose harmonic twists strike very deep.