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Scottish
chamber
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Jean Sibelius

Pelleas and Melisande
Kuolema : Valse Triste
Belshazzar's Feast
The Tempest : Suite No.2
Andante Festivo

JOSEPH SWENSEN
conductor

Jean Sibelius

Pelleas and Melisande

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>At the Castle Gate</i> | 2. <i>Melisande</i> |
| 3. <i>At the Seashore</i> | 4. <i>A Spring in the Park</i> |
| 5. <i>The Three Blind Sisters</i> | 6. <i>Pastorale</i> |
| 7. <i>Melisande at the Spinning-Wheel</i> | |
| 8. <i>Entr'acte</i> | 9. <i>The Death of Melisande</i> |
-

Kuolema

10. *Valse Triste*
-

Belshazzar's Feast

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 11. <i>Oriental Procession</i> | 12. <i>Solitude</i> |
| 13. <i>Nocturne</i> | 14. <i>Khadra's Dance</i> |
-

The Tempest : Suite No.2

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 15. <i>Chorus of the Winds</i> | 16. <i>Intermezzo</i> |
| 17. <i>Dance of the Nymphs</i> | 18. <i>Prospero</i> |
| 19. <i>Song 1</i> | 20. <i>Song 2</i> |
| 21. <i>Miranda</i> | 22. <i>The Naiads</i> |
| 23. <i>Dance Episode</i> | |
-

24. *Andante Festivo*

a soaring but seemingly unattainable joy, this mitigated little against the overall impression of a relentless underlying force". [The Guardian, London]. He continues his relationship with the Orchestra, returning regularly over forthcoming seasons.

Swensen is a regular guest conductor with many of the world's major orchestras, and appearances in recent seasons have included the London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Hallé, Bournemouth Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Mozarteum, Staatsorchester Stuttgart, Real Orquestra Sinfonica de Sevilla, and, in North America, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Saint Paul Chamber, Saint Louis, Dallas, Indianapolis and Toronto Symphony Orchestras.

Before deciding to dedicate himself solely to his conducting career, Joseph Swensen enjoyed a highly-successful career as a professional violinist, appearing as a soloist with the world's major orchestras. Nowadays his occasional appearances as a violin soloist are a natural extension of his work as a conductor, playing and directing concerti with the SCO and other orchestras with whom he enjoys a particularly close relationship. His devotion to chamber music results in frequent performances in that genre, often with members of the orchestras he conducts.

Joseph Swensen was born in 1960 in New York (an American, of Norwegian-Japanese descent); he now lives in Copenhagen.

Recorded at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, UK, March 2003

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Photo of Joseph Swensen by Douglas Robertson

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sits beside his mother's sick bed. She dreams of rising up and dancing with ghostly spectres in the room. Eventually Death arrives at the door and claims her. This little waltz subsequently became Sibelius's most often played and arranged work. The impecunious composer stood by and watched as the piece became an international hit - yet he made not a penny in royalties from the many arrangements, having signed away the rights to a publisher. He would spend many years writing light music, fruitlessly hoping to strike gold again.

Maeterlinck's drama **Pelleas and Melisande** (1893) fired the imagination of a number of prominent fin-de-siecle composers - Debussy in his great opera, Schoenberg in his huge romantic orchestral canvas, and Fauré and Sibelius's delicate atmospheric stage scores. Fauré's score was written for a production at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London in 1898, while Sibelius worked on a staging for Helsingin's Swedish Theatre in 1905, translated by Bertel Gripenberg.

Most of the music takes the form of interludes, conjuring up the magical and fantastical nature of the play and the claustrophobic atmosphere of the love triangle of Golaud, Melisande and Pelleas. Sibelius almost immediately produced a concert suite. It opens with an imposing evocation of a castle, broadly drawn and epic in style. The darkness of the drama is already evident in the second movement, a portrait of *Melisande*. With *At the Seashore*, Melisande and Pelleas see the departure of the ship in which she arrived. *By a Spring in the Park* acts as a prelude to the two lovers walking together but hints at the darker turn of events to come. *The Three Blind Sisters* is a song, sung by Melisande in the play, and takes the form of a medieval ballad. The *Pastorale* conjures up a scene of colourful harvesting. The music of *Melisande at the Spinning Wheel* is very graphic but it also, in its dark obsessive way, portends tragedy to come. The *Entr'acte* acts as a prelude in the play to a scene where Pelleas and Melisande plan a secret meeting but once again there

The Orchestra enjoys close relationships with many leading composers, including Composer Laureate Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Affiliate Composer James MacMillan. It also collaborates with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra in a programme of joint commissions from Sally Beamish and Karin Rehnqvist.

The SCO has led the way in the development of music education, with a unique and individual programme of projects providing workshops for children and adults across Scotland.

1ST VIOLIN	Benjamin Nabarro <i>guest leader</i> ; Ruth Crouch <i>assistant leader</i> ; Greg Lawson, Lise Aferiat, Fiona Stephen, Cheryl Crockett, Paula Smart, Elizabeth McLaren
2ND VIOLIN	Kathryn Greeley, Carole Howat, Robert McFall, Rose Ellison, Roddy Long, Jacqueline Norrie
VIOLA	Sophie Renshaw, Brian Schiele, Kathryn Jourdan, Vanessa McNaught
CELLO	Su-a Lee, Kevin McCrae, Alison Lawrance, John Davidson
BASS	Adrian Bornet, Rick Standley
FLUTE	Alison Mitchell, Elisabeth Dooner
OBOE	Robin Williams, Rosie Staniforth
CLARINET	Maximiliano Martín, Barry Deacon, Lewis Morrison
BASSOON	Ursula Leveaux, Julia Staniforth
HORN	David McClennaghan, Harry Johnstone, Paul Klein, Andrew Saunders
TIMPANI	Caroline Garden
PERCUSSION	Ian Coulter, Magnus Mehta, Scott Mackenzie
HARP	Pippa Tunnell

Seventh Symphonies emerged and the greatest of the symphonic poems *Tapiola* would appear in 1926. In 1925 Sibelius composed his score for Shakespeare's **The Tempest**. This was a return for him: back in 1901 his close friend and patron Axel Carpelan had suggested that he look at the play as a source of inspiration. This commission turned out to be his largest and most ambitious theatre score. In his theatre music to date, Sibelius had shown great resource in working around the limited forces available. With this score he had the Royal Danish Theatre, a home of opera as well as drama, at his disposal and his music extends to around an hour with vocal soloists, choir, harmonium and large orchestra.

A great success in Copenhagen, the score was revived a year later in 1927 in Helsinki, when Sibelius added a different epilogue and also produced, for the concert hall, a *Prelude* and two *Orchestral Suites*. The first suite is for large orchestra and includes some of the larger, more dramatic numbers including a reprise of *The Storm* which, in extended form, constitutes the *Prelude*. The *Suite No.2* is for small orchestra and concentrates on some of the more intimate portraits and episodes. Both suites include some of the composer's finest music for the theatre, indeed some of his most inspired ideas, worthy of standing alongside the last two symphonies and *Tapiola* as the culmination of his life's work in these genres.

The suite opens with the *Chorus of the Winds* which accompanies Ariel's narration of how he conjured the storm and brought all on board the shipwreck to the island. The *Intermezzo* evokes Alonso's grief at what he believes is the death of his son, Ferdinand. The *Dance of the Nymphs* comes from the Harvest Festival scene. There is a baroque grandeur to the portrait of *Prospero* and magical fragility to that of *Miranda*. The two songs were originally sung by Ariel - a soprano - 'Before you can say come and go' and 'Where the bee sucks', but in the suite the second gives the melody to two clarinets. *The Naiads* is a response to Ariel's song 'Come

unto these yellow sands' and the suite ends with the *Dance Episode*, a strange dance drawn from a larger portrait of Prospero's treacherous brother Antonio.

Like many composers before him (including Beethoven and Mozart), Sibelius had to be pragmatic about composing in order to generate much needed income. He wrote plenty of salon miniatures (not least because he never gave up the hope of chancing upon a second *Valse Triste*), and could also be commissioned to compose music for special occasions. The *Karelia* music was written for a fund-raising event consisting of a series of tableaux portraying major events in Karelian history. The Press Pension Celebrations music was another case in point and, like the *Karelia* music, it yielded one of Sibelius's most popular scores: *Finlandia*. The **Andante Festivo** was originally written, rather improbably, for a factory in 1922. He was working on the final two symphonies when he received the commission. It was scored for string quartet but is normally played today in the 1930 version for string orchestra with optional timpani (omitted in this recording). Although it inhabits the same sound world as the luminous string writing in the last two symphonies, this slight but effective work is most famous for the distinction of being the only score to survive in a recording conducted by Sibelius himself. The recording was in the archives of Finnish Radio from 1939 when the composer, at the age of 74 and already in retirement, conducted an orchestra for the last time for a short-wave radio broadcast to the New York Fair. Given that the technology for recording had been around from early in the century and Sibelius had been active on the podium until the late 1920s, it is tantalising to imagine what else could have existed today if he had been lured in to the recording studio or if the radio broadcast of his 1924 concert in Copenhagen, devoted entirely to his own music, had survived.

Roy McEwan

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The Scottish Chamber Orchestra is internationally recognised for its innovative approach to music-making and programme planning. Formed in 1974 with a commitment to serve the Scottish community, it is also one of Scotland's foremost cultural ambassadors. The Orchestra performs throughout Scotland, including an annual tour of the Highlands and Islands, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh, St Magnus and Aldeburgh Festivals and the BBC Proms. Its busy international touring schedule has recently included the USA, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, Sweden and Hong Kong.

The Orchestra's dynamic relationship with Principal Conductor Joseph Swensen continues to develop and, with both Swensen and Conductor Laureate Sir Charles Mackerras, the Orchestra pushes the boundaries of conventional chamber orchestra repertoire, performing symphonic works which were written for smaller orchestras than those usually heard performing them today. The SCO has an impressive catalogue of recordings, including - in partnership with Sir Charles Mackerras - six Mozart operas and a Grammy-nominated set of Brahms symphonies.

is dark undercurrent. The suite ends with *The Death of Melisande* - the longest and most substantial movement, a remarkably touching prelude to the last act - as Melisande lies dying from childbirth, Golaud is left with the unresolved question of her relationship with Pelleas.

The early 1900s, a heady time for theatre in Finland, was also the time of Sibelius's most intense activity in writing for the stage. Very quickly after **Kuolema** (1902) and **Pelleas and Melisande** (1905), he produced music for Hjalmar Procope's play **Belshazzar's Feast**. In contrast to Maeterlinck's masterpiece, Procope's play really only survives now through Sibelius's music - and critics at the time were not slow to point out the superiority of the music to the drama.

Belshazzar's Feast was premiered at the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki in November 1906. Sibelius provided a score of ten numbers, and although the concert suite (which Sibelius premiered himself in 1907) has only four movements, it incorporates all the significant material from the full score. The opening *Oriental Procession* is the nearest Sibelius came to conjuring up the colour and exoticism of the east - comparable to 'Anitra's Dance' and the 'Arabian Dance' in Grieg's music for *Peer Gynt*. This procession arrives from the distance, and disappears again with a broad, stately tread. *Solitude* was originally a song for Leschanah, the Jewish woman of the play who sings 'Jerusalem, how can I forget thee', but in the suite the vocal line is compellingly rescored for solo viola and cello. The intensely beautiful *Nocturne* features a long sad melody on solo flute. It accompanied a beautiful stage setting of the starry night. The final movement *Khadra's Dance* integrates two of the original movements, *Dance of Life* and *Dance of Death*.

By the mid-1920s Sibelius was reaching the climax of his compositional career and, although it was only to become apparent later, the period of his last major surviving works. In close succession, in 1923 and 1924, the Sixth and



Joseph Swensen conductor

Joseph Swensen has rapidly established himself as one of the most exciting talents to have emerged from amongst today's younger generation of conductors. This was recognised by his appointment in 1996 as Principal Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, with whom he has since enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship.

Joseph Swensen's enthusiasm for new music has seen him conduct the SCO in premieres of major works by composers such as James MacMillan, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Sally Beamish, Karin Rehnqvist and Eleanor Alberga. Swensen and the Orchestra have toured extensively in the USA, Far East, Spain and Portugal, and Swensen has also made his debuts at the Edinburgh International Festival, BBC Proms and Aldeburgh Festival with the Orchestra. In 2002, they returned to tour the USA, giving highly-acclaimed performances at *Mostly Mozart* in New York, at Tanglewood and Ravinia. Joseph Swensen and the Orchestra have also embarked on an extensive series of recordings for Linn Records. The first disc - Mendelssohn Violin Concerto and Symphony No.3 (Linn CKD 205) - featured Swensen as both conductor and soloist.

Joseph Swensen was Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales from 2000-2003, and, in addition to numerous concerts in Wales, has made several appearances with them at the BBC Proms in recent seasons. *"Swensen is the complete musician: a virtuoso violinist and composer as well as conductor; ostensibly well suited to Mahler [Symphony No 6]. From the very first sinister opening march, his approach was one of taut, thrusting vigour, and while the music is shot through with melodic material that represents glimpses of*

SIBELIUS THEATRE MUSIC

The foundations of Sibelius's reputation are his symphonies, tone poems and increasingly his songs, but the music he wrote for the stage throughout his creative life includes some of his finest scores.

This CD presents his theatre music from two distinct periods - the 1900s (contemporary with his Violin Concerto, and the Second and Third Symphonies) and the 1920s, including his last surviving works.

At the time when Sibelius was emerging as a major creative figure, drama was pivotal to the development of cultural and social attitudes in Scandinavia. One need only mention three of his contemporaries: Ibsen, Strindberg and Bjornson. Sibelius was attracted to theatre as early as 1893 when he started work on an opera, *The Building of the Boat*. It was a visit to Bayreuth that caused him to abandon work on this, but the prelude survived as one of his most perfect pieces: *The Swan of Tuonela*. Its striking economy of expression and intensity are characteristics shared by much of his incidental music for the stage. In his stage music, Sibelius tends not so much to accompany dramatic action but to set scenes, create atmosphere or provide a prelude or intermezzo to the action for what were, predominantly, exotic or mystical dramas.

In 1902, Sibelius was approached by his brother-in-law Arvid Jarnefelt and asked to provide a score for his new play **Kuolema** (Death). By this time Sibelius was reasonably experienced, having already written music for Adolf Paul's *King Christian II* - to great acclaim - as well as the *Karelia* music. He was working on the Violin Concerto at the time, but was still able to produce a score of around twenty minutes with six movements. Two of these went on to enjoy an independent life in the concert hall: the *Scene with Cranes* and **Valse Triste**. In his text, Jarnefelt specified a waltz tune to accompany a stark scene early in the action: a young boy