Friday, March 29, 2019  7:30pm  Lincoln Theater
Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Op. 39 by Jean Sibelius

Though Jean Sibelius was not an overtly political man, many of his compositions have a patriotic fervor. His command of theme and melody helped define and create Finland’s artistic identity, during an age when Russia exerted pressure on the Finnish government. Premiered in Helsinki on April 26th, 1899, Sibelius’ Symphony no. 1 is a remarkable symphonic debut. This is especially impressive considering the symphonic genre was generally perceived to be in its decline at the turn of the century, giving way to tone poems and other programmatic works by such composers as Claude Debussy and Richard Strauss. Though Sibelius was not fond of program music, he began writing this symphony in 1898 with a programmatic concept in mind, using quotes of poetry, art work and plays as the inspiration behind each movement, but these concepts ultimately did not make it into the final version of the symphony. Still, the piece exemplifies the power of the late Romantic symphony, with coherent thematic material woven throughout all four movements, utilizing an orchestration unique in its strength and fragility. Sibelius owes a great deal to composers such as Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Bruckner, as well as the influence of other Russian compositional styles, but the bracing drama and emotional impact of a work that could only be written by Sibelius renders it something to behold.

The first movement begins with a timpani roll, and a clarinet’s lonely song is barely heard above it, conveying a sense of desolation. This is the core theme of the symphony. Before the clarinet fades out, the violins transform the theme into a new kind of defiance. Next comes a scampering, folkish dance, led by two flutes over strings and harp, which becomes the primary material for the development.

The second movement is Sibelius’ love letter to Tchaikovsky, opening with a rocking melody for violins and cello, hinting at a romantic sadness. Soon, two bassoons begin a dark duet imbued with a distinct Finnish sound. (In the composer’s next symphony, the bassoons are even more prominent in the slow movement.) The development is a storm of agony; the tempo gets faster and faster, to the point of nearly getting out of control—unusual for a so-called ‘slow movement.’ In lieu of a real recapitulation, the opening theme returns as a coda, and the storm still lingers. The third movement is a Brucknerian scherzo, following the traditional A-B-A format. The brassy outer sections surround a slow and sustained trio, filled with bird calls and other sounds of nature.

The finale opens with a return of the clarinet theme, now given to soaring strings, accompanied by bellowing brass. After a brisk fugato, Sibelius gives us the big tune, worthy of Tchaikovsky, of whom Sibelius wrote to his wife, Aino, "There is much in that man that I recognize in myself."
Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1 by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Raised in London, Ralph Vaughan Williams showed an interest in music from a very young age, though his earliest teachers had doubts that he possessed any nascent talent. Thankfully, Vaughan-Williams ignored these opinions, and went on to rescue a multitude of British folksongs from their gradually disappearing oral tradition, giving them new life in many of his symphonic works. Looking both outwards to these old songs and inwards to his own upbringing, he was able to develop a sophisticated and authentic British style that was uniquely his own. Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1 (1906) was his first major foray into writing for orchestra, and it was also his first composition to directly incorporate quotations from his folksong collection. Originally, three of these rhapsodies were written and historians believe they were intended to be movements of a folksong symphony, but the third was never finished. Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1 is based on several folk songs: the introductory music is based on ‘The Captain’s Apprentice’, introduced by viola solo, and the faster middle section is based on "On Board a Ninety-Eight."

Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53 by Antonín Dvořák

The great violinist Joseph Joachim worked closely with Johannes Brahms on his violin concerto, and Dvořák -- a friend and great admirer of Brahms -- thought he would do well to enlist Joachim for his help on his own violin concerto. Dvořák was an adept violinist himself—finding work in orchestras in between composing stints—but thought it best to send a manuscript to Joachim for his guidance and seal of approval. Joachim did make numerous edits over a period of about four years, and Dvořák made many changes based on Joachim’s suggestions, but the violinist never performed the work.

A short and dramatic orchestral opening precedes the solo violin’s entrance, and as with so many of Dvořák’s orchestral music, the first movement is a fountain of folkloric melodic invention. The first movement segues into the slow movement, a decision that Joachim was not thrilled about (one can imagine the violinist’s desire to end the first movement with a flourish, as with the concerto Brahms wrote for him), but Dvořák, preferring the Mendelssohn/Bruch model, successfully fought of his publisher to keep the elision. The second movement has a lyrical spaciousness to it, composed of several long phrases before closing with a pastoral duet between violin and horns. The rondo finale employs two popular dances from the composer’s Bohemian homeland: a sparkling furiant, and then a more wistful dumka, before the concerto accelerates to a brilliant finish.
PERFORMERS

Edward Cumming is the Director of Orchestral Activities at The Hartt School. Before leading the Hartford Symphony for a decade, he was Resident Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and has been a guest conductor with orchestras throughout Europe, Asia and South America. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a doctorate from Yale University. In 2010, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Trinity College.

Violinist Katie Lansdale is widely acclaimed as soloist, chamber musician, and educator. She has performed as soloist and chamber artist in North/South America and Europe, and on numerous American concert series, including the Phillips Collection, the Caramoor Series, and Lincoln Center’s Rose Room. Winner of Grand Prizes at the Fischoff and Yellow Springs national chamber competitions, Lansdale has collaborated in chamber concerts with artists such as Yo Yo Ma, Felix Galimir, Donald Weilerstein, the Miami Quartet, Robert MacDonald, and Charles Neidich. Lansdale’s concerto appearances have included with the National Symphony, the Austin Mozart Orchestra, the Schroeder Classical Orchestra, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, and the NY Spectrum Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony and the New York Repertory Orchestra. In New York, where she founded the acclaimed Locrian new music group, Lansdale’s extensive chamber music concerts have ranged from Mostly Mozart at Lincoln Center with Yo Yo Ma to Merkin Hall with the Twentieth Centuryists; she now performs twice a year in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Hall with the Festival Chamber Society. Particularly widely acclaimed for performances of solo Bach, Lansdale has performed the complete cycle over a dozen times in North and South America. “This is one of the best recordings of this music,” wrote the American Record Guide of her Bach CD. Having presented solo Bach at Juilliard’s Delay Symposium in 2013, Lansdale directs the Promisek Bach workshop program triennially in Bridgewater, CT. Lansdale studied with Josef Gingold, Felix Galimir, Ronda Cole, Donald Weilerstein and Mitchell Stern. She graduated cum laude from Yale, where she was awarded prizes in both the arts and humanities, and earned graduate music degrees (M.M., D.M.A.) at the Cleveland Institute of Music and Manhattan School of Music. She has served on numerous summer festival faculties, including Kneisel Hall Chamber Festival, the Amalfi Coast Chamber Festival, Aria International Music Festival, and Music from Salem. Having taught at Boston University and at State University of New York-Stony Brook, she now teaches at the Hartt School at the University of Hartford and at Boston Conservatory at Berklee.

Hartt Orchestra

Edward Cumming, Director
Ziwei Ma and Haksong Lee, Assistant Conductors
Sydney Apel, Manager

Violin I
Beckett Koch, *concertmaster*
Yeeun Cho
Julie Haring
Gwyneth Haydock
Graham Woodland
Amanda Milne
Yuhong Tu
Edan Sabah
Sydney Apel
Cassandra Moore

Violin II
Yusong Zhao*
Cody Belnavis-Bigenho
Alex Small
Dian Cha
Olivia Moaddel
Kelly Gembara
Carissa McQuaid
Rebecca Clark
Sunaj Britt
Emily Paul
Deanna Casey

Viola
Nick Borghoff*
Tyson Salinas
Gris Moreno
Eugenio Figueroa
Kasey Calebaugh
Bobby Luan
Bailey Poesnecker
Dianna Jeong
Hector Elias
Pauline Park

Cello
Pin-hui Tsai*
Sanga Yoon
Elizabeth Vysin
Kevin Funnell
Estepan Perez
Timothy Sterbenz
Kylie Sexton
Eli Jones

Harp
Chaela Franck

Flute
Alison Hoffman (S*)
Sulina Baek (VW*)
Erika Rohrberg (D*)

Oboe
Angie Rosado-Rivera (S*)
Noah Mattiuzzi (D*)
Rebecca Shaw (VW*)

Clarinet
SaeRom Kim (D*, S*)
Chen Du (VW*)

Bassoon
Billy Beecher*
Philip McNaughton

Horn
Carla Hulcy (VW*, S*)
Michael Scardigno
Noah Fotis (D*)
Joseph Hayes

Trumpet
James MacAlloon (D*)
Matthew Sucking (S*)
Griffin Weber (VW*)

Tuba
Danielle Kendall (S*)
Andrew Weiss (VW*)

Percussion
Braden Travers*
Anthony Soscia
Yiming Zhong

Percussion
* denotes principal
D denotes Dvorak
VW denotes Vaughan Williams
S denotes Sibelius

Lincoln Theater Staff:
Kevin Hart, Technical Director
Alex Bozzi, Sound Engineer
Anthony “TJ” Spinnato, Master Electrician