Sibelius Inspiration

Thank you for joining us this evening for our special event with Finnish Musicans Jussi Makkonen and Nazig Azezian.

We would like to thank ASU and Professor Caio Pagano for his support in hosting our concert as well as co-hosts, Finns and Friends of Phoenix and Dr. Gary Waissi, Honorary Consul of Finland to AZ and MN.

Also, thank you to our special guest Stefan Lindström, The Consul General of Finland, joining us from LA.

Please enjoy the evening and should you have any future interest in local Finnish events, please check us out at www.finnsandfriends.com

Introduction

Inspired by the Finnish nature, forests, landscapes and myths, Finnish composers have composed music that is still played in concert halls around the globe. Finland's national composer, Jean Sibelius, was able to create his own unique style to include the humming of the trees and the rippling sound of water in his music in a way that it feels Finnish, yet universal.

Besides nature, Finnish composers have drawn inspiration from the roots of Finland's identity, the national epic Kalevala. The hundreds of years old poems were sang to pass on traditions. The myths and stories of Kalevala had a strong impact not only on composers but also writers, painters and other artists in the 19th century.

One Finnish composer who was able to capture the essence of the Kalevala was Oskar Merikanto, who celebrated his 150th anniversary in 2018. Jean Sibelius, who lived at the same time as Merikanto, was also influenced by Kalevala. Having travelled across the world Jean Sibelius still held the Finnish landscapes the dearest. In 1909 when visiting one of the birth places of Kalevala, Sibelius climbed on top of the Koli mountain and afterwards wrote to his diary: "At Koli. One of the greatest experiences of my life. Plans." Soon after the trip he began composing his fourth symphony.

The concert consists of the most beloved pieces by Finnish composers, some of them arranged for cello and piano for the first time in history. Makkonen and Azezian have the permission from Jean Sibelius' family to perform the arrangements especially made for them in their concerts.

Jean Sibelius (*1865-1957*)
The Spruce Op. 75 No. 5
Valse triste Op. 44 No. 1

Heino Kaski (*1885-1957*)
Night By the Sea Op. 34 No. 1
Pankakoski (Prelude in B minor) Op. 48 No. 1

Oskar Merikanto (*1868-1924*)
Valse lente Op. 33
At Sea Op. 47 No. 4

Jean Sibelius
The Tempest Op. 109 No. 2, *arr. Jussi Jalas*
Chor der Winde
Miranda
Impromptu Op. 5 No. 5
Karelia Suite Op. 11
Ballade
Alla Marcia
Finlandia Op. 26 No. 7

Jussi Makkonen, *cello*
Nazig Azezian, *piano*

Matti Makkonen, *arrangements*
Mert Otsamo, *costume design*

The Artists

Cellist **Jussi Makkonen** (Master of Music) and pianist **Nazig Azezian** (Master of Music) established their co-operation in 2013.

Makkonen and Azezian's concerts, records, books and music videos have reached hundreds of thousands of listeners in Finland and other countries. They have also introduced classical music to young audiences, and by the end of 2017 their concerts had already reached over half a million schoolchildren. In the autumn of 2017, Makkonen and Azezian received a platinum record for their Melody Forest CD, recorded in Ainola, as the first Finnish chamber music record to sell platinum. Their concert tours have taken the artists to the United States, Mexico, Turkey, and many European countries.

Makkonen and Azezian are continuing their applauded concert tours in the United States in 2019-2021 performing also music composed for them by prominent Finnish composers.

In September 2019 they received Finlandia Foundation National's Award of Excellence in recognition of their excellent musicianship, especially in the interpretation of the works of Jean Sibelius, and their work in introducing classical music to young people by performing at schools across Finland, in Europe and the U.S.

www.sibeliusinspiration.com
www.youtube.com/cellistjussimakkonen
www.facebook.com/cellistjussimakkonen
www.instagram.com/sibelius_inspiration