

## PROGRAM NOTES A Confession of the Soul - Sibelius 2

WILLIAM INTRILIGATOR, Music Director & Conductor



### Peter Warlock

b. 1894, London, England  
d. 1930, London

### Instrumentation:

Strings

### Capriol Suite - Peter Warlock (Philip Heseltine)

Philip Heseltine was a man with a split personality that seemed to be reflected in the two names he went by. In the character of his given name, he was a dedicated and deeply knowledgeable scholar of Renaissance and Elizabethan music. Under his pen name, Peter Warlock, he was a composer with an unconventional and flamboyant life style and an interest in the occult, which perhaps dictated his choice of "Warlock" for a last name. Sadly, he only had a short life, dying by suicide at the age of 36.

Though Warlock mostly wrote songs, his most popular work is the enchanting *Capriol Suite* (1926) he composed first for piano duo, then orchestrated — as we'll hear it tonight — for string orchestra, and then later for full orchestra. This suite of six dances artfully combines the two sides of his musical work, for it is based on tunes he selected from Thoinot Arbeau's 1588 *Orchésographie*, a treatise on French dance melodies of the 16th century. (Interestingly, "Thoinot Arbeau" was also a pen name, an anagram to conceal the identity of the French cleric Jehan Tabourot, who didn't want to have such a secular work appear under his real name.) In this treatise, two characters present the various melodies in dialogue; therefore, Warlock chose the name of one of them, the lawyer Capriol, for his title.

Undoubtedly, Warlock was inspired to create the *Capriol Suite* by Ottorino Respighi's popular *Ancient Airs and Dances* of 1917. However, Warlock took a much more creative approach to his treatment of old melodies than did Respighi, for he extensively elaborated them, harmonized them imaginatively, and, in the case of the last dance, gave them a dissonance that carried the music right into his own time.

First we hear the "**Basse Danse**," a stately, but vigorous dance traditionally associated with older performers; the dance is named for its use of gliding steps in which the feet never leave the floor. The "**Pavane**" is a very grave and lovely dance, to which the lower instruments give the drumbeat. Much faster and lighter, the three-beat "**Tordion**" shows off the players' *pizzicato* or plucking technique and seems to vanish into thin air at the end. The "**Bransle**" is a fast-paced country round dance that accelerates to a thrilling virtuoso climax. Most beautiful of the dances is the calmly flowing "**Pieds-en-l'air**"; the title comes from this dance's instructions that the feet should move so lightly they barely touch the ground. The last dance, "**Mattachins**" is the most dramatic and original. It is an aggressive sword dance for four male dancer, and Warlock enlivens it with savage dissonances that suggest one of his favorite contemporary composers, Bartók.



### Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

b. 1756, Salzburg, Austria  
d. 1791, Vienna, Austria

#### Instrumentation:

Solo violin, 2 oboes,  
2 horns, strings

## Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, "Turkish" - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Although he eventually chose to concentrate on the keyboard, the young Mozart was almost equally gifted as a violinist, admired for the beauty and purity of his tone. As concertmaster of the Prince-Archbishop Colloredo's court orchestra, he played the principal violin part and led the orchestra from his chair. He was soon to grow deeply frustrated with this role, but between 1773 and 1775, it inspired him to write his five violin concertos, as well as a number of other works with prominent solo violin parts for him to play. The last three of these concertos, all written in 1775 when he was 19, rank among his earliest masterpieces.

Dated December 20, 1775, the Violin Concerto in A Major is the last of the group. Full of surprises and shifts of emotional tone, it shows Mozart playing freely and creatively with the concerto norms of his day. It is nicknamed "Turkish" for an exuberant episode of "alla Turca" ("in the Turkish manner") music Mozart inserted in its vivacious finale. Such music — with its exotic leaping melodies, menacing unison passages, drone basses, and the clatter of drums and cymbals — was very fashionable in Europe during the late-18th century. But this music really isn't "Turkish" at all; rather, as Mozart scholar Neal Zaslow explains, it actually came from Hungary.

The **first movement** opens with music of charm and insouciance. The orchestral violins merely sketch the principal theme with pert ascending notes. Likewise, the winsome second theme with its humorous repeated notes is but a preview of what the soloist will play. Now comes Mozart's first surprise: instead of entering in this mood and tempo, the soloist floats in with a dreamy romance over rustling orchestral strings in a much slower tempo. Eventually, she shifts up to *Allegro* and transforms the orchestral pencil sketch of the principal theme into a soaring, full-color melody. And then she expands the second theme into music of great charm. A brief development section deepens the music's expressiveness before the violinist reprises her rapturous theme.

**Movement two** is an early example of Mozart's almost painfully beautiful slow movements, which yearn for something more than ordinary life can give. The long-spun melodic lines are continually punctuated by little sighing figures in the orchestra. In the movement's middle section, poignant harmonies intensify the mood to the brink of tears.

The work closes with a **finale** in the rondo form Mozart favored for his concertos. In this form, a refrain melody keeps returning in the home key while, in between, episodes of contrasting music explore other keys. Here the refrain tune is a courtly minuet ending with a little teasing upward flourish. Midway through the movement comes Mozart's "Turkish" surprise. Since he didn't have percussion in his small ensemble, he cleverly asked the cellos to thump their instruments with the wooden side of their bows to produce the drum-and-cymbals effect.



**Jean Sibelius**

b. 1865, Hämeenlinna, Finland

d. 1957, Järvenpää, Finland

**Instrumentation:**

2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets,  
2 bassoons, 4 horns,  
3 trumpets, 3 trombones,  
tuba, timpani, strings

## Symphony No. 2 in D Major - Jean Sibelius

As the 20th century was born, Finland found herself in a desperate battle for survival. Throughout the 19th century, she had been an autonomous grand duchy of Russia, with the Russian rulers generally respecting her independence. But under the last of the tsars, Nicholas II, the weight of Russian autocracy pressed heavily on the Finns, crushing their rights. In response, a new spirit of Finnish nationalism blazed up. Finns, many of whom — including Jean Sibelius himself — spoke Swedish rather than Finnish, rediscovered their native language and their mighty Norse sagas of the *Kalevala*. And, as Sibelius scholar Erik Tawaststjerna wrote, “Finland found a focus for her identity in the arts” and especially in her greatest composer, who appeared just when his nation needed him most.

Although he was born to a family of Swedish extraction, Sibelius was a passionate Finn patriot, and his music introduced a new voice to Europe, as stern, majestic, and uncompromising as the Finnish landscape itself. In 1900, he gave his people a virtual national anthem with *Finlandia*, but even his more abstract works and his personality became a rallying point for his countrymen, in 1897 the Finnish senate voted him an annual stipend, which continued throughout his long lifetime even when he was no longer composing.

But the Second Symphony is tempered by southern winds: it was born during the composer’s sojourn in Verdi’s home country in 1901. The composer’s friend Axel Carpelan, an odd combination of musical amateur and artistic conscience, had decided Sibelius needed a new source of inspiration beyond his homeland. “You have sat at home long enough, Herr Sibelius,” he wrote. “It is high time for you to be on your travels. You can spend ... the winter in Italy. Everything there is lovely — even the ugly. You remember the important role that Italy played in Tchaikovsky’s development and [Richard] Strauss.” Supported by money Carpelan had raised for the purpose, Sibelius spent the winter and spring of 1901 in the Italian sun. “Now I am living completely in the world of the imagination — nothing disturbs me,” he gratefully wrote Carpelan.

Perhaps because of its Italian birth, this most popular of Sibelius’ symphonies wears, with the exception of its slow movement, a happier, brighter garb than his First. Many listeners, especially among the Finns, insisted the work was a graphic portrayal of the Finnish struggle against Russia, a program Sibelius vehemently denied. But perhaps, steeped as he was in Finland’s travails, there is more of that struggle than the composer realized in this highly dramatic symphony that achieves a resounding victory through a fierce display of musical energy and determination.

About his symphonic method Sibelius famously wrote: “It is as though the Almighty had thrown the pieces of a mosaic down from the floor of heaven and told me to put them together.” The **opening movement** demonstrates this method, as Sibelius first presents small, seemingly unrelated chunks of melodic ideas — fragments of his mosaic. Only as they are gradually assembled do we begin to see a picture. Even the strings’ hesitant opening chords are an important piece of the puzzle: their three notes rising stepwise establish a pattern for many of the themes to come. The woodwinds respond with a mirror image: a folk dance tune built from three *descending* notes. A moment later, the woodwinds introduce an expression of vehement resolve with a memorable fist-shaking gesture. The solo oboe sings a plaintive version of this theme to open the development section, in which Sibelius reveals the close relationship between his terse themes as he juxtaposes and combines them. This grows to an imposing climax of brass chords that, in a Sibelian trademark, swell, fade, then swell again.

**Movement two** moves away from the D-Major home key to darker D minor. Remarkably, Sibelius sustains a mood of weight and sorrow over a long movement without losing a sense of forward momentum. At first, the music is imprisoned in the orchestral cellar: over a drum roll and a spooky *pizzicato* tune for basses and cellos, the bassoons croon a mournful theme. This is followed by the blackest of brass fanfares, with the voice of death in the horns' harsh, baleful cry. The strings gently offer a tender, grief-laden theme; Sibelius labeled this "Christus" in his early sketches. "Christus" attempts to offer consolation without succeeding in lightening the tragic mood.

**Movement three** is a fast, fierce scherzo. Juxtaposed against the frenzy of the strings is a slower trio section featuring a bittersweet repeated-note melody for oboe. Both scherzo and trio return, but the trio's second appearance is artfully transformed into a bridge to the **finale**, preparing us for the expansive melody — using the three-note ascending pattern that opened the symphony — that is this work's most famous.

Sibelius may have detested the Russian government, but there was one Russian he adored: Tchaikovsky. "There is a lot of that man in me," he admitted. The three-note ascending pattern expands into a luscious, soaring melody of which the Russian would have been proud. The finale's other important theme is a sad, minor-mode woodwind march above agitated strings, which Sibelius' wife revealed as her husband's musical response to her sister's suicide. These two themes, along with several subsidiary ones, carry the symphony to a heart-pounding apotheosis. Here is no Scandinavian reticence but an expression of unbounded faith — perhaps a vision of Finland, free at last.

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