

Program Notes for Friday, August 12
Alasdair Neale, Conductor
Vadim Gluzman, Violin

- Sibelius *Finlandia*, Opus 26
- Falla Suite No. 2 from *The Three-Cornered Hat*
 The Neighbors (Seguidillas)
 The Miller's Dance (Farruca)
 Final Dance (Jota)
- Korngold Concerto in D Major for Violin, Opus 35
 Moderato nobile
 Romanze: Andante
 Finale: Allegro assai vivace

Vadim Gluzman, Violin

***Finlandia*, Opus 26 (1899)**
Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

For hundreds of years, Sweden and Russia fought bitterly over the region of Scandinavia now occupied by Finland. Assurances of constitutional autonomy for the vast area led to its temporary stability as a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire in 1809. By the end of the century, however, the Tsars were clamping down. In February 1899, Tsar Nicholas II declared in an official Manifesto that Russia could impose its will upon the Grand Duchy without the approval of local governments. This decree only served to fuel the determination of Finns to establish a true independent country. *Finlandia* was written in the midst of this nationalist fervor, and came to serve as a cultural rallying cry to strengthen the resolve of the resistance, and eventually as a celebratory anthem when Finland finally achieved its independence in 1917.

Finlandia was originally entitled "Finland Awakens", composed as the finale of six selections of incidental music to accompany a series of staged historical vignettes. Sibelius quickly reworked the piece into the tone poem that we now know, and its popularity was immediate. Scholar James Hepokoski summarizes the piece's thematic content succinctly: "political subjugation, sudden awakening and conflict, and a nationally centered hymnic liberation into the future." The music is simple and glorious, powerful and stirring. The moving "Finlandia Hymn" that leads to the culminating triumph has become akin to a second national anthem for Finland, a country that still celebrates Sibelius as a national hero.

Suite No. 2 from *The Three-Cornered Hat* (1915-19)
Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

The Three-Cornered Hat is a ballet Falla wrote for Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, choreographed by Léonide Massine and with set design by Pablo Picasso, an artistic dream team if there ever was one. The name comes from the characteristic headgear of the magistrate in the ballet who finds himself embarrassed after his advances on the miller's wife are rebuffed. He tries to take vengeance by having the miller arrested, but a series of events involving mistaken identities thwart him yet again. By the end, the magistrate's ill-will proves no match for the force of joyous

festivity in the miller's village.

Falla's music here is wonderfully evocative, setting the mood of the ballet perfectly. The Andalusian flavor of the score comes from a deep understanding of the folk traditions of Spain, but the music itself is mostly original to Falla. The one exception originated during a visit that Falla and Massine made to Andalusia for inspiration. There they heard a blind beggar strumming a broken guitar and singing an intriguing tune. Falla quickly wrote it down and incorporated it into the music for The Neighbor's Dance (*Les voisins*). The Suite that we hear tonight extracts music verbatim from the second half of the ballet.

The Neighbor's Dance comes at the beginning of the second part of the ballet as evening falls. The miller's neighbors come to celebrate St. John's Eve with the miller and his wife, making merry with a lively *seguidilla*, a quick dance in triple time that requires some fancy footwork. The miller proceeds to perform his own dance for the company, a *farruca* which is a stylized flamenco dance in A minor danced by men. The Final Dance is a wild number depicting the celebratory mood of the villagers dancing an energetic *jota*. Interspersed are frantic chases involving the miller and the magistrate, mistaken for one another as they have exchanged clothes. By the end, the confusion has been resolved and the villagers take delight in tossing the magistrate up and down on a blanket, vividly depicted by Falla in the music.

Violin Concerto in D Major for Violin, Opus 35 (1945-46) Erich Korngold (1897-1957)

If musical genius is difficult to comprehend, then musical prodigy is unfathomable. The eighteenth century had Mozart, the nineteenth Mendelssohn, and the twentieth had Erich Korngold. Shortly after turning nine, Korngold was taken to Mahler's apartment in Vienna to play his cantata *Gold for the master*. Korngold's father described the meeting and Mahler's stunned reaction:

He began to pace hastily to and fro in the curious limping rhythm peculiar to him when he was excited. He kept exclaiming, "A genius! A genius!" in ever more strident tones. The melodic structure, formative power, and revolutionary sense of harmony had strongly impressed him.

Korngold continued composing in the Classical idiom while in Europe, using an intricate harmonic vocabulary and characteristic free-flowing melodies. His gift for lush scores made his shift to film composition natural, and he relocated to Hollywood in the mid-1930's in part to escape the growing threat of the Nazis. He scored over 20 films in the 1930's and 40's, winning an Academy Award for his work on *The Adventures of Robin Hood* in 1938.

Korngold returned to concentrating on concert hall music shortly after the war, and his Violin Concerto was one of the first products of his new/old focus. Never forgetting the pivotal role Mahler played in directing his early studies and championing his music, Korngold dedicated the piece to his widow, Alma Mahler. With Jascha Heifetz's triumphant premiere and subsequent recording of the concerto, Korngold's classical music career was successfully relaunched.

If the concerto's opening melody, a soaring solo line ranging through widely spaced intervals culminating with a poignant tritone, sounds like it came right out of a film score, that's because it did. Korngold had no qualms translating his melodies across genres, as he said, "I have never drawn a distinction between music for films and for operas or concerts." This opening melody comes from the 1937 Errol Flynn film *Another Dawn*, now primarily remembered for Korngold's superb score. After a playful dancing tune, a lyrical line in the solo emerges, accompanied by touching gestures in the winds and horn. This theme was drawn from the 1939 film *Juarez*, starring Bette Davis and Paul Muni. Korngold artfully arranges the themes into a modified sonata

form structure, complete with a brief, dramatic cadenza, here preceding a luxurious recapitulation of the opening theme.

The intimate second movement is based on music Korngold wrote for *Anthony Adverse* (1936), a film that won four Oscars including Best Musical Scoring. The dreamy middle section, marked *misterioso*, seems to extend naturally from the tender melody of the opening.

The Finale uses music from *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937), based on Mark Twain's novel and again starring Errol Flynn. The music here bursts with youth and energy, beautifully capturing the delight of the title characters as they embark on lives in their alternate identities. The same melody was used, in slightly varied form, as the main theme to the recent Jerry Seinfeld animated feature *Bee Movie*, a testament to the timelessness of the scores that Korngold seemingly effortlessly penned over his career.