



## **Europe goes North**

***This summer the EUYO focuses on the artists and composers of Northern Europe with a tour to the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and 'Spirit of the North' projects at both the European Music Campus with the Orchestra's Summer Home and Principal Venue Partner Grafeneegg, and Summer Residency Partner, Bolzano Festival Bozen. The Orchestra's CEO Marshall Marcus explores below just what northern delights are in the offing ...***

For centuries, artists have eulogised the piercing light and brooding myths of Northern Europe. Here is a world of elemental emotions, poised between the unending opposition of harsh unforgiving winters and the softly illuminating midnight summer sun. How do we grasp such extremity? And what does the music of this region tell us about such an identity, and its part in today's Europe?

2017 brings important celebrations in this part of the EU: whilst Finland celebrates 100 years of hard won Independence, Estonia takes on the EU Presidency from Malta, and one of the world's finest music conservatoires - the [Royal Danish Academy of Music](#) - celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. So it is that this summer's programme of music focuses on the sound and the spirit of the North of Europe, with soloists from Latvia and Sweden, and concerts in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as part of *Capital Sounds*, our multi-year concert tour of all EU member states. More than a dozen compositions from the EU's six most northerly countries can be heard, as well as a classic Tchaikovsky symphony from neighbouring Russia, chamber music from Norway and beyond, and an in depth exploration of the Northern 'aesthetic' as part of the [European Music Campus](#) at [Grafeneegg](#).

At the very heart of the EUYO's [summer 2017 concert programme](#) lies Sibelius's first symphony, written at the end of the nineteenth century, and premiered in its revised version in Berlin on 18 July 1900. Such was the acclaim that that performance received that it is often said to be the piece that launched the then 35 year old Finnish composer's international career.

Sibelius (1865 - 1957) occupies a special position in any account of the music of Northern Europe as a key writer of symphonies at the twilight end of the hundreds of years long European symphonic tradition. Yet when you compare him with some other composers of the North that we are performing this summer - the Lithuanian Čiurlionis, Estonia's Arvo Pärt, and Latvian Pēteris Vasks - there is a fascinating common thread: focused, interior, sustained and introspective sound, with elongated melodies and repetitive almost minimalist structures, that give a piercing directness that seems to take us back to that elemental landscape of the North. Perhaps it is no accident that many of these composers are deeply spiritual human beings, and often closely linked to nature. And this makes them extraordinarily approachable, almost *anti*-intellectual.

Notwithstanding these similarities, there is also a variety on show elsewhere in these programmes that is dazzling, with music to suit practically every mood; Lindberg's riotous virtuosity (a virtuosity that includes the composer also performing as a pied piper soloist), Nielsen in a short overture of unusually entertaining style, the homely folk music idioms of Alfvén and Maskats, and the stark clean modernist textures of Saariaho.

For many (if not all) of the countries that these composers hail from, whilst the EU is today's union, nearby Russia is also of huge importance, not simply politically but also artistically. There are surely more shared traditions here than we often care to admit. It is therefore no accident that a major architect of the *Spirit of the North* programmes is the EUYO's Chief Conductor [Vasily Petrenko](#), a Russian artist who grew up in St. Petersburg, a city allegedly alluded to by its creator as Russia's 'window' onto the West. There, in the late 1980s and 90s, Petrenko absorbed much of this music, reminding us of what it is that the EU and Russia share, rather than are separated by.

And perhaps this points us to something to be learnt from these *Spirit of the North* programmes: the surprising shared traditions of a region of Europe that is both contained within - but also far larger than - the great nationalities and borders it encompasses. So do join us - physically and/or online - as Europe makes the great summer journey North. A great prospect; wherever you are from!

**Spirit of the North music programmed this summer, by country and date:**

Denmark - Carl Nielsen, Overture *Masquerade* (1906)

Estonia - Arvo Pärt, *Fratres* in 2 different versions: for solo violin, strings & percussion (1992), & 'cello and harp (2010); *Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten* (1977)

Finland - Kaija Saariaho, *Terrestre* (2002); Jean Sibelius, *Symphony No. 1* (1900), and string quartet *Intimate Voices* (1909)

Latvia - Maskats *Midnight in Riga* (1957), Pēteris Vasks - *Lonely Angel* (1999, revised 2006)

Lithuania - Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis – *In the Forest* (1901)

Norway - The Holberg Suite (1884)

Russia - Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 4* (1878)

Sweden - Christian Lindberg, Trombone concerto *Golden Eagle* (2014); Alfvén *Dance of the Shepherd Girl* (1916), *Festmusik* (1907), and movements from the *Prodigal Son* (1957)

**Want to hear more?**

Programmer and writer Gillian Moore reviews recordings of Sibelius's *Symphony No.1 in E minor Op. 39*

Carl Nielsen, Overture *Masquerade* – BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sakari Oramo

Arturs Maskats, *Midnight in Riga* - Gidon Kremer (violin), Giedre Dirvanauskaite (Cello), Andrey Pushkarev (vibraphone) and chamber orchestra Kremerata Baltica

Arvo Pärt, *Fratres* for solo violin, strings & percussion – Gil Shaham (violin), Roger Carlsson (percussion), Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Neeme Järvi

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, *In the Forest* – The Russian State Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Fedoseyev

Jan Sandström, *Motorbike Concerto* (Trombone Concerto No. 1) – Christian Lindberg, Last Night of the Proms

**#EUYONewsletter**

More from our **#EUYONewsletter**: [President and Co-Founder of EUYO, Mrs Joy Bryer awarded OBE!](#) [Christian Lindberg, virtuoso pioneer of Solo Trombone & Players & Alumni: July Meetup](#)

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