

MEDIA RELEASE

SIBELIUS' MYTHICAL ADVENTURES

19, 20 and 21 April
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

Sydney, Thursday 12 April 2007 - In the 50th anniversary year of Sibelius' death, Sydney Symphony presents a program of mythical adventures, longing and emotion.



Sibelius takes us to the shadow-world of the Nordic afterlife with the brooding and passionate *Lemminkäinen* Suite, one of his most popular works, conducted aptly by Finnish conductor **Hannu Lintu**. Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto was composed in one of the relatively peaceful periods of his life but it is haunted by a darker past. Ranging from slow lament to obsessive energy, the concerto is an expressive showcase for rising star, **Jing Zhao** (left). Australia's own James Ledger (cousin of actor Heath Ledger), completes the bill with a recent composition *Peeling*, inspired by Peter Carey's short story of the same name.

Taking inspiration from Wagner, Sibelius created the *Lemminkäinen* Suite, as a group of four 'symphonic poems' that tell the story of a young man named Lemminkäinen, a hero of Finnish folklore (from the *Kalevala* epic). Handsome, adventurous and highly popular (!) he journeys to the enchanted island of Saari where he sows his wild oats (!), and is killed in his attempt to shoot the Swan of Tuonela and thereby win the hand of Pohjola's daughter. His mother has her own magic and restores him to life, allowing him to return home in triumph.

Sibelius had been inspired by Wagner to create a musical drama, and initially began writing a great opera based on the story *The Building of the Boat*. The opera didn't eventuate but from the wreckage of the boat emerged the group of four pieces now known as the *Lemminkäinen* Suite. Common to both is the focus on a young Finnish hero, his amorous adventures, tests of bravery and journeys to Tuonela, the Finnish underworld.

Sibelius said of this work that "Music attains its fullest power only when it is motivated by poetic impulse" - he is interested primarily in the atmosphere of the original stories, and the resulting work doesn't follow a detailed program but rather a sense of voyaging through worlds as rites of passage.

Sibelius is perhaps unique among composers in that he became not only a leading musical figure but a national hero for his country. He was a force in the creation of a distinctive Finnish voice, and much of his music – especially the earlier works – was based on incidents and themes from the Finnish folk epic, the *Kalevala*. He died in 1957.

ENDS

For further information regarding these performances, interviews with musicians and photo opportunities, please contact:

Imogen Corlette, PR Manager
Sydney Symphony
Tel. + 61 2 8215 4653/0410 520 776
imogen.corlette@sydneysymphony.com

Yvonne Zammit, Publicist
Sydney Symphony
Tel: +61 2 8215 4612/0410 761 578
yvonne.zammit@sydneysymphony.com

Concert details

SIBELIUS' MYTHIC ADVENTURES

Thursday 19 April, 1.30pm
Friday 20 April, 8pm
Saturday 21 April, 2pm

Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

Hannu Lintu conductor
Jing Zhao cello

LEDGER Peeling
SHOSTAKOVICH Cello Concerto No.1
SIBELIUS Lemminkäinen – Suite

Tickets from \$54

Pre-concert talk by Yvonne Frindle at the Sydney Opera House Northern Foyer 45 minutes before each performance.