RACH 2

Friday 3 November 7.30pm, Federation Concert Hall, nipaluna / Hobart

Olari Elts conductor
Alexey Yemtsov piano
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

SIBELIUS En saga, Op 9 (20′)
RACHMANINOV Piano Concerto No 2 in C minor, Op 18 (33′)
Moderato
Adagio sostenuto
Allegro scherzando

INTERVAL (20′)

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No 9 in E flat, Op 70 (27′)
Allegro
Moderato
Presto -
Largo -
Allegretto - Allegro

As a tone poem with no explicit reference, listeners have attempted to fit En saga to various literary and artistic works while Sibelius himself offered contradictory sources of inspiration. In one explanation he stated, 'En saga is psychologically one of my most profound works...It is an expression of a state of mind...' while also conceding 'How could one think of anything other than Finland while listening to it!' The piece is characterised by Sibelius's distinctive orchestration, opening with glimmering strings and folk-like tunes in the woodwinds. Heroic melodies in the brass fade to an ending of a plaintive clarinet enveloped in shimmering mist.

Composed after an extended period of depression and self-doubt, Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto established his fame as a composer and quickly became a favourite on concert stages around the world. Its soaring melodic lines, virtuosic piano writing and colourful orchestration have ensured its enduring popularity. The opening chords lead to a theme that epitomises the passion of the Russian Romantic style. In the second movement this lyricism takes a quieter turn, with the orchestra spinning long lines of colour around the piano. Concluding with energy and triumphant glory, the concerto is testament to Rachmaninov's talents as a virtuoso pianist and compositional master of emotional expression.

Following the monumental Seventh ('Leningrad') and Eighth symphonies of 1942 and 1943, the world expected, and Shostakovich promised, a triumphant tribute to the victory over Nazi Germany and the end of World War II. Shostakovich began work but inspiration waned, and the sketches were abandoned. In their place, Shostakovich presented the light, almost neo-classical Ninth Symphony, shorter in its entirety than single movements of his previous symphonies. Shostakovich had expected some resistance, anticipating 'musicians will like to play it, and critics will delight in blasting it.' Soviet musicologist Nestyev wrote 'the Ninth Symphony is a kind of respite, a light and amusing interlude between Shostakovich's significant creations...But is it the right time for a great artist to go on vacation...?' while the New York World Telegram chided 'The Russian composer should not have expressed his feelings about the defeat of Nazism in such a childish manner.'

The symphony opens with a sprightly theme, punctuated by typical Shostakovich irony. The trombone, proud of his role as herald of the second theme, ends up making a fool of himself when he has not one, not two, but six false starts in the recapitulation before he finally gets it right. The second movement opens with a clarinet solo which blooms into a duet before absorbing the other winds with a waltz-like theme that is strangely arresting with its leaps, chromaticism and unexpected pauses. The final three movements are played without pause, and the mood shifts from virtuosic wind writing to a plaintive bassoon solo with sinister brass interjections, before the bassoon trots into the quirky final allegretto. With its elegance, humour, introspection and energy, the Ninth Symphony more than makes up for what it lacks in length and bombast.

Eloise Fisher, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2023

RACH 2

Friday 3 November 7.30pm, Federation Concert Hall, nipaluna / Hobart

Olari Elts conductor
Alexey Yemtsov piano
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

SIBELIUS En saga, Op 9 (20′)
RACHMANINOV Piano Concerto No 2 in C minor, Op 18 (33′)
SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No 9 in E flat, Op 70 (27′)

Violin
Emma McGrath *Concertmaster*
Ji Won Kim Associate *Concertmaster*
Jennifer Owen *Principal Second*
Edwina George *Principal First*
Helen Ayres
Miranda Carson
Yue-Hong Cha
Frances Davies
Michael Johnston
Elinor Lea
Susanna Low
Phoebe Masel
Christopher Nicholas
Rohana O'Malley
Michelle O'Young
Hayato Simpson

Viola
Caleb Wright*
Douglas Coghill
Sandra Ionescu
William Lane
Anna Larsen Roach
William Newbery

Cello
Jonathan Békés*
Ivan James
Nicholas McManus
Martin Penicka
Sophie Radke

Double Bass
Stuart Thomson*
Jonathan Coco
Aurora Henrich
Oliver Simpson

Flute
Jessie Gu#
Rachel Howie
Lloyd Hudson *Piccolo*

Oboe
Sarah Young#
Dinah Woods *Cor Anglais*

Clarinet
Andrew Seymour*
Eloise Fisher *Bass Clarinet*

Bassoon
Tahnee van Herk*
Tasman Compton

French Horn
Greg Stephens* *Principal First*
Philip Paine# *Principal Third*
Jules Evans
Roger Jackson
Calen Linke

Trumpet
Timothy Frahn#
Mark Bain
Melanie Wilkinson

Trombone
David Robins*
Pius Choi

Bass Trombone
Mitchell Nissen*

Tuba
Rachel Kelly#

Timpani
Matthew Goddard*

Percussion
Gary Wain*
Stephen Marskell
Tracey Patten

*principal player
#guest Principal

Concertmaster Emma McGrath plays an 1845 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin on loan from two of our generous Tasmanian patrons.