



DDD

8.553233

# SIBELIUS • ELGAR

## Violin Concertos

Dong-Suk Kang, Violin

Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra

Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra

Adrian Leaper



## Jean Sibelius (1865 - 1957)

### Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47

## Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)

### Violin Concerto in B Minor, Op. 61

The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius was born in 1865, the son of a doctor. The language and culture of his family was Swedish, but Sibelius himself was to enter wholeheartedly into the world of Finland, with its different linguistic and literary traditions. It was this world that he translated into musical terms in his remarkable seven symphonies and in a series of tone poems that echo the ancient sagas. He was trained as a musician at first in Helsinki, then in Berlin and Vienna, and had early ambitions as a violinist, at a time when the first professional orchestra in Finland was being established. Narrowly failing to win the position of Professor of Music at the University of Helsinki in 1896, he was awarded a government stipend for ten years, converted thereafter into a pension for life. This was never enough to meet his needs, hardly tempered by a certain inherited improvidence. His father had had a gift for extravagance, and had left his family bankrupt at the time of his early death. For the last twenty-seven years of his long life Sibelius virtually ceased to work as a composer. His position was unassailable, but he felt himself out of tune with the contemporary world of music, as it had developed.

Sibelius completed the first version of his *Violin Concerto* in 1903 and it was first performed in Helsinki with indifferent results. The concerto was revised and successfully performed in Berlin in 1905 by Karl Halir, under the direction of Richard Strauss. The choice of soloist, however, offended the violinist Willy Burmester, who had originally been promised the work. The earlier version of the concerto was technically ambitious, and as a violinist Sibelius had needed no help with the lay-out of the solo part, although this presented technical difficulties that were beyond his own command. The later version made necessary revisions in the solo part and it is in this definitive form that the work has become a standard part of the solo repertoire.

The concerto opens with no lengthy orchestral introduction, the soloist making an almost immediate appearance, accompanied by a Scandinavian mist of muted strings. Although the movement is in the traditional tripartite form, the central development section is replaced by a cadenza-like passage for the violinist. The lyrical slow movement brings a deeply romantic melody, the soloist proceeding to weave his own fantasies above the orchestra. There follows a finale which the composer once described as a *danse macabre*, providing an opportunity for virtuoso display in a work in which the solo part is generally intertwined with the orchestral texture.

The image of Sir Edward Elgar as an Edwardian gentleman, happier at the race-course or with his dogs than in the concert hall or with musicians is sadly deceptive. Popularly associated with the heyday of British imperialism, through his all too well known *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* and other occasional celebrations of Empire that have lasted less well, he has seemed the musical epitome of a period in British history that it has become fashionable to decry. The picture is a false one. In Edwardian terms Elgar was a counter-jumper, a man of relatively humble origins, son of a jobbing musician who kept a shop in Worcester, and later the husband of an imprudent if well connected spinster, the daughter of a Major-General in the Indian Army and nine years his senior. As a Catholic in a largely Protestant and strongly prejudiced community, he must seem very much less of an Establishment figure, whatever mask he may have chosen to assume as his fame grew.

Initial recognition was slow in coming. In 1890 the Elgars moved to London, but the following year retreated again to the West Country, taking a house at Malvern, allowing Elgar to return to his earlier activities as a provincial musician, enjoying a merely local reputation. During the last decade of the century he turned his attention largely to the writing of choral works, designed for the flourishing choral societies of his native region and of the North of England. It was the *Enigma Variations*, completed in 1899, that first established his fame in London and, therefore, nationally. The oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*, which followed in 1900, was less successful at its first performance in Birmingham and the publishers, Novello, were not particularly generous in their treatment of him, although he came to rely on the encouragement of the German-born Augustus Johannes Jaeger, a reader for the firm, who found in Elgar's music something much more akin to the music of his own native country.

By 1910, the year of the Violin Concerto, circumstances had changed. *Gerontius* had become an established part of English choral repertoire: there had been honorary degrees from major universities, a knighthood in 1904, the oratorios *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, and in 1908 the first of his two symphonies. Expectation ran high when the Philharmonic Society commissioned a new violin concerto. The work was completed in time for its triumphant first performance at the Queen's Hall in November 1910. It was dedicated to Fritz Kreisler, the soloist on this occasion, and inscribed, cryptically, with the words *Aquí esta encerrada el alma de . . . .*, the inscription found on a poet's tomb in the picaresque novel *Gil Blas* by Lesage. This is generally supposed to be a reference to Alice Stuart-Wortley, Elgar's acknowledged inspiration for the work, his *Windflower*, an affectionate nick-name that distinguished her from his wife Alice. Although Elgar himself was a violinist, he relied for technical assistance on W.H.Reed, the young leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, who played through the work with the composer at the first private hearing in Gloucester, before Kreisler, a soloist at the Gloucester Festival, offered his own private performance of the work.

The concerto opens with a highly characteristic first theme, in its orchestral exposition, moving forward to themes identified with the *Windflower*. The soloist enters, introducing a second exposition, a reworking of the first material, developed in the central section of the movement, which relies at first on the first subject, before turning to the *Windflower* second subject, now played *maestoso*. The first subject opening figure is played in descending sequence by the soloist in introducing the recapitulation of this sonata-form movement.

The slow movement, the part of the concerto that Elgar wrote first, moves from the key of B minor to B flat major. Here the solo violin adds its own element to the ingenuous first theme announced by the orchestra, which also proposes the modal second theme, shifting in key to a mysterious D flat major in music of wonderful lyricism.

The final *Allegro molto* opens with an introduction of ominous excitement, leading, after ornamental brilliance from the soloist, to the announcement of the first theme, echoed and developed by the soloist. The gently romantic second subject, marked *cantabile e vibrato*, is introduced by the soloist and this thematic material, and that of the introduction to the movement, re-appear, as the music is developed, leading to an initially accompanied cadenza, into which the orchestra softly intrudes in conclusion.

The final section of the movement echoes the introduction, culminating in a version of the principal theme, in violin triple stopping and marked *nobilmente*, a favourite direction in Elgar's music, bringing to an affirmative end a major addition to the violin repertoire, a concerto that goes far beyond any merely insular tradition.

## **Dong-Suk Kang**

Dong-Suk Kang first came to the attention of the concert-going public when he won both the San Francisco Symphony Competition and the Merriweather Post Competition in Washington, D.C., thereafter going on to win important prizes in several international competitions, among them the Montreal, the Carl Flesch in London and the Queen Elisabeth in Brussels. In his highly successful career he has appeared with many of the great orchestras of the world in major cities from Los Angeles and Philadelphia to London, Paris and St Petersburg, in collaboration with some of the most distinguished conductors of our time. His recordings have won critical acclaim, with awards that include the Grand Prix du Disque of the Académie Charles Cros and the Nouvelle Académie du Disque.

## **Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava)**

The Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava), the oldest symphonic ensemble in Slovakia, was founded in 1929 at the instance of Milos Ruppeldt and Oskar Nedbal, prominent personalities in the sphere of music. Ondrej Lenárd was appointed its conductor in 1970 and in 1977 its conductor-in-chief. The orchestra has given successful concerts both at home and abroad, in Germany, Russia, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, Hong Kong and Japan. For Marco Polo the orchestra has recorded works by Glazunov, Glière, Miaskovsky and other late romantic composers and film music of Honegger, Bliss, Ibort and Khachaturian as well as several volumes of the label's Johann Strauss Edition. Naxos recordings include symphonies and ballets by Tchaikovsky, and symphonies by Berlioz and Saint-Saëns.

## The Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra of Katowice (PNRSO)

The Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra of Katowice (PNRSO) was founded in 1935 in Warsaw through the initiative of well-known Polish conductor and composer Grzegorz Fitelberg. Under his direction the ensemble worked till the outbreak of the World War II. Soon after the war, in March 1945, the orchestra was resurrected in Katowice by the eminent Polish conductor Witold Rowicki. In 1947 Grzegorz Fitelberg returned to Poland and became artistic director of the PNRSO. He was followed by a series of distinguished Polish conductors - Jan Krenz, Bohdan Wodiezko, Kazimierz Kord, Tadeusz Strugala, Jerzy Maksymiuk, Stanislaw Wislocki and, since 1983, Antoni Wit. The orchestra has appeared with conductors and soloists of the greatest distinction and has recorded for Polskie Nagrania and many international record labels. For Naxos, the PNRSO will record the complete symphonies of Tchaikovsky and Mahler.

## Adrian Leaper

Adrian Leaper was appointed Assistant Conductor to Stanislaw Skrowaczewski of the Hallé Orchestra in 1986, and has since then enjoyed an increasingly busy career, with engagements at home and throughout Europe. Born in 1953, Adrian Leaper studied at the Royal Academy of Music and was for a number of years co-principal French horn in the Philharmonia Orchestra, before turning his attention exclusively to conducting. He has been closely involved with the Naxos and Marco Polo labels and has been consequently instrumental in introducing elements of English repertoire to Eastern Europe. His numerous recordings include a complete cycle of Sibelius symphonies for Naxos, and Havergal Brian's *Symphony No. 4* ("Das Siegeslied") for Marco Polo.

8.553233



8.553233

STEREO

DDD

 Playing  
 Time:  
 77'10"

**Jean  
 SIBELIUS**

(1865 - 1957)

**Edward  
 ELGAR**

(1857 - 1934)

**Violin Concertos**
**Dong-Suk Kang, Violin**

Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra

Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra\*

Adrian Leaper

**SIBELIUS: Violin Concerto  
 in D Minor, Op. 47**

- |          |                             |                |
|----------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Allegro moderato</b>     | <b>(15:52)</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Adagio di molto</b>      | <b>(7:52)</b>  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Allegro ma non tanto</b> | <b>(7:25)</b>  |

**ELGAR: Violin Concerto  
 in B Minor, Op. 61\***

- |          |                      |                |
|----------|----------------------|----------------|
| <b>4</b> | <b>Allegro</b>       | <b>(16:33)</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Andante</b>       | <b>(11:06)</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Allegro molto</b> | <b>(18:04)</b> |

Recorded at the Concert Hall of the Czecho-Slovak Radio, Bratislava  
 from 18th to 21st September 1989 (Tracks 1 - 3), and at the Concert Hall  
 of the Polish Radio, Katowice, from 13th to 16th April 1991 (Tracks 4 - 6).

Producers: Günter Appenheimer (Tracks 1 - 3) and

Beata Jankowska (Tracks 4 - 6)

Engineer: Otto Nopp (Tracks 4 - 6)

Music Notes: Keith Anderson

Cover Painting: Kaukola Ridge at Sunset by Albert Edelfelt



ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. UNAUTHORISED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE,  
 BROADCASTING AND COPYING OF THIS COMPACT DISC PROHIBITED.  
 © 1989 & 91 HNH International Ltd.  
 © 1995 HNH International Ltd.  
 DISTRIBUTED BY: MVD MUSIC AND VIDEO DISTRIBUTION GmbH,  
 OBERWEG 21C-HALLE V, D-82008 UNTERHACHING, MUNICH, GERMANY.

SIBELIUS • ELGAR: Violin Concertos

NAXOS

NAXOS

SIBELIUS • ELGAR: Violin Concertos

8.553233

