

CHAN 6626(2)

# Madetoja

Complete Symphonies  
Comedy Overture  
Suites from 'Okon Fuoko'  
& 'The Ostrobothnians'

Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Petri Sakari

CHANDOS  
COLLECT

## Leevi Madetoja (1887–1947)

COMPACT DISC ONE

### Symphony No. 1, Op. 29 23:20

in F major

- |   |     |                                     |      |
|---|-----|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | I   | Allegro                             | 7:05 |
| 2 | II  | Lento misterioso                    | 9:17 |
| 3 | III | Allegro vivace – Andante – Moderato | 6:52 |

### Symphony No. 2, Op. 35 43:26

in E flat major

- |   |     |  |       |
|---|-----|--|-------|
| 4 | I   | Allegro moderato –   | 13:51 |
| 5 | II  | Andante<br>off-stage soloists Daði Kolbeinsson oboe · Joseph Ognibene horn | 14:41 |
| 6 | III | Allegro non troppo –   | 9:50  |
| 7 | IV  | Epilogue: Andantino  | 4:58  |

TT 66:55

COMPACT DISC TWO

### 1 Comedy Overture, Op. 53 8:20

Andante – Lentando – Allegro

### Symphony No. 3, Op. 55 32:11

in A major

- |   |     |                                      |      |
|---|-----|--------------------------------------|------|
| 2 | I   | Andantino                            | 7:38 |
| 3 | II  | Adagio                               | 7:45 |
| 4 | III | Allegro non troppo –                 | 9:42 |
| 5 | IV  | Pesante, tempo moderato – Allegretto | 6:55 |

### Suite No. 1 from 'Okon Fuoko', Op. 58 13:42

- |    |     |   |      |
|----|-----|---|------|
| 6  | I   | Okon Fuoko, unitaikuri (Okon Fuoko, the<br>Dream Magician): Andante – | 3:44 |
| 7  | II  | Vieraat saapuvat (Entrance of the Guests):<br>Lento (non troppo) –    | 1:06 |
| 8  | III | Nukkien tanssi (The Dance of the Dolls): Allegro –                    | 1:52 |
| 9  | IV  | Miehen tanssi (Man's Dance): Allegro sostenuto –<br>Allegro –         | 3:14 |
| 10 | V   | Naisen tanssi (Woman's Dance): Poco lento –<br>Più lento –            | 1:41 |
| 11 | VI  | Danse grotesque: Allegretto   | 2:06 |

### Suite from 'The Ostrobothnians', Op. 52 16:45

- |    |     |   |      |
|----|-----|---|------|
| 12 | I   | Lakeus (The Plain): Andantino – Più lento                           | 4:53 |
| 13 | II  | Vangin laulu (Song of the Prisoner): Lento maestoso                 | 3:36 |
| 14 | III | Häijyt (The Ruffians): Allegro moderato, rubato –<br>Allegro vivace | 3:18 |
| 15 | IV  | Tulopeli (Entrance Music): Tempo di Marcia –                        | 1:48 |
| 16 | V   | Hypyt (Leaps and Jumps): Moderato mosso                             | 3:04 |

TT 71:25

## Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Petri Sakari



## Madetoja: Orchestral Works

Leevi Madetoja was one of Finland's most outstanding post-Sibelian composers. He managed to do what his teacher, Jean Sibelius, never achieved: to write a national Finnish opera, *The Ostrobothnians*. But as an orchestral composer too, he was well on a par with his European colleagues. Although essentially a national romantic composer, he integrated French impulses and a kind of classical clarity to the Finnish components of his style, making him comparable with such names as Vincent d'Indy, Albéric Magnard, and Carl Nielsen.

Madetoja came from a modest background. His father, a seaman, died in the United States without ever having seen the child. Madetoja's first instrument was the kantele, a Finnish folk instrument plucked with the fingers, but he also studied violin and piano. In 1906 he travelled from his home city Oulu, the provincial capital of Northern Ostrobothnia near the north-western coast of Finland, to the Finnish capital, Helsinki, where he studied at both the Music Conservatoire and at the University, obtaining his degree in 1910. He continued his music studies mostly on his own, in Paris from 1910–11 and Vienna and Berlin from 1911–12. From 1912–16 he made his living as a conductor in Helsinki and Viipuri

(now in the Republic of Karelia), but returned finally to Helsinki to teach at the Conservatoire and write music reviews for *Helsingin Sanomat*, the nation's leading daily newspaper. As an additional duty he taught music at the University from 1926. On his fiftieth birthday in 1937, he was awarded the title of Professor and elected chairman of the Finnish composers' International Copyright Bureau.

The summit of Madetoja's career was his opera *The Ostrobothnians* in 1924. It soon acquired the status of national opera, and was also a success abroad. The Ostrobothnian folk tunes (originally collected by the composer Toivo Kuula) skilfully woven into the texture were particularly appealing to the audience. Madetoja's second opera *Juha* (1935) had no such folk elements and has never become as popular, though musically it is of greater maturity than *The Ostrobothnians*.

Beside the operas, three symphonies and other orchestral works, Madetoja wrote many fine choral works and solo songs. Decades of hard work and the pressure of financial worries undermined the composer's health in the late 1930s, and his plans for a fourth symphony, a violin concerto and a Finnish *Parsifal* came to nothing.

### Symphony No. 1

This symphony was written in Viipuri from 1914–16 and first performed in Helsinki on 10 February 1916 under the composer's baton. It was dedicated to Robert Kajanus, founder and conductor of the Helsinki City Orchestra.

'You are in the possession of the properties that make a symphony composer', wrote Jean Sibelius to encourage his pupil, and he was right: the work is amongst the most mature of first symphonies. A reader of old Latin, Madetoja in his Symphony goes *in medias res*. The main theme of the *Allegro* first movement is a short, incisive motif, typical of the composer in that its harmonic background is an essential part of its character. Two different and simultaneous syncopations give the theme a polyrhythmic touch, and it is surprisingly reminiscent of Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* – surprisingly, because Madetoja was not uncritical of this composer. The dreamy second theme, in the Tchaikovskian model, is from a different world, an oasis of calm which brings the symphonic process to a standstill. The development takes up the main theme again, now inverted and handled in chromatic sequences. Unusually, it is the second theme which introduces the recapitulation – and now in E major! The movement softly draws to a close with a more remote variation of the main theme.

The *Lento misterioso* is lyrical and descriptive in a way typical of Madetoja's slow movements. At the first performance critics commented especially on the Finnish character of its woodwind episode in F sharp minor; whilst resembling the slow movement of Sibelius's Third Symphony, the phrase endings with a falling third are here all Madetoja's own.

In accordance with the idiom of the Romantic symphony – as in Sibelius's First, for example – the first movement themes return in the finale, *Allegro vivace*. The movement begins energetically, but as before it is halted by the pastoral *Andante* second theme. The composer then seems to have some difficulty starting up again, but when the proper theme of the finale arrives – a brilliant brass fanfare with falling third motifs – it is handled impressively: Madetoja's rhythmic and harmonic inventiveness is such that the effect is truly epic. The conclusion to the Symphony may well have upset its contemporary listeners, for in the culmination of this F major work it staggers to C major – and the final chord is A major!

### Symphony No. 2

The monumental and tragic Second Symphony (1916–18) had dark personal overtones for Madetoja. His only brother and his composer-friend Toivo Kuula were both killed by the 'Reds' during Finland's civil war in 1918. To

the memory of his brother Yrjö, Madetoja dedicated his most important piano composition *Kuoleman puutarha* (The Garden of Death, 1918), which is partly based on the same material as the Second Symphony. Later Madetoja dedicated the Symphony to the memory of his mother, who died in 1934.

Madetoja began composing in the summer of 1916, his First Symphony having had its successful premiere in February of that year. Robert Kajanus conducted the Helsinki City Orchestra in the first performance of the Second Symphony on 17 December 1918, and it was exceptionally well received. The leading Finnish music critic Evert Katila published a seven-column article entitled 'The newest large-scale work of Finnish art music' and declared the Symphony to be 'the most remarkable achievement in our music since the monumental series of Sibelius' (Sibelius had by this time produced five symphonies). The work was performed in Copenhagen in June 1919, marking the beginning of an international interest in Madetoja's music, and introducing the composer to the Danish publisher Wilhelm Hansen.

This is a Symphony of beauty, nature, war and resignation. These sentiments in turn dominate its four parts, the last being a short epilogue. The *Allegro moderato* first movement is one of the purest musical expressions of Madetoja's 'philosophy of beauty', and the

arch of the main theme over a soft E flat major seventh chord is like a memory of distant happiness. An 'annexe' to this theme, a brief figure ending with a typical falling third, in fact turns out to have significance to the whole work. The use of this motto theme is in some way reminiscent of Brahms's symphonic technique. The second theme is more modest than that of the First Symphony, and is also affected by the threatening motto theme. In the coda, fragments of the main theme are evident, but the ending, on a dissonant chord, is left open and leads *attacca* into the *Andante* slow movement.

The pastoral motifs on oboe and horn here suggest the calls of a shepherdess, which perhaps Madetoja would have heard in the countryside in summer. The motto theme appears again, now modified from minor to major.

Like that of the First Symphony, the third movement combines elements of scherzo and finale, but here the scherzo elements are by no means playful or jovial. Grating, dissonant trills in the highest woodwind registers are combined with impetuous hollow figures in the bass to make this movement Madetoja's most dramatic. A Shostakovich-style march theme in dotted rhythm surges up from the deepest strings, returning, after a repeat of the scherzo material, to be taken up by the full orchestra, and at last it becomes evident that the war

has left its mark on the Symphony. The short *attacca* Epilogue (*Andantino*) ends the work, which began in E flat major, in a modal E minor. The dotted repeated figure in the horns dissolves into distant fragments as an expression of resignation.

### Comedy Overture

This Overture was first performed in Helsinki on 12 April 1923. As was to be the case with the Third Symphony three years later, the critics missed the essence of the Overture, which was for a long time neglected even in the Finnish repertoire. In fact it represents the core of Madetoja's art: restrained spirit, well-proportioned classicism and an ability to say much using little means. Written in a free rondo form, the work presents three lovely and characteristic themes. The Overture was originally planned for an opera based on a comedy by Aleksis Kivi, but the project was never accomplished. In his later years, Madetoja observed to a friend: 'I wonder how I ever managed to make a piece like it.'

### Symphony No. 3

After the success of *The Ostrobothnians*, Madetoja had in 1925 an opportunity to settle down for some six months in Houilles, a little town near Paris. It was there that he worked on the Third Symphony and the ballet-pantomime *Okon Fuoko*. The Symphony

was finished in his homeland the next year and had its first performance in Helsinki at a concert of his works on 8 April 1926. The reception was positive as usual, but because expectations had to an extent been dictated by his Second Symphony, the critics missed the significance of the new work. Madetoja was generally regarded as a composer of elegiac and tragic sentiment, and therefore the luminous and well-proportioned 'classical' character of this Symphony came as something of a surprise. The French writer Henri-Claude Fantapié later said of the work that it was clearly Finnish, but the symphony could also bear a subtitle 'Sinfonia Gallica'.

The Third Symphony is the most mature in Madetoja's symphonic output. The first movement (*Andantino*) leaves behind conventional sonata form, and the music flows on without great gestures. By closer examination, numerous motivic and contrapuntal intricacies such as canons and augmentations can be found. The opening motive is very typical of Madetoja, and is here decorated with chromatic trills. The second movement (*Adagio*) in a modal D minor actually begins with the same motive, developing into a peaceful, folk-tune like canon with augmentations. The 'question' put three times by the trombones is left unanswered.

The most individual movements are, however, the scherzo (*Allegro non troppo*) and

the finale (*Pesante, tempo moderato – Allegretto*). The scherzo begins with an incisive series of *staccato* chords in the brass, followed by a Beethovenian main theme. After a pastoral second theme a strangely chromatic, floating third theme makes its appearance. It is one of Madetoja's most genial melodic inventions, and is also rhythmically attractive: written in 3+3 dotted crotchets it 'swims' against the even metre. Like Schubert's 'Great' C major Symphony, the finale is solemnly opened with a unison introductory theme in the horns. But the ceremonial air turns to its antithesis when the famous 'waltz in even metre' is reached. At the end the stately introduction returns, but the work finishes softly, quietening down as the Symphony withdraws into its own secretive world.

#### Suite from 'Okon Fuoko'

Madetoja planned to gather three orchestral suites from the music of the one-act ballet-pantomime *Okon Fuoko*, but unfortunately only one suite was finished. The principal character of the ballet, Okon Fuoko, is a Japanese doll maker. Suddenly, one of his dolls, Umegava, comes to life, and this leads to the suicide of Okon Fuoko. Robert Kajanus conducted the first performance of the Suite in Helsinki on 15 December 1927. Stylistically, *Okon Fuoko* belongs to the boldest music

Madetoja ever wrote. Rhythmical inventiveness and rich chromatic and pentatonic ('Japanese') harmony is made complete by the colourful orchestration.

The first-night performance of the ballet on 12 February 1930 in Helsinki was in fact the first real set-back in Madetoja's career. While the music itself was unanimously praised, there was an equally singular disappointment with the dramatic weakness of the libretto by the Danish playwright Poul Knudsen, and the combination of speech, song, dance and pantomime was regarded as a failure. The work was performed only three times, and the performance originally scheduled for Copenhagen never took place.

#### Suite from 'The Ostrobothnians'

The Suite was gathered directly from the music of the opera (first and second acts) in 1923, while this work was still unfinished. Robert Kajanus conducted the first performance in Bergen, Norway, on 8 March that year, and the Suite was first heard in Finland the next month in a Helsinki concert of Madetoja's works conducted by the composer – the same occasion at which the *Comedy Overture* was given its premiere. The movements are as follows: 'Lakeus' (The Plain), 'Vangin laulu' (Song of the Prisoner), 'Häijyt' (The Ruffians), 'Tulopeli' (Entrance Music) and 'Hypyt' (Leaps and Jumps). The third movement also appears

with the title 'Tappelu' (Rough-and-tumble) – which is incorrect, insofar as there is no fight scene in the opera. The Suite gives a good picture of Madetoja's ability to paint musical landscapes. The long-held high tonic pedal in the violins in 'The Plain' illustrates the vastness of the plainland of Central

Ostrobothnia. 'Song of the Prisoner' is a folk tune modified by the composer and one of the main themes of the opera. The three last movements display the rural folk elements of the opera.

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**Petri Sakari**

MADETOJA: ORCHESTRAL WORKS - Iceland Symphony Orchestra/Sakari



**CHANDOS** DIGITAL

**CHAN 6626(2)**

**Leevi Madetoja (1887–1947)**

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 - 3 **Symphony No. 1, Op. 29** 23:20  
in F major

4 - 7 **Symphony No. 2, Op. 35** 43:26  
in E flat major

TT 66:55

COMPACT DISC TWO

1 **Comedy Overture, Op. 53** 8:20

2 - 5 **Symphony No. 3, Op. 55** 32:11  
in A major

6 - 11 **Suite No. 1 from 'Okon Fuoko', Op. 58** 13:42

12 - 16 **Suite from 'The Ostrobothnians', Op. 52** 16:45  
TT 71:25

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