

ZOE KNIGHTON | IAN MUNRO

# NORTHERN CELLO





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*Edvard Grieg*

### **Cello Sonata in A minor, Op. 36**

- 1 Allegro agitato 10'19"
- 2 Andante molto tranquillo 6'49"
- 3 Allegro 12'42"

*Edvard Grieg*

### **Elegiac melodies, Op. 34**

- 4 Herzwunden 3'41"
- 5 Letzter Frühling 5'00"

*Jean Sibelius*

### **Four pieces for cello and piano, Op. 78**

- 6 Impromptu 2'13"
- 7 Romance 3'45"
- 8 Religioso 5'31"
- 9 Rigaudon 2'34"



*Peteris Vasks*

### **Gramata Cellam**

- (for solo cello)
- 10 Fortissimo marcatissimo 5'39"
  - 11 Pianissimo dolcissimo 6'29"

*Arvo Pärt*

- 12 **Fratres** 12'35"

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Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)  
**Cello Sonata in A minor, Op. 36**

Chamber works are often written with someone special in mind and both Sibelius and Grieg had brothers who were amateur cellists accounting for these compositions. Grieg's relationship with his brother (John) was rather estranged and the sonata was premiered in 1883 with Grieg at the piano and not his brother, but his brother's teacher, Julius Klengel, at the cello. This particular sonata

has had its share of bad press since the premiere (criticisms over the structure, the imposed sense of nationalism and the use of his own themes to source material) but the evidence from the performers sharing their name with the early performances prove its place in the canon and the obvious warmth and affection that cellists have for this deliciously over-the-top romantic saga that comprises the three movements. Grieg himself played it with Piatti (whom he thought

frightfully dull) and Casals (whom he admired intensely). It was a performance by our very own Percy Grainger and Herman Sandby that was given for Grieg himself that showed the work's true potential. "There were things that Grainger got much more out of than I myself did and on the whole, I received a grand lesson." were the notes from his diary at the time.

The first movement sways with true romantic turbulence and grandeur. The second movement uses themes from his own incidental music originally scored for four cellos to a play about King Sigurd Jorsalfar of Norway prompting the comments of a lack of originality (which,

if it were a crime, most composers would be found guilty) and the third is guilty of the nationalism charge with a delightfully vigorous folk dance. In answer to the patriotism in his compositions, Grieg is famous for saying, "music which matters, however national it may be, is lifted high above the purely national level."

His two Elegiac melodies are delightful examples of the miniatures for which he was so famous. They

were written in 1880 after a bout of illness. The inspiration to return to work came from a nationalist poet, Aasmund Olafsson Vinje who wrote largely of Norwegian rural life. These two melodies are from two songs included in his Op. 33 set and set them for string orchestra with brilliant orchestration. The first tells of the strength of faith and how adversity and the wounds of life will not destroy it. The second, Last spring tells of the joy and rebirth of spring with the knowledge that one may not live to see another.



was given to her at the age of 12. From all accounts, Sibelius was a truly gifted violinist playing regularly in string quartets but failing an audition for the Vienna Philharmonic because he was too nervous.

With all these pieces being written during WWI, there is an air of optimism

and also a sense of nationalism in the Rigaudon. Sibelius apparently asked himself if the Romance was too traditional but despite this, it is one of his most popular short works.

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

**Four pieces for violin (or cello) and piano Op. 78 (1915-17)**

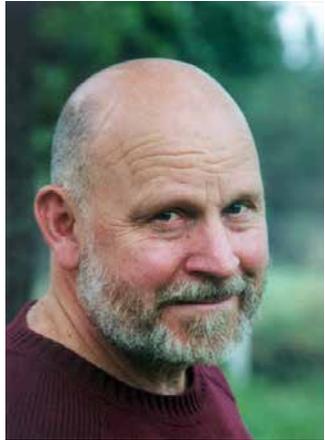
Three of these four pieces were written originally for violin. It was the Religioso (1917) that was written specifically for his brother Christian in thanks for his recovery from illness suspected to have been pernicious anaemia. This illness was fatal in 1922. Christian was a very good cellist, chosen to work with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra but was Professor of neurology and psychiatry and too busy to perform.

Sibelius' grand-daughter performed this religioso at Aino Sibelius' funeral in 1969 on Sibelius' own violin that



Peteris Vasks (b. 1946)

### **Gremata Cellam**



Peteris Vasks was born in Latvia and lived through the Russian occupation. Vasks has repeatedly made reference to the suffering that the Latvian people have experienced and even the creative repression.

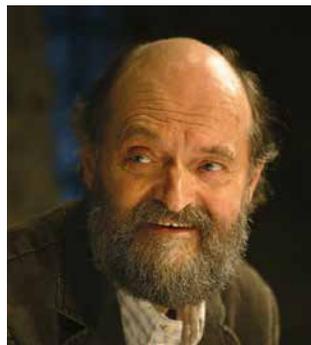
This became the catalyst for compositions from an early age and at 10 years old, he had already composed a freedom-fighting song for those who had been expelled from their houses overnight and sent to detention camps. Most notably, his brass quintet “Music for Fleeting Birds” which was composed in 1977 exhibited the yearning hope for freedom of travel which was forbidden throughout the Soviet occupation. Written one year later, this work holds that same yearning and angst. The same frustration and sense of longing. With the two movements at opposing ends of the dynamic and expressive possibilities one can find

an intense dialogue between the two as the battle of power and ideas is constantly explored.

Vasks has described the cello as “his inner voice”. He has written a number of works for cello including two cello concertos and has explored the sonorities of combining the human voice with the sound of the cello.

Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)

### **Fratres**



This work uses the technique “tintinnabulation” which was developed by Pärt. He is quoted as saying, “I have discovered that it is enough when

a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements - with one voice, with two voices. I build with the most primitive materials - with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells. And that is why I call it tintinnabulation.”

Written in 1977, this work has had many forms (strings and percussion,

with and without solo violin, for wind octet and percussion, for string quartet, and for eight cellos.) and uses a 6 bar pattern that is repeated throughout with an emphasis on patterning and moving to new tonal levels by thirds. Each section has its own character based on the rhythmic patterns, united by the same harmonic progression.

One can hear his study of Gregorian and orthodox chant as a very religious man. Like Vasks, he suffered under a Soviet regime in Estonia and after angering the authorities with his earlier styles, he found a quieter defiance in his music.



## **Ian Munro**

Ian Munro has emerged over recent years as one of Australia's most distinguished and awarded musicians, with a career that has taken him to thirty countries in Europe, Asia, North America and Australasia. His award in 2003 of Premier Grand Prix at the Queen Elisabeth International Competition for composers (Belgium) is a unique achievement for an Australian and follows on from multiple prizes in international piano competitions in Spain (Maria Canals), Italy (Busoni), Portugal (Vianna da Motta) and the UK, where his second

prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition in 1987 established his international profile.

After completing his early training in Melbourne under the guidance of Roy Shepherd, a pupil of Alfred Cortot, and furthered his studies in Vienna, London and Italy with Noretta Conci, Guido Agosti and Michele Campanella, his international career began in the UK, where he has performed with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia, English Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players, BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and broadcast widely for the BBC. Elsewhere, he has performed with orchestras in Poland, Italy, Portugal, Russia, the USA, China, New Zealand and all the major orchestras in Australia in over sixty piano concerti. A widely experienced chamber musician, Ian joined the acclaimed Australia Ensemble in Sydney in 2000.

Ian has recorded CDs for ABC Classics, Hyperion, Cala, Naxos, Marco Polo, Tall Poppies and the UK label Warehouse. Recent discs the collected music by Tasmanian composer Katharine Parker and the piano concerto by Elena Kats-Chernin, commissioned for Ian Munro by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. During the last few concert seasons Ian has

performed concerti by Ravel, Munro, Mozart, Kats-Chernin, Gershwin and Edwards, toured to the UK, Russia, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Uzbekistan and throughout Australia and New Zealand in recitals, chamber music and concerto performances.

Increasingly in demand as a composer, he was Featured Composer for Musica Viva in 2011. His flute concerto and song cycle 'Three birds' receive their premieres in 2016 with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Australia Ensemble respectively.



## **Zoe Knighton**

Zoe is a founding member of Flinders Quartet, one of Australia's finest chamber ensembles. Flinders Quartet appears regularly at Australian festivals as well as their own celebrated subscription series. The group has commissioned many works and continues to be a champion of Australian Chamber music. "Flinders Quartet...whose players give such care and unanimity of musical thought to Australian Chamber Music" Peter McCallum, Sydney Morning Herald

After starting cello at the age of 9 with Jill Kahans, and graduating from the University of Melbourne with the highest mark of her year,

Zoe went on to establish herself as one of the country's most sought after cellists. Having studied with Christian Wojtowicz, Michel Strauss (Paris) Nelson Cooke, and Angela Seargeant, she has continued this legacy by teaching at The University of Melbourne, Victorian College of the Arts, Monash University, The University of Tasmania, The Australian Youth Orchestra, The Victorian Amateur Chamber Music Society as well as other masterclasses and workshops.

Zoe has played numerous concertos with Melbourne Orchestras and with pianist Amir Farid, made an impressive debut at the Melbourne Recital Centre to great critical acclaim in 2009. Their partnership continues with recordings for ABC, concerts throughout Australia and the release of five CDs on the Move label. She has been praised for her "thrilling tenor sound" (Limelight magazine) "sublime phrasing" and "many great technical demands carried off with ease."

In 2017, Zoe releases the six suites for violoncello solo by J.S. Bach with concerts comprising all six suites. Zoe continues to freelance with Melbourne's orchestras and is a regular panelist for National and international competitions.

**Recorded at Move Records studio in July and November 2016**

**Recording:**

**Vaughan McAlley and Martin Wright**

**Editing: Vaughan McAlley**

**Mastering: Martin Wright**

**Photo of Zoe Knighton: Nicholas Purcell**

**Photo of Ian Munro: Patrick Boland**

**Photo of Ian and Zoe:**

**Finley Knighton-Collinson**

**All other photos: Martin Wright**

**The Sibelius monument (1967) on the front cover is located in Helsinki, Finland. The monument is composed of 600 stainless steel pipes and was designed by Eila Hiltunen.**

**The original composer's hut of Edvard Grieg is located in the garden of Hotel Ullensvang, Lofthus, Norway. His piano can be seen inside the hut.**

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