

Aino

Instrumentation

- 3 Flutes (3rd doubling Piccolo), 3 Oboes, 3 Clarinets in Bb (2nd doubling Clarinet in Eb), 3 Bassoons (3rd doubling Contrabassoon)
- 4 Horns in F, 3 Trumpets in C, 3 Trombones, 1 Tuba
- Timpani; Perc. 1: Suspended Cymbal, Crash Cymbals, Glockenspiel, Tubular Bells; Perc. 2: Snare Drum, Rainstick, Marimba (4.5 octave), Crash Cymbals, Tam-tam, Glockenspiel; Perc. 3: Vibraphone, Bass Drum, Thunder Sheet, Snare Drum
- Harp
- Strings

Aino, tone poem for orchestra

Duration: 14 minutes.

Aino contemplates the sea, exquisitely dressed and inconsolable. It's been three days since she left home, wandering through the woods. At dawn, her eyes still moist, she sees three beautiful maidens atop a headland, bathing in the waters. Enthralled, Aino sheds her clothes and joins them, but as she reaches the summit, the rock begins to sink, taking her to the bottom of the sea and thus silencing her sorrows.

In pure tone poem tradition, "Aino" follows the story of the eponymous hapless maiden as told in the fourth poem of the Kalevala (Finland's national epic), but although Aino is the central character of this poem, she is certainly not the only one. There is Joukahainen, her brother, who promises her hand to Väinämöinen in a desperate bid to save his own life. There's Väinämöinen, the grand and powerful suitor, whose formidable powers can't prevent him from ultimately losing Aino. There's Aino's mother, whose pain at losing her daughter prompts her to cry rivers of tears, which eventually give birth to waterfalls, mountains, and forests; and there's the hare, who amongst all animals, is entrusted with the bitter task of relaying the news of Aino's passing.

I first learned of the Kalevala through Sibelius' oeuvre, but it was not until I moved to Helsinki that I fully grasped the unique place it holds in Finland's sense of national identity. It therefore came as no surprise when Conductor Klaus Mäkelä brought up the story of Aino as a possible source of inspiration for this commission. This piece is first and foremost a gift to Klaus, to whom I am deeply grateful for taking my music with him wherever he goes, but it is also a homage to the country that welcomed me as a young student, and with which I still have very strong and loving ties.

As soon as I read Aino's story, I was struck by its rich sound world, which although not obvious at first, becomes clear as the poem progresses. The anguished sobs of Aino; the mesmerizing vision of the three maidens bathing; the rock sinking to the bottom of the sea; the hare running across the forest to relay the news; the mother wailing upon learning of her daughter's fate, and the waterfalls, golden mountains, and trees that emerge from her endless stream of tears; and finally, the three

cuckoos, singing eerily atop three birch trees. All these elements offer a plethora of tantalizing sounds, all of which inspired and guided the way I orchestrated the piece. The cuckoo's song, due to its universally known musical cadence, makes a prominent appearance at the climax across all instrumental sections, and makes its presence felt all the way up until the end (on Glockenspiel). But I also chose to thread the cuckoo's song into an earlier musical motive: my imagined "song of the three maidens", uttered as they first entice Aino to join them, and represented in the orchestra by two solo violins and a solo viola playing a haunting, whistle-like melody on high harmonics.

Writing "Aino" has been a wonderful journey into the world of the Tondichtung or tone poem, and in many ways, it is a departure from other relentless and rhythmically-driven works of mine. Here, instead of trying to tell the story by imposing my point of view, I chose to quiet myself and listen to what the story had to tell me. It seemed all but fitting, given that it was in Finland that I learned the art of listening, and that Silence can be just as powerful as a thunderous orchestral tutti.

This work was commissioned by Orchestre de Paris, Concertgebouworkest, and Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and it is dedicated to the wondrous Klaus Mäkelä, whose young age belies his timeless wisdom and deeply profound understanding of music.

Jimmy López Bellido © 2022