

CHANDOS

ALFVÉN

Festspel · Suite from 'Gustaf II Adolf'

RAUTAVAARA

Cantus Arcticus

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra

NEEME JÄRVI



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Hugo Alfvén, 1928

Hugo Alfvén (1872 – 1960)

- 1 **Festspel, Op. 25** (1907) **7:44**
(Festival Play)
Fest-Polonaise
for Large Orchestra
Allegro con brio – Allegro maestoso – Poco più vivo

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928 – 2016)

- Cantus arcticus, Op. 61** (1972) **18:37**
Concerto for Birds and Orchestra
Dedicated to Urho Kekkonen
Written for the Arctic University of Oulu 1972
Sound effects by Daniel Arnesson and Jan Svanberg
- 2 The Bog (Think of autumn and of Tchaikovsky). ♩ = c. 88 –
♩ = c. 52 / ♩ = 52 – ♩ = 96 (clarinet only) **7:48**
- 3 Melancholy. ♩ = c. 50 **3:55**
- 4 Swans migrating. ♩ = 100 –
(Sempre l'istesso tempo ♩ = 100) / ♩ = 84 –
♩ = 100 – ♩ = 92 **6:44**

Hugo Alfvén

Gustav II Adolf, Op. 49 (1932)

34:52

(Gustavus Adolphus)

Suite for Orchestra

- | | | | |
|----|---|--|----------|
| 5 | 1 | Vision. Lento | 3:26 |
| 6 | 2 | Intermezzo. Allegro agitato – Sempre più agitato – Tempo I | 2:23 |
| 7 | 3 | I Kejsar Ferdinands slottskapell (In Emperor Ferdinand's Royal Chapel). Andante solenne – Lento – Andante – Lento – Andante – Poco più mosso – Molto largo e tenuto – Tempo I – Lento | 6:16 |
| 8 | 4 | Sarabanda, for String Orchestra. Largamente | 2:24 |
| 9 | | Bourrée, for Three Bassoons. Allegro vivace | 1:49 |
| 10 | | Menuett. Allegro | 2:48 |
| 11 | 5 | Elegi. Till Carin, min hustru. Adagio | 4:33 |
| 12 | 6 | Breitenfeld. Bataljmålning (Breitenfeld. Battle Painting). Andante – Più lento – Tempo I – Allegro moderato – Poco più vivo – Più agitato – Meno mosso – Allegro moderato – Poco più vivo – Più agitato – Maestoso | 10:08 |
| | | | TT 61:27 |

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra

Sara Trobäck concertmaster

Neeme Järvi

Alfvén / Rautavaara: Orchestral Works

Hugo Alfvén

The final decade of the nineteenth century saw a remarkable cultural breakthrough across the Nordic countries. Among the figures leading that creative wave was the multitalented Swedish composer, artist, and writer Hugo Alfvén. Born in Stockholm on 1 May 1872 into a religious family (his father was director of the local Baptist choir), Alfvén was admitted as a fifteen-year-old to Kungliga Musikhögskolan (the Royal College of Music), in Stockholm – the oldest and most prestigious musical conservatory in the country – where he studied violin and composition with Johan Lindegren. Following his graduation, in 1891, he played in Kungliga Hovkapellet (the Royal Opera Orchestra), before undertaking further study abroad, in Berlin, Dresden, Paris, and Brussels, supported by a Jenny Lind scholarship. His First Symphony was premièred shortly before he departed for the continent, in 1897, but it was the first performance of his Second Symphony, in May 1899, that established him as one of the most talented composers of his generation; the influential composer and music critic Wilhelm Peterson-Berger favourably compared the success of Alfvén's work to

that of Jean Sibelius's First, which had been premièred just the previous month. Alfvén held the post of Professor of Composition at Kungliga Musikhögskolan in 1903–04, before being appointed Director of Music at Uppsala University, in 1910. Here he combined his compositional activity with work as conductor, especially of choral music. He served as director of the Siljansbygdens Körförbund (Siljan Choral Society) from 1904 until 1957, just three years before his death, and he was also, at Uppsala University, conductor of its Allmänna Sången (General Chorus) and Orphei Drängar (Sons of Orpheus), as well as Svenska Sångarförbundet (Swedish Association of Singers). A gifted watercolourist as well as musician, Alfvén was first married to the painter Marie Triepcke (1867–1940), previously the wife of the Danish artist Peder Severin Krøyer, with whom he settled at a beautiful rural property named Alfvängården, at Leksand, in the central Swedish province of Dalarna.

Festspel, Op. 25

Alfvén's musical style was heavily influenced by Wagner as well as Richard Strauss, but Alfvén also maintained a keen interest

Neeme Järvi at the live recorded concert,
Gothenburg, October 2024



Sofia Sabel Fotografi AB

in Swedish folk music and its vernacular artistic traditions, from painting and dance to architecture. His output eventually comprised five symphonies, three orchestral rhapsodies including *Midsommarvaka* (Midsummer Vigil), which has since become one of the most celebrated works in the Nordic musical repertoire, as well as two outstanding ballet scores, *Bergakungen* (The King of the Mountains) and *Den förlorade sonen* (The Prodigal Son), which was among his very final works. *Festspel* (Festival Play), Op. 25, was commissioned to inaugurate the new art nouveau building for Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern (the Royal Dramatic Theatre), or Dramaten, on Nybroplan, in Stockholm, in 1908. Alfvén's score was inspired by a historical tale recounted by the author Verner von Heidenstam – who received the 1916 Nobel Prize for literature – during a trip to Lake Vättern, in central Sweden, which revolved around the adventures in Poland of a band of soldiers called King Karl's Men, in the service of the Swedish King Karl XII. Alfvén's music opens with a brilliant series of fanfares, creating an irresistible sense of excitement and action. A glittering polonaise follows, showcasing Alfvén's deft control of orchestral colour and timbre, while the trio has an alluring Tchaikovskian melodic elegance. The pace quickens as the polonaise returns, bringing

the music to a suitably rousing and celebratory conclusion.

Suite from music to the play 'Gustav II Adolf', Op. 49

The impetus for Alfvén's *Gustav II Adolf*, Op. 49, was provided by a request, in 1932, from the director of Kungliga Teatern, John Forsell, for music to accompany a play written by Ludvig Nordström to commemorate the 300-year anniversary of the death of the protestant Swedish monarch at the battle of Lützen, at the end of the Thirty Years War. Alfvén was attracted to the subject's rich historical associations, though he later recalled that he found Nordström's text unexciting and instead sought inspiration from the more colourful account in Carl Gustav Grimberg's monumental chronicle *Svenska folkets underbara öden* (The Wonderful Destiny of the Swedish People). Alfvén himself conducted the music for the work's première, at Kungliga Teatern, on 6 November 1932. The Suite which he later extracted from his score is itself a substantial work, comprising eight vivid movements of varying lengths. The first, 'Vision', opens with a wistful fantasy on the Lutheran hymn *Vår Gud är oss en väldig borg* (better known outside Sweden as 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott'). The second movement is a fierce *fugato*, suggesting the energetic gathering of military

forces on the eve of war, while the third, 'I Kejsar Ferdinands slottskapell' (In Emperor Ferdinand's Royal Chapel'), is an atmospheric evocation of the service of blessing in the household of Gustav's principal adversary, the catholic King Ferdinand of Bohemia: the writing for celeste and, later, for solo cello is especially effective. The next movement, the first in a trio of neo-baroque character pieces, is an elegant 'Sarabanda', recalling Edvard Grieg's famous 'Holberg' Suite, while the 'Bourrée' that follows is an earthy drinking song scored for a troupe of bassoons. A graceful minuet then restores a courtlier demeanour. The penultimate movement is a moving 'Elegi', often extracted from the suite and performed by itself, evoking Gustav Adolf's sombre reflections on the night before the battle of Breitenfeld, in 1631 – one of the key engagements in the campaign and a significant victory for the Swedish forces. The finale, depicting the battle itself, is an extended piece of dramatic writing, which takes its cue from another Lutheran melody (the psalm tune *Förfäras ej, du lilla hop*, 'Be not dismayed, thou little flock'), sung by the Swedish troops as they walked into the fray. The final bars bring Alfvén's historical tableau to a shimmering conclusion.

Einojuhani Rautavaara

Alfvén belongs to the generation of

composers, including his compatriot Wilhelm Stenhammar as well as Sibelius and his Danish colleague Carl Nielsen, whose work had a transformative impact upon music across the Nordic region. The Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara was born over fifty years later, in Helsinki, on 9 October 1928, and was one of the younger generation who had to confront the challenge of how to shape and articulate their own individual creative voice after such a formative period. The son of an opera singer and a doctor, Rautavaara studied at the University of Helsinki and, later, at the Sibelius Academy, where his teachers included Aarre Merikanto (1893 – 1958), one of the most important early pioneers of musical modernism in Finland. Rautavaara then travelled to the United States to study at the Juilliard School of Music, where he worked with Vincent Persichetti, and with Aaron Copland and Roger Sessions at Tanglewood. He then later studied in Switzerland and Germany before returning to Finland, where he taught at the Sibelius Academy from 1966 until 1990. A prolific composer, Rautavaara left an output that included eight symphonies and fifteen concertos, as well as much chamber music (four string quartets), many choral works, and almost a dozen operas on a range of biographical, historical, and mythical topics. He was compositionally active right up until

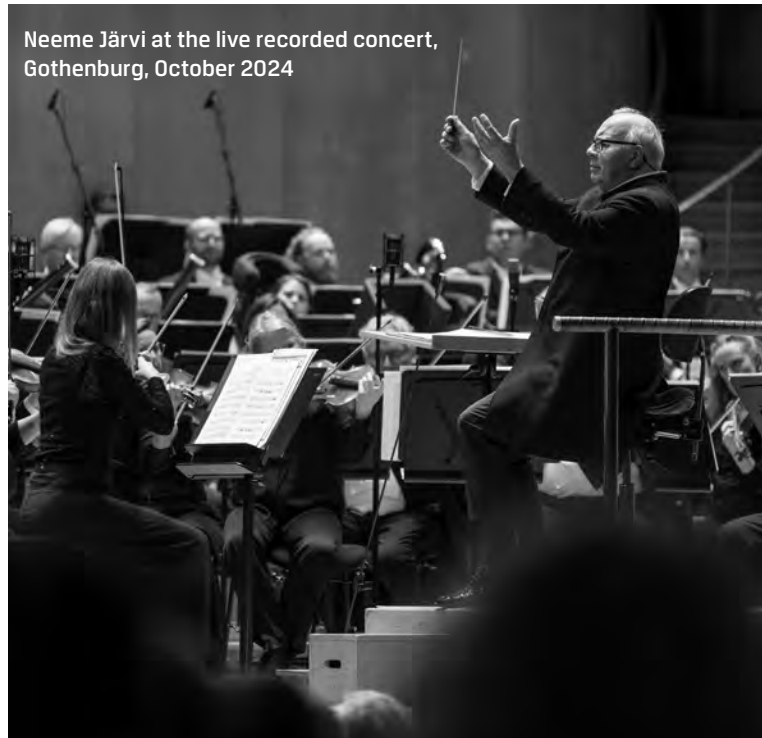
his death, at the age of eighty-seven, on 27 July 2016.

Cantus arcticus (Concerto for Birds and Orchestra)

In common with that of other Finnish composers of his generation, such as Erik Bergman, Aulis Sallinen, and Joonas Kokkonen, the early music of Rautavaara was marked by a strongly internationalist outlook, and he experimented with the atonal and serial techniques being advanced elsewhere on the continent in the 1950s. Rautavaara nevertheless always maintained a fiercely individual streak, and his work became increasingly eclectic and diverse as his career progressed. The *Cantus arcticus* is a key work in this stylistic shift, marking in some senses a return to a more unashamedly tonal-modal idiom characteristic of an earlier twentieth-century era. It was commissioned by the University of Oulu, in northern Finland, to honour its first formal doctoral graduation ceremony, in 1972, and was premièred, in Oulu, on 18 October that year. Rather than drawing on the area's institutional or social history, however, Rautavaara instead took his inspiration from the natural environment of the region, incorporating two-channel tape recordings of birdsong as part of the orchestral texture.

The *Cantus* is in three movements which share the same arc or formal trajectory. The first, 'The Bog', opens with a nostalgic intertwining flute arabesque; Rautavaara wrote at the head of the score, 'Think of autumn and of Tchaikovsky'. The tape recording, of wild cranes at Liminka Bay, south of Oulu, enters gradually but becomes the dominant textural layer, prompting a series of imitative responses in the live orchestra. This is followed by a hymn-like passage that begins in the lower strings and becomes steadily brighter before fading back into the bird song and arabesque figuration of the opening. The second movement, headed simply 'Melancholy', opens with the bird recording (larks along the shoreline), prefacing a luminous string chorale that grows in volume and textural density before dying away once more. The final movement, 'Swans migrating', might be a symbolic reference to Sibelius, who wrote of the sound of whooper swans flying overhead as one of the key influences on the finale of his Fifth Symphony. Rautavaara opens with the sound of the swans themselves, before recalling the flute arabesque with which the *Cantus* began. This becomes more complex and elaborate as the texture develops, layered with a further chorale-like melody that starts in the lower strings and slowly expands across the

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full range of the orchestra before passing into the distance. The final gesture is a single stroke on the tam-tam, harp, double-basses, and celeste, like a shaft of light gently cutting across the horizon as the birds disappear. At a time of dizzyingly rapid climate change and heightened environmental awareness, it is hard to imagine a more poignant evocation of seasonal change and the fragility of the natural world.

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Formed in 1905, the **Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra** (Göteborgs Symfoniker) today numbers 109 musicians. Its base is the Gothenburg Concert Hall (Göteborgs Konserthus), at Götaplatsen, which has gathered music lovers since 1935. Barbara Hannigan took up her appointment as Principal Guest Conductor at the start of the 2019 / 20 season and since 2025 has shared that title with Pekka Kuusisto. The Orchestra is also a proud partner of Barbara Hannigan's Equilibrium mentoring programme, which focuses on young singers at the start of their careers. The Chief Conductor of the Orchestra from 1907 to 1922 was Wilhelm Stenhammar who gave it a strong Nordic profile and invited his colleagues Carl Nielsen and Jean Sibelius to conduct the ensemble. Under the

direction of Neeme Järvi, from 1982 to 2004, it made a series of international tours as well as a hundred recordings and established itself among Europe's leading orchestras. In 1996, the Swedish Riksdag appointed it as Sweden's National Orchestra. The Orchestra's Chief Conductors have included such prominent figures as Mario Venzago (2004 – 07), Gustavo Dudamel (2007 – 12), and Santtu-Matias Rouvali (2017 – 25). Anna-Karin Larsson is CEO and Artistic Director, Gustavo Dudamel Honorary Conductor, and Neeme Järvi Chief Conductor Emeritus. The Orchestra's owner is the Västra Götaland Region. The Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra works regularly with conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Joana Carneiro, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Christian Zacharias, and Anja Bihlmaier.

The head of a musical dynasty, **Neeme Järvi** is one of today's most esteemed maestros. He conducts the world's most prominent orchestras and works alongside soloists of the highest calibre. Over his long and highly successful career he has held chief conductor positions across the world with orchestras such as the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, among others. He is currently Honorary Artistic

Director for Life of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Emeritus of both the Residentie Orchestra The Hague and Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He also holds the titles of Chief Conductor Emeritus of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Conductor Laureate of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He spent three summers between 2013 and 2016 as Head of Conducting and Artistic Advisor of the Gstaad Conducting Academy. Among recent and future appearances are engagements with European orchestras such as the Berliner Philharmoniker, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Orchestre national de France, and Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, as well as major orchestras in the USA and Asia. In November 2023 he conducted a highly successful tour of China, which was widely acclaimed.

A prolific recording artist, Neeme Järvi has amassed a discography of nearly 500 recordings. He has been a star recording artist with Chandos Records for over thirty years, his most recent releases, with orchestras such as the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Estonian National Symphony Orchestra,

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, and Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, including discs of the three full-length ballets of Tchaikovsky and works by Joachim Raff, Kurt Atterberg, Saint-Saëns, and Martinů. Whilst highlights of his extensive discography for international record companies include critically acclaimed complete cycles of works by many of the great composers, he has also championed less widely known composers such as Wilhelm Stenhammar, Hugo Alfvén, and Niels W. Gade, as well as composers from his native Estonia, including Rudolf Tobias and Arvo Pärt. In September 2018 he received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the magazine *Gramophone*.

Neeme Järvi has been honoured with many international prizes and accolades. Named as one of the 'Estonians of the Century', he holds various awards from his native country, including an honorary doctorate from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn, and honorary doctorates from Wayne State University, in Detroit, the universities of Michigan and Aberdeen, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. He has also been appointed Commander of the North Star Order by King Karl XVI Gustaf of Sweden.

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ALFVÉN / RAUTAVAARA: ORCHESTRAL WORKS

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Hugo Alfvén (1872–1960)

- 1 Festspel, Op. 25 (1907) 7:44
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Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos House,
1 Commerce Park, Colchester,
Essex CO2 8HX, UK.
enquiries@chandos.net

Contact:

Naxos Deutschland Musik & Video
Vertriebs-GmbH, Gruber Str. 46b,
DE-85586 Poing, Germany.
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