

May 1, 2027

7:30 pm

“Conductor Wannabes and Sibelius Symphony No. 2”

Scherzo from *Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)

Wannabe 2nd Place Winner

Pomp and Circumstance March in D Major, Op. 39, No. 1

Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)

Wannabe 1st Place Winner

Wannabe Conductors

Violin Concerto in B Minor

William Walton (1902 - 1983)

- I. Andante tranquillo
- II. Presto capriccioso alla napolitana
- III. Vivace

James Thompson, violin

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43

Jean Sibelius (1865 - 1957)

- I. Allegretto
- II. Tempo Andante, ma rubato
- III. Vivacissimo-Lento e suave-Tempo primo – Lento e suave
- IV. Finale: Allegro moderato

May 1, 2027

7:30 pm

"Conductor Wannabes and Sibelius Symphony No. 2"

Scherzo from *Midsummer Night's Dream*

Felix Mendelssohn (b. Hamburg, Germany, February 3, 1809; d. Leipzig, Germany, November 4, 1847)

Felix Mendelssohn was a German composer, pianist, organist and conductor of the early Romantic era. This music to Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains an overture and 12 episodes: instrumental and choral dialogues with orchestral accompaniment. The suite *A Midsummer Night's Dream* combines the overture and four symphonic episodes. This *Scherzo* is dedicated to the beauty and spaciousness in the world of the elves.



Felix Mendelssohn

Wannabe 2nd Place Winner

Pomp and Circumstance March in D Major, Op. 39, No. 1

Edward Elgar (b. Broadheath, United Kingdom, June 2, 1857; d. Worcester, United Kingdom, February 23, 1934)

Pomp and Circumstance, March in D Major, Op. 39, No. 1 (Land of Hope and Glory) refers to the famous trio theme from Sir Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance Military Marches*, Op. 39, which was composed for the coronation of King Edward VII in 1901. The lyrics were added by A.C. Benson and are a staple at graduations and the Last Night of the BBC Proms in London. The piece is available in various published formats, including sheet music for different ensembles (like flex-band) and recordings.



Edward Elgar

Wannabe 1st Place Winner

Violin Concerto in B Minor

William Walton (b. Oldham, United Kingdom, March 29, 1902; d. Ischia, Italy, March 8, 1983)

- I. Andante tranquillo
- II. Presto capriccioso alla napolitana
- III. Vivace

James Thompson, violin

The orchestration of this work is two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, harp, strings, with solo violin. Duration is 31 minutes.

William Walton's musical talents were spotted when he was still a young boy; he took piano and violin lessons, though he never mastered either instrument. He was more successful as a singer. Sir William Turner Walton was born into a musical household in Lancashire, England, the second son in a family of three boys and a girl.

His father, Charles Alexander Walton, was a musician who had trained at the Royal Manchester College of Music under Charles Hallé, a British pianist and conductor. Mr. Walton made a living as a singing teacher and church organist. Walton's mother, Louisa Maria, had been a singer. Clearly, the young boy received a great deal of music experience at home.

Walton was sent to a local school, but in 1912 he entered as a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral School in Oxford University. He remained at the choir school for the next six years. The young Walton's musical potential was seen and was encouraged by his teachers who saw some manuscripts of Walton's early compositions

The young Walton spent much time in the university library, studying scores by Stravinsky, Debussy, Sibelius, Roussel, and others. He took music lessons with Ernest Ansermet, Ferruccio Busoni, and Edward J. Dent, who were famous conductors and musicians. He attended the Russian ballet and met Stravinsky and Gershwin. Walton wrote an experimental string quartet that was performed at a festival of new music at Salzburg in 1923. The composer, Alban Berg, heard the performance and was impressed enough to take Walton to meet Arnold Schoenberg, Berg's teacher and the founder of the Second Viennese School.

The *Violin Concerto* was written in 1938–39 and dedicated to Jascha Heifetz, a world renowned violin soloist who commissioned the work and performed it at its premiere on December 7, 1939 with the Cleveland Orchestra conducted by Artur Rodziński. The contract between composer and soloist gave Heifetz the exclusive rights to the concerto for two years.

According to the William Walton Trust, “In 1936 Jascha Heifetz took Walton out to lunch in London and commissioned him to write a Violin Concerto for 300 pounds, a great honor from the greatest virtuoso of the day. Walton was delighted and accepted Heifetz's commission. He said he did not know how to make the violin part elaborate enough, and therefore worthy of Heifetz. In a panic, he thought he had better give it instead to Fritz Kreisler (another world-class solo violinist) to play. Eventually, he was satisfied that he had exhausted the possibilities of what one could do on a violin. Yet he always thought of it as a rather intimate piece.”

Heifetz was born in 1901 and died in 1987. He was a Russian-American violinist, widely regarded as one of the greatest violinists of all time. Born in Vilna (the capital of Lithuania), Heifetz was soon recognized as a child prodigy and was trained in the Russian violin school in St. Petersburg. Accompanying his parents, he moved to the United States as a teenager, where his Carnegie Hall debut was rapturously received. Fritz Kreisler, another leading violinist of the twentieth century, said after hearing Heifetz's debut, “We might as well take our fiddles and break them across our knees.”

By the age of 18, Heifetz was the highest-paid violinist in the world. He had a long and successful concert career. After an injury to his right (bowing) arm in 1972, he switched his focus to teaching and served on the faculty of UCLA.

Michael Steinberg writes in his book *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*, “Several projects kept Walton from getting to the *Violin Concerto* before 1938. Walton and Heifetz first met in 1936, and shortly after the concerto was composed in 1938 and 1939. It was known that Walton composed at a frustratingly slow pace.”

The Violin Channel is the world's leading classical music platform featuring news, livestreams, masterclasses, and more for musicians and fans worldwide. *The Violin Channel*, based in New York City, also provides background information on famous musicians. “In the spring of 1939, Walton visited America to incorporate into the solo part Heifetz's own suggestions for presenting the substance of the music in the most effective light that violin technique could cast upon it,” writes *The Violin Channel*.

The world premiere of the concerto was given by Heifetz and the Cleveland Orchestra conducted by Artur Rodziński on December 7, 1939. The same performers introduced the work to New York at Carnegie Hall in February 1941.

Walton later reorchestrated the concerto; the revised version was premiered in 1944. The work has been frequently recorded and has established itself as one of the composer's most durable compositions.

“Heifetz performed the work under the direction of Walton once. Yet he collaborated with other orchestras playing the *Violin Concerto* and recorded it two times – once with conductor Eugene Goossens and once with Walton himself,” according to author Dario Sarlo in his book, *The Performance Style of Jascha Heifetz*. “The Walton *Violin Concerto* requires a high level of technical ability.”

In fact, Walton observed that Heifetz seemed to demand such difficulty in the solo part of his concerto as to intimidate other violinists from tackling it. Walton died at La Mortella, Italy on March 8, 1983, at the age of 80.

What to Listen For

1. Andante tranquillo

The first movement is the slowest of the three. It is predominantly lyrical. The solo violin launches straight into the main theme after a brief rhythmical orchestral opening which pervades the whole movement. The second subject is a quiet and flowing melody for strings and woodwind. The opening theme marked "*sognando*" – dreamily – is developed in a variety of moods (the analyst Christopher Palmer calls them "an extraordinary number of personality changes") before a written cadenza, and a concluding recapitulation of the opening melody, with brief reappearances of the secondary theme.

2. Presto capriccioso alla napolitana

The second movement is the opening presto and requires extreme virtuosity from the soloist – Palmer points to harmonics followed by pizzicati in a fast-moving two-in-a-bar. The intermittent tarantella rhythm gives way to a subsidiary waltz-like theme. The first section eases into the trio, a canzonetta introduced by a solo horn. The analyst Frank Howes notes that Walton disliked identical repetitions of a theme, and at each reappearance the gentle theme of the canzonetta starts on different beats of the bar, changing the rhythmic emphasis of the melody. The scherzo returns, and after the cellos repeat the horn theme from the start of the canzonetta the movement ends quietly.

3. Vivace

The rondo finale has three main subjects. Both Howes and Palmer describe the first as "gruff" and the second as "shrill". The first is played by the lower strings, joined by the bassoons and clarinets in a march-like theme, in which the soloist joins. The third theme is lyrical and there is a continuing contrast between the two elements. The solo violin then plays a variant of the opening theme of the first movement, with the first theme of the finale now serving as its ostinato accompaniment, before an accompanying cadenza and a final alla marcia.



William Walton

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43

Jean Sibelius (b. Hämeenlinna, Finland, December 8, 1865; d. Ainola, Järvenpää, Finland, September 20, 1957)

- I. **Allegretto**
- II. **Tempo Andante, ma rubato**
- III. **Vivacissimo-Lento e suave-Tempo primo – Lento e suave**
- IV. **Finale: Allegro moderato**

The orchestration of this work is two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings. Duration is 43 minutes.

“Sibelius began his *Symphony No. 2* in 1901, shortly after the successful premiere of the popular *Finlandia*, completing it early in 1902, and conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic in the first performance on March 8th of that year,” writes Michael Steinberg in his book *The Symphony: A Listener’s Guide*. “Sibelius said, ‘My second symphony is a confession of the soul.’” Yes, it is beautiful and was an immediate success.

According to Guy Rickards in his book *Jean Sibelius*, “The *Second Symphony* has occupied a special place in Finland and has remained the most popular and often played of his symphonies.”

“More than any other single factor, the music of Jean Sibelius is quintessentially the product of the natural landscapes of his native country. Finland is a country of extremes and opposites, a young nation in an ancient land,” writes Rickards. “The surface topography includes a complex latticework of forests and over 100,000 lakes formed by the grinding process of the ice sheets’ last recessional some thousands of years ago.”

Author Stephen Johnson writes in an article for *BBC Music Magazine* (May 2025), “Sibelius crafted beauty from personal turmoil.” In fact, Sibelius is quoted in the *Magazine* as saying, “‘I managed when I had cigars and wine, but now I have to find new ways.’” (For a while he managed to give up alcohol and smoking.) Johnson continues, “Sibelius’s love of nature permeates his music, but it goes deeper than mood or simple tone-painting. For instance, wind and water don’t move at regular, steady speeds, and his music reflects that increasingly as he develops. Different strands in the music texture can seem to be moving at different tempos, like ocean crosscurrents, the eddies of a river or the interplay of breezes through tree canopies.”

Additionally, Tomi Mäkelä writes in his book *Jean Sibelius*, “Sibelius, as a ‘Finn,’ had a ‘primeval relationship to nature.’ It is a perfect example of the creation of analogies between music and nature.”

Lastly, “Sibelius had a log cabin,” writes author Mäkelä. “It was located not far from a clean lake, was surrounded by spruces and by land that was partly in its natural state and partly cultivated as his kitchen garden. He liked this landscape, ‘I leave it only when absolutely necessary.’”

“As a boy, Sibelius was of a dreamy, intermittently remote nature; his sense of fantasy and separateness was remarked on by many and found expression in some of his drawings,” continues Rickards.

“Evidence of his musicality emerged throughout his childhood. His gift of perfect pitch, the ability to recognize and distinguish notes precisely by ear alone was exceptional even with birdsong. He even related certain keys to particular colors.”

“Sibelius started school in 1872 (at age 7), and coming from a culturally Swedish background, he was sent first to a Swedish school and then, later, to a Finnish school,” states Rickards. “Music was already beginning to take hold of his imagination, and he began to scribble down musical phrases. His mother and her family had a longstanding amateur tradition of music-making and was prepared to encourage his interest in music.”

“Therefore, it was felt when he was ten years old that his musicality required more expert guidance and he began to study the violin. This instrument immediately captivated the boy, whose sights were set firmly on a virtuoso career,” adds Rickards. “Besides the violin, more solid music instruction was gained from a local composer and the study of textbooks in the school library.” He then formed a trio with his sister at the piano and brother on the cello. “The violin formed the center of his musical universe.”

The first recording, sponsored by the Finnish government, was conducted by Robert Kajanus with an unnamed orchestra for the British Columbia label in May 1930 at the Central Hall, Westminster on 78 rpm record disks.

Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra performed the symphony during broadcast concerts in 1939 and 1940 in NBC Studio 8-H; the 1940 performance was commercially released by RCA Victor in 1967 on LP.

In his 1935 recording with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Serge Koussevitzky conducting, Sibelius praised the performance, saying that Koussevitzky “interpreted my work with supreme mastery. I shall ever be deeply grateful to him for all that he has done for my art.”

Steinberg writes, “In 1940 many American orchestras were performing works by Sibelius. He was at his zenith in America, sustained by such conductors as Serge Koussevitzky (Boston Symphony), George Szell (Cleveland Orchestra), Eugene Ormandy (Minneapolis Symphony – now known as the Minnesota Orchestra), Artur Rodzinski (New York Philharmonic), and Leopold Stokowski (Philadelphia Orchestra).

Each one of my seven symphonies has its own style, and their creation in every case took a lot of time. But I never talk about my own work; for the next morning I would regret having done so. *Jean Sibelius*

What to Listen For

First Movement

"This first movement is very familiar," writes Steinberg. "It might seem haunting when it turns to 'darker colors.' The horns are soulful and slower. The clarinets take up the soulful horn phrase. A timpani roll sets the scene for the second movement."

Second Movement

"Each phrase of the bassoon melody is underlined by a timpani roll. Horns are added to the bassoon melody and quickly everything becomes louder, faster, and more agitated. Then there is stillness. When the music resumes after a long silence, it is as though the world has changed." Michael Steinberg adds, "There is a touch of Wagner to these measures. Yet, peace is short-lived. The music is full of rushing scales, leading to a more melancholy resolution. The music ends with a troubling abruptness."

Third Movement

"The buzzing-string music sets the very quick scherzo in motion," continues Steinberg. "Then a long silence follows, broken only by five drumbeats which clear the air for the trio, an oboe melody. Then the scherzo returns with a loud 'snarl' from the brass, making the atmosphere more tense than ever. The trio returns which soon bursts forth as the principal theme of the finale."

Fourth Movement

"This theme generates powerfully thrusting forward motion," writes Steinberg. "Yet it has a wistful melody played obsessively over running eighth notes in the lower strings. The strain is renewed in D Major in which the symphony so triumphantly ends."



Jean Sibelius