

MEDIA RELEASE

Level 5, 10 Hickson Road The Rocks
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Phone 61 2 8248 6500 Fax 61 2 8248 6599
sydneyfestival.org.au



Rautavaara

Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Australia



Photo: Sakari Viika

“The greatest Finnish composer since Sibelius.”

The New York Times

Conducted by **Benjamin Northey**, the **Sydney Symphony Orchestra** honours the life and work of the late Finnish composer, **Einojuhani Rautavaara** by performing some of his best-known orchestral music, *Cantus Arcticus*, *Isle of Bliss* and *Symphony No. 7: Angel of Light*.

In an output running to over 150 compositions, with dozens of orchestral pieces, Rautavaara’s eight symphonies went on to define Finnish music of the 20th century. Over a lifetime, his music touched on styles as disparate as neoclassicism and 12-tone serialism. Rautavaara reasoned: *“If a composer writes exactly the same thing now as he did when he was 20 years old he is infantile, isn’t he? Something happens with a man in his life. And that must influence his creation, his writing.”*

Rautavaara’s breakthrough work from 1972, *Cantus arcticus*, captures the majesty and vastness of the Arctic Circle in music for orchestra and birdsong that he recorded near the Arctic Circle. In this concert it’s followed by a sumptuous vision of an island paradise.

Angels have often featured in the titles of Rautavaara’s works, a response to the memory of an angel-like creature that appeared to him in childhood. Though not religious, he was interested in the ability of music to open a window to another world. *Angel of Light*, his seventh symphony and the last in his angel series, is characterised by broad, sweeping melodies and represents the culmination of his rich stylistic syntheses.

Rautavaara’s father was an opera singer and a cantor, as well as a founding member of the Finnish National Opera. Rautavaara himself studied music at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. He first came to international attention when he won the Thor Johnson Contest for his composition *A Requiem in Our Time* in 1954, and **Jean Sibelius** himself recommended him for a scholarship to study at

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the famous New York Juilliard School where he studied under **Vincent Persichetti, Roger Sessions** and **Aaron Copland**. He returned to his alma mater to teach and was eventually appointed professor of composition at the Sibelius Academy, a position he held from 1976 to 1990.

Where	City Recital Hall, Angel Place
When	11 January
Duration	75 mins
Tickets	\$60–\$90 + booking fee
Bookings	Sydney Festival on 1300 856 876 sydneyfestival.org.au/rautavaara

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For interviews and further information contact:

Jessica Keirle, Publicity Manager jessica.keirle@sydneyfestival.org.au

Julia Barnes, Publicist julia.barnes@sydneyfestival.org.au

Georgia McKay, Publicist georgia.mckay@sydneyfestival.org.au

