



# Heino ELLER

*works for  
violin and piano*

Andres Kaljuste  
Sophia Rahman



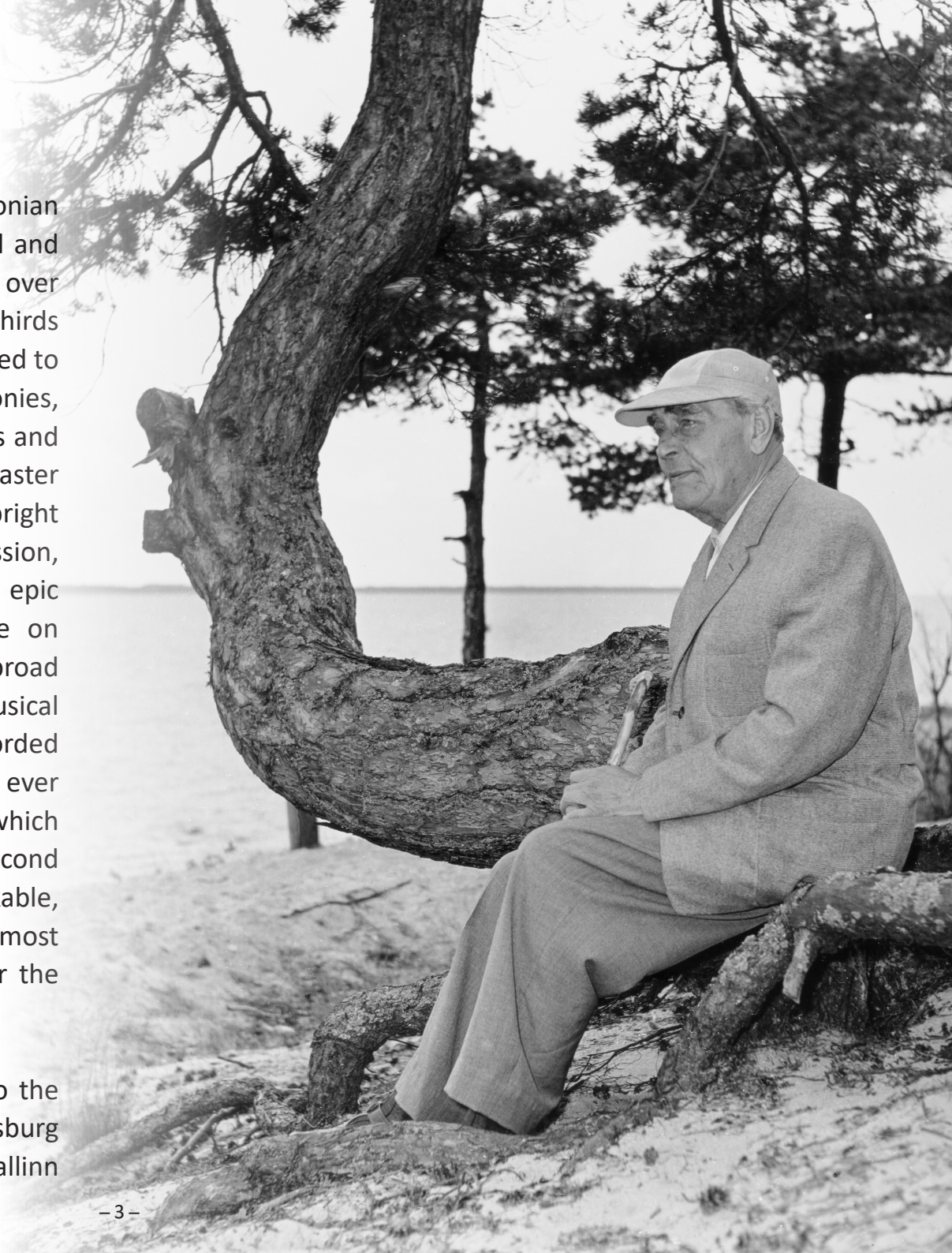
	Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2 in D minor (1946) *	[18:31]
1	I. Allegro	[7:36]
2	II. Andante	[5:31]
3	III. Presto	[5:23]
4	Fantasy for Solo Violin (1931) *	[7:07]
5	Valse mélancolique (1933)	[3:01]
6	Allegretto in D major (1917)	[1:37]
7	Dance in G minor (1951) *	[2:14]
8	Moment musical ('Muusikaline moment') (1912) *	[1:39]
9	Adagio in A minor (1956) *	[4:16]
10	Three Pieces: No. 1. Lyrical Song ('Lüüriline laul') (1949)	[2:18]
11	In Moonlight ('Kuuvalgel') (1918)	[5:33]
12	Fantasy in G minor (1916) *	[5:57]
13	Canzonetta in G major (1912) *	[2:18]
14	Dance in G major ('Cross-stick Dance') ('Ristpulkade tants') (c. 1953) *	[1:50]
15	Evening Song ('Õhtulaul') (1921, arr. 1952)	[2:02]
16	Berceuse (c. 1920) *	[2:04]
17	Nordic Tune ('Nordische weise') (1912) *	[2:40]
18	Pines ('Männid') (1929)	[3:46]
	<b>Total Timing:</b>	<b>[67:24]</b>

\* Première recording

## Heino ELLER: works for violin and piano

Heino Eller (1887–1970) is the founding father of Estonian professional instrumental music, both as a masterful and original composer, and as a teacher of composition over half a century. His output of around 300 titles — two thirds of which are for piano — is almost exclusively dedicated to instrumental music. Though Eller wrote three symphonies, around a dozen symphonic poems, six string quartets and four piano sonatas, he is nevertheless essentially a master of the small form. Eller's music is characterised by a bright pantheistic lyricism and a Nordic restraint in expression, whilst retaining a philosophically charged, at times epic undercurrent. His compositional logic relies more on graphic refinement than dramatic construction or broad colouring. Regardless of Eller's cultural stature and musical quality, many of his works are still not printed nor recorded to this day. In fact, this magnificent album is the first ever devoted to Eller's music for violin, about half of which is represented here — including the demanding second of his two sonatas for violin and piano, the remarkable, hyper-expressionist *Fantasy* for solo violin, and the most popular, emblematic work in Estonian repertoire for the instrument, *Pines*.

Eller's oeuvre allows for a neat division according to the Beethovenian tripartite model into the early (St Petersburg 1907–1920), middle (Tartu 1920–1940) and late (Tallinn



1940–1970) periods, albeit with the emphasis not only on the development of musical style, but equally on the geographical location of the composer and socio-historical circumstances. His music, at first a paragon of aesthetic novelty and highest European standard in the newly created Estonian Republic, came to be viewed as the embodiment in music of both Estonian Nature and the national character by the 1960s under the Soviet occupation. Eller's most celebrated composition is the *Kodumaine viis* (Homeland Tune / Native Melody, 1918-53), originally a humble piano piece, which in its arrangement for string orchestra became the equivalent of a national anthem in instrumental music. Up until Eller's centenary in 1987 — on the eve of the 'Singing Revolution' that led to Estonia regaining its independence — he was lauded as the premier composer of the country and dubbed the 'Estonian Sibelius' and 'Estonian Grieg'. However, unlike these great Nordic masters, Eller never made an international impact and, remarkably, since re-independence in 1991 his primacy in the Estonian musical sphere has been eclipsed by three other compatriots. In the 1990s it was the music of the 'spiritual father of Eller's youth', Rudolf Tobias (1873–1918) and in the early 2000s that of his greatest pupil from the Tartu period, Eduard Tubin (1905–1982), that dominated the Estonian cultural landscape. In the past decade, it has been Eller's brightest student from the Tallinn Conservatoire, Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) — the most played living composer in the world — who has received the ultimate accolades both in terms of public affection and state support.

Eller was born in the town of Tartu, then part of the Governate

of Livonia within the Russian Empire, which had seen the first wave of Estonian national awakening between 1860–1885. In the first years of the 20th century Tartu was the scene for the first all-Estonian symphony orchestra and string quartet where the young Eller played the violin. The flames of his musical ambitions were further fanned by Rudolf Tobias, a young and talented composer who had studied with Rimsky-Korsakov at the St Petersburg Conservatoire. In 1907 Eller entered the Conservatoire to study the violin, but had to abandon his chosen path due to overstraining his hand during the first year. Subsequently he followed his father's wishes and entered St Petersburg University to study law in 1908, where by 1913 he had finished the full curriculum, bar the final exams. During this time, he had, however, started to compose music. The first three surviving pieces for violin and piano, all presented on this album — *Canzonetta* [13], *Moment musical* [8] and *Nordic Tune* [17] — are dated 1912. In 1913 Eller re-entered the Conservatoire to study composition, but his studies were again interrupted. In 1915, like many top musicians of the time, Eller volunteered for the Russian Imperial Army, getting a place in one of the military orchestras to avoid being sent to the front. The *Fantasy in G minor* [12], written at that time, is also known in its arrangement for violin and orchestra from 1964. The austere expression of the initial theme feels like a harsh Nordic landscape in winter, and the work is capped by an exquisite coda on a tonic organ point. The St Petersburg works are chiefly marked by a need to acquire the basics of musical composition and emulate the Romantic tradition, as the sentimental melodic opulence of the violin part and the



# Sonata #2

Heino Eller

*Allegro*

Violino

Handwritten musical score for Violino and Piano, first system. The Violino part is on a single staff in G major, 4/4 time, starting with a whole rest followed by a half note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, and quarter note C5. The Piano part consists of two staves. The right hand starts with a half note chord (G2, B2, D3) marked *mf*, followed by a series of chords and a melodic line. The left hand plays a bass line with chords and a melodic line. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*.

Handwritten musical score for Violino and Piano, second system. The Violino part continues with a melodic line marked *mf*. The Piano part continues with chords and a melodic line in the right hand, and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *mf*.

Handwritten musical score for Violino and Piano, third system. The Violino part starts with a whole rest followed by a half note chord marked *pizz* and *p*, then a melodic line marked *arco*. The Piano part continues with chords and a melodic line in the right hand, and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* and *arco*.

graceful piano accompaniment in *Allegretto* [6], *Kuuvalgel* [11] and *Berceuse* [16] testify.

The central period in Eller's life was spent in Tartu between 1920–1940, which coincides with the interwar period of Estonian independence. One of the first works from this period, the *Evening Song* [15], was originally written as a piano piece on 22 July 1921 during a holiday sojourn in Toila, on the north-eastern coast of Estonia, a place of extraordinary natural beauty. The simple and openhearted melody, perhaps inspired by a sunset on the beach, is only briefly interrupted by a passionate surge of emotion. But overall, the earlier part of the Tartu years is marked by an acute search for an advanced modern compositional idiom, sparked by exposure to new music during several trips to western Europe. This quest for aesthetic novelty culminated in the intricate works of the early 1930s which represent the apex of Ellerian modernism, such as the *Second String Quartet* (1930–31), *Elegy* for string orchestra and harp (1931) and the fabulous *Fantasy* for solo violin (1931) [4]. The intricately interwoven thematic tissue and formal complexity of the *Fantasy* give it an almost symphonic intensity, which is all the more impressive given that the work is actually the very first Estonian composition for solo violin. Throughout this period, Eller was seen as the leading modernist of the country, even though from around 1934 he increasingly sought to reconcile contemporary aesthetics with those of the Estonian national idiom. The languid *Valse mélancolique* [5] falls into this limbo between modernist and national idioms, which accounts for its ambiguous character.

The reverberations of Eller's artistic quests — essentially the need to accommodate the modern, the national and the personal aesthetics into a seamless whole — is most palpable in two compositions from 1929. First comes *The Bells* for piano, an undisputed masterwork and calling card for the whole of Estonian piano music, and second, the *Pines* [18] for violin and piano, an equally uncontested leader in the national repertoire. Here the reflection of Estonian nature is seen through a highly personal lens, the freedom of the narrative thread is intertwined with untamed lyric intensity and incisive compositional craft.

After the Soviet occupation of Estonia in 1940 Eller was invited to be professor of composition at the Tallinn Conservatoire. The all-pervasive pressure of the Socialist-realist agenda in Soviet Union demanded that all artistic creation be 'Socialist in content and national in form'. Whilst socialist content is a nebulous criterion in the abstract realm of instrumental music, elevating the national element through use of local folklore was a lifeline for countless composers throughout the Soviet Union. Eller had thus far always been aloof from actual folklore material, but in 1940–41 he turned to using authentic Estonian folk songs and tunes as the basis for his compositions. This change of style also brought about a simplification of Eller's elaborate compositional style, most notably between 1948 and 55. This 'Socialist realist' streak, marked by an unpretentious upbeat mood, devoid of dramatic contrast or development is also manifested in the *Lyrical Song* [10], *Dance in G minor* [7] and

*Cross-stick Dance* [14].

These last three decades of the composer's life brought the hardest ordeals both on a personal and artistic level; but also, the highest cultural recognition as the grand old man of Estonian music. The cruellest blow was dealt in 1942 when Eller's wife Anna, a Jew from Warsaw, was arrested and killed by the Germans. The years immediately after the end of the war and prior to the coming ideological and political repressions saw a period of lull, personally for Eller, as he recovered his health and remarried, and for society in general. The *Second Sonata for Violin and Piano*, Eller's largest work for these instruments, belongs to this time of relative calm. The first movement [1], with its long and ruminative melodic lines, is largely introspective. The main theme of the second movement [2] is spiritually related to the first, but the *più mosso* secondary subject, in five-four time and with lilting rhythms, offers an idyllic respite from the prevailing sombre mood. The last movement [3] is in sonata-rondo form, and contrasts with the earlier movements in its bright and energetic outlook. The relentless folkish merriment of the main theme turns

more upbeat with every occurrence, and culminates in a fiendish fugato.

The anti-formalist campaigns of the late Stalinist years, launched in 1948 by the infamous 'Zhdanov Decree', brought vitriolic attacks upon Eller and his music, and the aesthetics of his 'Tartu School' were branded the root cause of 'the reeking yeast of formalism' in Estonian music. Though the ideological pressure did not lead to physical repressions or to Eller losing his job at the Conservatoire, there was an overall stagnation in all forms of artistic creation throughout the Soviet Union until the mid-1950s. The year 1956 marks the start of a period of easing tensions and relative cultural freedom, known as The Khrushchev Thaw. The *Adagio in A minor* [9] reflects this sense of liberation, not in exhilaration — which after all had been the communist-supposed state of mind — but rather through unrestrained depth of feeling and anguish. Initially the unassuming melody sounds somewhat muted and resigned on the G string, but after the restless *più mosso* middle section the main theme recapitulates two octaves higher in the treble, with sincerity and unrestrained lyricism.

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## **Andres Kaljuste** *violin*

Violinist, violist and conductor Andres Kaljuste enjoys a diverse career that gives voice to a wide range of artistic talents. Before studying orchestral conducting at the Sibelius Academy, Kaljuste trained as a violinist at the Royal Academy of Music, Stockholm and the Hanns Eisler School of Music, Berlin.

He has performed as soloist with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra and Belgrade Strings, and as guest concertmaster of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and the Oulu Sinfonia. Kaljuste has played in some of Europe's top orchestras in London, Berlin and Stockholm, as well as with the Helsinki Philharmonic, where he was guest principal viola for three seasons.

In 2022, Kaljuste took up the inaugural post of Creative Director of Classical Studies at the new Tallinn School of Music and Ballet.

In partnership with pianist Sophia Rahman, Kaljuste champions music by his fellow Estonian composers Arvo Pärt and Pärt's teacher Heino Eller. He premières many new works both as instrumentalist and from the podium.

Kaljuste has conducted top Northern European orchestras including the Helsinki Philharmonic, Lahti Sinfonia, the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra and the Odense Symphony Orchestra.

A keen chamber musician, Kaljuste appears at festivals throughout Europe. He has recorded for the Navona label two albums of chamber music by composer Eleanor Alberga (the première of whose *Symphony* he conducted in 2022) as well as music by Sharon Farber for Signum Records. As an instrumentalist and conductor Kaljuste has worked alongside artists such as Steven Isserlis, Mark Padmore and Nicholas Daniel.



## **Sophia Rahman** *piano*

Known for her 'supreme chamber-musical responsiveness' (*The Arts Desk*), pianist Sophia Rahman loves championing the work of underrepresented composers. Rahman made the first UK recording of Florence Price's *Piano Concerto* for broadcast on BBC Radio 3 with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. She has made several albums featuring the work of female composers such as Rebecca Clarke and together with duo partner Andres Kaljuste is committed to performing newly commissioned and undiscovered Estonian repertoire alongside the music of Arvo Pärt, with whom the duo has a long working association.

Rahman has toured extensively, appearing at top festivals including Gstaad, Kuhmo and Pärnu, venues such as Wigmore Hall and collaborating with world-class musicians including Klaus Mäkelä, Augustin Hadelich and Steven Isserlis.

As Artistic Director of Whittington Music Festival, Rahman has worked with distinguished singers Mark Padmore and Roderick Williams and mentored some of the brightest instrumental and vocal talents of the new generation. Rahman has masterminded courses for aspiring Estonian chamber musicians at Tallinn College of Music and Ballet and the Arvo Pärt Centre, where she is much sought-after as a recitalist. Rahman has played for Steven Isserlis' class at IMS Prussia Cove since 2011 and acted as class pianist for the legendary William Pleeth at the Britten-Pears School.

After attending the Yehudi Menuhin School, Rahman took a first-class honours degree in English from King's College, London, completing postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music and winning the Royal Overseas League's collaborative and chamber music piano awards in consecutive years.



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Photos:

Album cover: ‘Eller’s Pine’ on the Laulasmaa shoreline, Estonia and pages 10, 12, 14 and 16 taken by **Kaupo Kikkas**.

Page 3: Heino Eller seated on ‘Eller’s Pine’ on the Laulasmaa shoreline taken in 1965  
and pages 5 and 9: Heino Eller from the **Estonian Theatre and Music Museum**

Page 6: autograph manuscript of *Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2* by Heino Eller  
from the **Estonian Theatre and Music Museum**

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