

BSO **BROMLEY** **SYMPHONY** **ORCHESTRA**

102nd Season 2021

Conductor - Adrian Brown

Leader - Andrew Laing

Soloist - Janice Watson

Saturday 17th July 2021

Langley Park Centre for the
Performing Arts

£2.00



www.bromleysymphony.org
Box office 020 3627 2974
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Programme

Wagner - Die Meistersinger Overture

Elgar - Sea Pictures

Soloist - Janice Watson

Beethoven - Symphony no5 in C minor

Our performance of Elgar's Sea Pictures is dedicated to the memory of our former president Anthony Payne

Unauthorised audio or video recording is not permitted

Adrian Brown - Music Director



Adrian Brown comes from a distinguished line of pupils of Sir Adrian Boult. After graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in London, he studied intensively for some years with Sir Adrian, who said: “He has always impressed me as a musician of exceptional attainments who has all the right gifts and ideas to make him a first class conductor”. Adrian remains the only British conductor to have reached the finals of the Karajan Conductors’ Competition and the Berlin Philharmonic was the first professional orchestra he conducted.

In 1992 Adrian Brown was engaged to conduct one of the great orchestras of the world, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1998 he was invited by Sir Roger Norrington to work with the Camerata Salzburg, one of Europe’s foremost chamber orchestras. Adrian has also conducted many leading British orchestras including the City of Birmingham Symphony, the BBC Symphony, the BBC Scottish Symphony and the London Sinfonietta. His concerts with the Corinthian Chamber Orchestra in 2011 were met with critical acclaim; he was appointed their joint principal conductor.

Adrian conducted the Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra for 40 years and, on his retirement in 2013, was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by Music Teacher and Classic FM.

Adrian was one of a hundred musicians presented with a prestigious Classic FM Award at their Tenth Birthday Honours Celebration in June 2002. In the summer of 2013 he was awarded the Making Music NFMS Lady Hilary Groves Prize for services to Community Music, a much appreciated and admired honour. In December 2017, he was presented with the Berlioz International Society Medal for services to the great French composer. It was announced in late 2019 that Adrian has been awarded the Elgar Medal by the Elgar Society for “commitment to the promotion of the life and works” of the composer.

The 2014-17 seasons featured several concerts with the Royal Orchestral Society, including a performance of Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius* and concerts with the Corinthian Orchestra including Vaughan Williams *Pastoral Symphony*. He conducted a centenary performance with the BSO of Holst *The Planets*, originally premiered by his teacher, Boult, in 1918.

In November 2018, Adrian formed his own orchestra, the Elgar Sinfonia of London. Sasha Rozhdestvensky performed the Elgar *Violin Concerto* with the orchestra in June 2019.

Adrian has conducted Bromley Symphony Orchestra since 1980. He directed BSO in its 2018-19 Centenary season. We celebrated his 40th season with a repeat of the programme from his first concert (when the violin soloist was Ralph Holmes).

Wagner - Die Meistersinger Overture

The prelude to Die Meistersingers is one of the grandest opera openings in music. From the first second, the orchestra soars. What it doesn't do, of course, is scream comedy – Wagner's notions of comedy being notoriously heavy-handed – and so, once all the dust is cleared away, what we have instead is pure grandeur (or, in his own words, 'noble, pure' German art).

As the American composer Virgil Thompson joked, Die Meistersingers 'is all direct and human and warm – none of the characters takes drugs or gets mixed up with magic.' Despite this, the plot is still pretty far-fetched, though based on a known composer/cobbler who lived in Nuremberg in the 1500s and featuring a composition competition. However, what the story is really about is Wagner's own struggle for recognition. The villain represents those crotchety, pedantic, conservative music critics with whom Wagner regularly crossed swords – and the divinely handsome, talented and underrated Walther, radical creative and triumphant lover represents – you guessed it – Wagner himself.

At any rate, the grandeur of the opening first gives way to the 'banner' theme, the Guild of Meistersingers' march (inspired by a sixteenth-century work). The lyrical theme that follows represents the instantaneous attraction between Walther and Eva. By this point, Wagner was absolutely flying, and began to toss themes together with nonchalant ease – at one point the Meistersingers' theme, the march theme, and the love-theme sensationally overlap. As he wrote: 'One evening from the balcony of my house, as I watched a fine sunset light up in glory the view of "golden" Mainz and the majestically flowing Rhine, the Prelude to my Meistersingers suddenly sprang clearly to my mind...and I proceeded to draft the Prelude precisely as it appears today.' The musicologist in whose article I found this quote believed this statement to be pure Wagnerian hyperbole – personally, I believe it. The work gives the sense of having been composed in an effortless state of 'flow' and is hugely enjoyable to play.

Elgar - Sea Pictures

Hard on the heels of the sensational reception of Enigma Variations, Elgar was commissioned to write his only song cycle, featuring five visions of the sea and starring Dame Clara Butt, of whom Sir Thomas Beecham admiringly remarked: "On a clear day you could have heard her across the Channel!" The vocal part, originally conceived for soprano, requires every possible variety of tone and colour, from Meistersinger-ish resonance to the most intimate word-painting.

The poetry, on the whole, is less than amazing. Elgar's friend, Vera Hockman, remembered that Elgar remarking, 'it is better to set the best second-rate poetry to music, for the most immortal verse is music already.' At any rate, the music steals the limelight here.

The first song, inspired by Cornwall's Kynance Cove, features harp, soft timpani and evocatively curling surf. The strings replicate the pulses of waves on the beach, with the sea represented as maternal. The musical mood brightens on the lines, 'isles in elfin light', only to soften to the farewells of the end. In the mezzo's final 'Goodnights', one imagines a mother listening to the soft breathing of her newborn.

Sea Slumber Song

*Sea-birds are asleep,
The world forgets to weep,
Sea murmurs her soft slumber-song
On the shadowy sand
Of this elfin land;*

*"I, the Mother mild,
Hush thee, O my child,
Forget the voices wild!*

*Isles in elfin light
Dream, the rocks and caves,
Lull'd by whispering waves,
Veil their marbles bright.
Foam glimmers faintly white
Upon the shelly sand
Of this elfin land;*

*Sea-sound, like violins,
To slumber woos and wins,
I murmur my soft slumber-song,
Leave woes, and wails, and sins,*

*Ocean's shadowy night
Breathes good night,
Good night!"*

Roden Berkeley Wriothsley Noel

In the tiny musical gem of 'In Haven (Capri)' waves feather and fuss the shore, with scarcely a ripple of wind beyond. It represents an oasis of predictability in the midst of Elgar's own inner turbulence – as perhaps did his wife, who wrote it.

In Haven (Capri)

*Closely let me hold thy hand,
Storms are sweeping sea and land;
Love alone will stand.
Closely cling, for waves beat fast,
Foam-flakes cloud the hurrying blast;
Love alone will last.
Kiss my lips, and softly say:
"Joy, sea-swept, may fade to-day;
Love alone will stay."*

Caroline Alice Elgar



The mood at the opening of 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' darkens to one vague foreboding. The unquiet poet is lifted by a fresh solo violin on 'God's spirit shall give comfort'... which then inspires a near-transformative musical peroration inspired by Elgar's ardent Christianity, particularly on the line: 'He shall assist me to look higher'. Elizabeth Barrett Browning (and the singer) ends the poem in a glory... but typically, perhaps, Elgar's mood then alters.

Sabbath Morning at Sea

*The ship went on with solemn face;
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward.
I bowed down weary in the place;
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.*

*The new sight, the new wondrous sight!
The waters around me, turbulent,
The skies, impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,*

*As glorified by even the intent
Of holding the day glory!
Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day.
The sea sings round me while ye roll
Afar the hymn, unaltered,
And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
And bless me deeper in your soul
Because your voice has faltered.*

*And though this sabbath comes to me
Without the stolèd minister,
And chanting congregation,
God's Spirit shall give comfort.
He who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation.*

*He shall assist me to look higher,
Where keep the saints, with harp and song,
An endless sabbath morning,
And, on that sea commixed with fire.
Oft drop their eyelids raised too long
To the full Godhead's burning.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning



'Where Corals Lie' is a strangely powerful song, curiously elliptical yet surpassingly beautiful. Is it a paean of praise to death, or to peacefulness? The singer/dreamer almost seems to long for both... The hit of the season, it enjoyed a great vogue as salon piece and encore, all on its own.

Where Corals Lie

*The deeps have music soft and low
When winds awake the airy spry,
It lures me, lures me on to go
And see the land where corals lie.*

*By mount and mead, by lawn and rill,
When night is deep, and moon is high,
That music seeks and finds me still,
And tells me where the corals lie.*

*Yes, press my eyelids close, 'tis well;
But far the rapid fancies fly
To rolling worlds of wave and shell,
And all the lands where corals lie.*

*Thy lips are like a sunset glow,
Thy smile is like a morning sky,
Yet leave me, leave me, let me go
And see the land where corals lie.*

Richard Garnett



'The Swimmer' is the most dramatic of the set. After the flourish of the opening, 'seas that climb and surfs that comb' are described, along with a shipwrecked ship, amidst yearnings for happier days and the poignancy of the almost Eliot-like line: 'God surely loved us a little then.'

But anxieties return – the brass grow ominous – and the swimmer – whether deliberately or not – appears to be tiring in the face of the towering 'white horses' representing the surging waves. Despite this, the long descent into the 'tempest' section, snarled by trumpets and trombones, unfurls in the end to something precariously close to triumph.

The Swimmer

*With short, sharp, violent lights made vivid,
To southward far as the sight can roam,
Only the swirl of the surges livid,
The seas that climb and the surfs that comb.
Only the crag and the cliff to nor'ward,
And the rocks receding, and reefs flung forward,
Waifs wreck'd seaward and wasted shoreward,
On shallows sheeted with flaming foam.*

*A grim, grey coast and a seaboard ghastly,
And shores trod seldom by feet of men—
Where the batter'd hull and the broken mast lie,
They have lain embedded these long years ten.
Love! when we wandered here together,
Hand in hand through the sparkling weather,
From the heights and hollows of fern and heather.
God surely loved us a little then.*

*The skies were fairer and shores were firmer—
The blue sea over the bright sand roll'd;
Babble and prattle, and ripple and murmur,
Sheen of silver and glamour of gold.*

*So, girt with tempest and wing'd with thunder
And clad with lightning and shod with sleet,
And strong winds treading the swift waves under
The flying rollers with frothy feet
One gleam like a bloodshot sword-blade swims on
The sky line, staining the green gulf crimson,
A death-stroke fiercely dealt by a dim sun
That strikes through his stormy winding sheet.
O brave white horses! you gather and gallop,
The storm sprite loosens the gusty reins;
Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop
In your hollow backs, on your high-arched manes.
I would ride as never a man has ridden
In your sleepy, swirling surges hidden;
To gulfs foreshadow'd through strifes forbidden,
Where no light wearies and no love wanes.*

Adam Lindsay Gordon



Beethoven - Symphony no5 in C minor

For Berlioz, in his Fifth, 'It is Beethoven's own intimate thought that is developed... his secret sorrows, his pent-up rage, his dreams so full of melancholy oppression, his nocturnal visions and his bursts of enthusiasm furnish its entire subject.'

Leonard Bernstein was also right on the money: 'Beethoven broke all the rules and turned out pieces of breath-taking rightness. He had the real goods, the stuff from Heaven, the power to make you feel at the finish: Something is right with the world.'

Pugnacious – even pugilistic – from the first downbeat – it opens with a fist being shaken at fate (or, in Beethoven's widely-reported words to his assistant, 'Fate, knocking at the door.') Whatever the four notes represent, it proves an extraordinarily fertile motive. From the beginning of the development strings contend furiously with the woodwinds, until the powerful blasts of fate are resummoned. Then, in a curiously moving interruption, a solo oboe mourns, like a Palestinian mother – only to be furiously overruled by the forces already blasted into motion. Eventually middle and lower strings resurrect the surging power of the main theme, challenging the solo oboe to the last bar.

The set of double variations comprising the second movement opens with elegant violas and cellos, sedately answered by solo winds, and endorsed by violins. The woodwinds are less tranquil, eventually relinquishing control to the brass in stately mode. The middle strings then embellish their initial offering, eventually converting, first the violins, and finally the entire orchestra. An improvisatory section – see Bernstein's 'rule breaking' comment above - blooms irresistibly into a full-blooded statement of the variation theme – though the winds remain a little wistful.

Diaphanous cellos and basses open the Scherzo but the horns interrupt, recollecting the first movement. The trio section features lower strings in rollicking mood, with counterpoint spiced with offbeat winds. The 'Trio' section descends mischievously into staccato bassoon and pizzicato strings: almost elfin, and entirely pianissimo. It's the timpanist, weary of such foolery, who begins the wind-up to the finale, which emerges without a gap, amidst swirling violins and pounding lower strings, the full brass in chorale mode.

Tempests briefly roil before this is all repeated – though with a blasting shock when Beethoven impudently crashes into the new key at the double bar. The woodwinds converse, but the horns strike a more ominous note, before runs break out, like a rash, in the strings. A nostalgic oboe is interrupt by the recapitulation, bolder and more exuberant than ever, fired by triplets and reaching an apotheosis of unison chords... The coda, featuring an impertinent piccolo, feels like a long-delayed holiday, and there's simply no holding the trumpets at the end.

BROMLEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLINS

Andrew Laing (Leader)
Clare Wibberley
(Associate Leader)
Andrew Condon
Mark Cousins
Rosie Cousins
Liz Cromb
Rachel Dubourg
Nick Georgiadis
*Mike Ibbott
Phil McKerracher
Kim Morrissey
Veronica Parry

SECOND VIOLINS

Monika Molnar (Principal)
Claire Dillon
Ruth Elliott
*Jacqueline De Ferrars
Eleanor Harber
Andrew Harber
Penny Longman
Richard Miscampbell
Judith Montague
* David Rodker

VIOLAS

Simon McVeigh (Principal)
Maria Beale
Sharifah Burford
Emily Colyer
Richard Longman
Nicola Oliver
Liz Tarrant

CELLOS

Alice McVeigh (Principal)
* Helen Griffiths
Helen McDonald
Marion Hitchcock
Jane Broadbent
Becky Fage
Mandy Selby
Berard Somerville

DOUBLE BASSES

Adrian Ball (Principal)
Thomas Dignum
Barrie Pantrey
Keith Pinnock

FLUTES & PICCOLO

Mark Esmonde
Catherine Borner
Timothy Kipling

OBOES & COR ANGLAIS

* Caroline Marwood
Vicky Dowsett
Philip Knight

CLARINETS

Hale Hambleton
David Floyd

BASSOONS & CONTRA

Stephen Fuller
Julian Farrel
Phillip Pike

HORNS

Roy Banks
Mary Banks
Frank Cottee
Karem Mehmet Sahimer

TRUMPETS

May Thompson
Derek Cozens
Clive Griffin

TROMBONES

* Peter Bruce
Paul Jenner
Alan Tomlinson

TUBA

* James Dowsett

TIMPANI

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BROMLEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Bromley Symphony Orchestra was formed in 1918 by Miss Beatrice Fowle and Miss Gwynne Kimpton, teachers at Bromley High School for Girls. Over the years, it has earned a high reputation for concerts of professional standard and has worked with many famous soloists and conductors. Sir Adrian Boult conducted regularly in the 1940s and in 1952 Norman Del Mar took over. Internationally renowned soloists who have performed with the orchestra include Paul Tortelier, John Lill, Dennis Brain, Kathleen Ferrier, Ralph Holmes, Hugh Bean, Emma Johnson, Leslie Howard and Sir Donald McIntyre.

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