



Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland
Symphony Orchestra
Garry Walker **Conductor**

ARNOLD BAX

Tintagel

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Sinfonia da Requiem

Interval

GUSTAV HOLST

The Planets

Friday 1 March 2013
Stevenson Hall
7.30pm

Bax, Britten and Holst

The dawn of the twentieth century was heralded by perhaps the single most significant premiere from a British composer since the days of Henry Purcell. Not only did the 1899 premiere of Edward Elgar's *Enigma Variations* propel its composer from relative obscurity to overnight fame, but it also gave British music generally a confidence boost - a 'shot in the arm' that encouraged a significant group of young composers to emerge and flourish.

The British Isles had famously been dismissed as *Das Land ohne Musik* ('the land without music') by a sharp-tongued German critic, and very few British works had made lasting impressions across the English Channel or the Atlantic Ocean. As the new century began, Wagner, Puccini and Strauss dominated operatic schedules worldwide and the idea of a 'popular British symphony' was oxymoronic. Elgar's success changed that, and from out of his shadow there quickly emerged a school of prolific symphonists including Ralph Vaughan Williams, Granville Bantock and Havergal Brian. From succeeding generations come the three composer's in tonight's programme - Gustav Holst, Arnold Bax and Benjamin Britten - all of whom looked beyond the British Isles for their ancestry, inspiration or influence.

Gustav von Holst's German-sounding name and Nordic ancestry probably did him no harm in a musical world reluctant to take British composers too seriously (he dropped the 'von' from his name during the Great War). He was in fact born in Gloucestershire, and studied at the Royal College of Music under Charles Villiers Stanford, taking up the trombone when his piano playing was affected by a nerve disorder. Before concentrating on composition, he played trombone professionally, including in the Scottish Orchestra, forerunner of today's RSNO. **Arnold Bax** was born into a wealthy family of Dutch origin in London a decade later than Holst. His family's affluence meant that he never had to take a paid position and was free to develop his musical and literary interests - he wrote poetry under the pseudonym Dermot O'Byrne, and imbibed Irish and Celtic influences throughout his career. After early successes - including *Tintagel* and early symphonies - Bax's stature within British musical circles waned, and he spent his 'retirement' living above a bar in Sussex. He was, however, bestowed with a Knighthood, and was made Master of the King's Music in 1942, as much a surprise to him as to the rest of the musical establishment.

As Bax's stature diminished in the 1930s, and Britain lost both Elgar and Holst, so a new generation of composers was beginning to gain prominence. The late 1920s and early 1930s saw William Walton heralded as the bright young thing of a post-war musical scene. By the mid-1930s, however, another name was coming to attention of professors at the Royal College of Music, a precocious pianist and composer from Suffolk called **Benjamin Britten**. He studied with Frank Bridge and John Ireland and burst onto the public stage with his ebullient Piano Concerto in 1938, premiered at the Proms with Sir Henry Wood conducting. As we commemorate the centenary of Britten's birth this year, it is possible not only to celebrate his success as a composer, but also the debt he and we owe to the previous generation of British composers who put the country well and truly back on the international musical map.

ARNOLD BAX (1883-1953)

Tintagel

From letters written at the time, it is clear that Bax's tone poem *Tintagel* resulted from an excursion he made to North Cornwall in September 1917, spent partly in the company of his wife and children, and partly with his mistress Harriet Cohen. Cast in the same framework as Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*, and imbued with the spirit of Liszt's tone poems, Bax's music also reveals from the outset the influence of his idol Richard Wagner. For a performance in Leeds in 1922 Bax provided a programme note, in which he declared his intention as 'simply to offer a tonal impression of the castle-crowned cliff of ... Tintagel, and more especially of the long distances of the Atlantic, as seen from the cliffs of Cornwall on a sunny, but not windless, summer day.' He had in mind, too, the legendary associations of the ruined castle, the stories of King Arthur and King Mark, of Tristan and Isolde. The music opens, after a few *Rhinegold*-inspired introductory bars, with a brass theme built over a lengthy pedal point, representing the ruined castle perched solidly on a rock. Later a long, folk-like melody for strings suggests the serenity of the Celtic Sea. The sea soon becomes restless - flashes of light sparkle across the water on the glockenspiel - and brings with it, according to Bax, thoughts of many passionate and tragic incidents from the castle's legendary past. A wailing chromatic figure gradually dominates the music, calling to mind music from Act 1 of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. A great climax follows, suddenly subsiding, and then a passage suggesting immense waves slowly gathering force until they smash themselves upon the rocks. The piece ends as it began, 'with a picture of the castle still proudly fronting the sun and wind of centuries'.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Sinfonia da Requiem, Op.20

- I. Lacrymosa
- II. Dies irae
- III. Requiem aeternam

Shortly before the successful premiere of his Piano Concerto, Britten had lost both of his parents. His attachment to them, in particular his mother, was intense. Her sudden death in January 1937 came as a great shock and marked the beginning of a turbulent year for Britten. This loss of familial stability, and with it much reason to stay in England, occurred at the same moment that Britten met the tenor Peter Pears, eventually his lifelong partner, for the first time; soon he and Pears were casting their eyes across the Atlantic, with Britten raising the idea of emigrating to further their careers. In January 1939 they took the plunge and followed their friend WH Auden across the Atlantic. After a few months in Canada, the pair headed to New York where they became friends with Aaron Copland and Christopher Isherwood. War clouds were now billowing across Europe again, and they discussed the subject of their homeland with Copland who later recalled that the pair "worried constantly about whether to return to England." He wrote advising Britten - a lifelong pacifist - to stay put: "Anyone can shoot a gun - but how many can write music like you?" As it happened, Britten was inundated with commissions and Pears' singing career blossomed to such an extent that Britten was able to tell his publisher Ralph Hawkes that he was simply too busy to return to London.

It was Hawkes who told him that Japan was commissioning music to mark 2,600 years of the Mikado dynasty. Britten submitted his *Sinfonia da Requiem*, which he dedicated to the memory of his parents, but the Japanese government rejected the work outright. They considered its use of titles from Christian liturgy insulting and were outraged that Britten wrote a memorial to his parents to mark a Japanese national celebration. In his rejection of the work, Prince Fumimar Konoye wrote to Britten "Besides being a purely religious music of a Christian nature, it has melancholy tone both in its melodic pattern and

rhythm, making it unsuitable for performance on such an occasion as our national ceremony.” The rejection turned out to be a blessing in disguise when the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 pulled the USA into the Second World War: to be an immigrant providing music for the enemy would have been an unfortunate situation.

The *Sinfonia*'s three movements play without a break. The titles of the movements do not indicate any specific liturgical meaning, but suggest the tone of each movement. In the opening *Lacrymosa* ('Weeping') an angular, dissonant main theme first heard in the saxophones builds to an anguished clash of major and minor tonalities. The *Dies irae*'s ('Day of Wrath') winds, brass and percussion perform a 'dance of death', generating a frenzied scherzo. This resolves into the peaceful calm of the *Requiem aeternam* ('Eternal Rest'). Britten's publisher, Erwin Stein, described the delicate opening melody of the three flutes as a 'slumber song,' a gentle lullaby that suggests the tranquillity of eternal rest.



Interval



GUSTAV HOLST (1874-1934)

The Planets, Op.20 H125

- I. Mars *The Bringer of War*
- II. Venus *The Bringer of Peace*
- III. Mercury *The Winged Messenger*
- IV. Jupiter *The Bringer of Jollity*
- V. Saturn *The Bringer of Old Age*
- VI. Uranus *The Magician*
- VII. Neptune *The Mystic*

Throughout his life Gustav Holst delved into mysticism and esoteric studies, learning Sanskrit in order to read the *Mahabharata* and other Hindu scriptures in their original language. During the years just prior to World War I, on a tour of Spain in 1913, he became interested in astrology and learned to cast horoscopes. The musical result of this new hobby was *The Planets*, a suite of seven short tone poems begun in 1914 and completed two years later. Sir Adrian Boult conducted a private rehearsal of the suite in 1918, whilst Albert Coates led the first complete public performance, in London, two years later. The work proved enormously successful catapulting its composer, hitherto an obscure music teacher, to sudden fame. For the reclusive Holst, who hated the attention of the press and public, it was a relief when his later music garnered less approval. "If nobody likes your work," he stated, "you have to go on just for the sake of the work, and you are in no danger of letting the public make you repeat yourself." Holst's starting point for the music was the astrological character of each planet, though his interest in astrology went no deeper than its musical suggestiveness. His daughter wrote that once the underlying idea had been formulated "he let the music have its way with him."

Mars, the Bringer of War, presents a harrowing portrait of cold, inhuman power. Three musical ideas are used to create this martial piece: a brutally rhythmic figure of five beats relentlessly hammered out over an implacable, motor like rhythmic tread; a principal theme in triads moving by chromatic steps with no true harmonic purpose; a second theme consisting of a tattoo in the tenor tuba answered by a flourish of trumpets. Early audiences were convinced that Holst had intended this music as a portrait of the world

war that had recently ended. In fact, he had completed the sketches before it broke out. A solo horn summons *Venus, the Bringer of Peace*, gracefully announced by four ascending notes and a sequence of converging chords in the flutes and oboes. Harps, the celeste and glockenspiel further characterise her heavenly nature.

Two contrasted scherzos follow. *Mercury, the Winged Messenger* flits by on transparent wings. Aside from its speed, its particular quality comes from the opposition of two simultaneous keys (E and B flat) and two simultaneous rhythms. Something of Mercury's swift, quicksilver character may be heard in the chuckling woodwinds, darting strings, and tinkling celeste. *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity* has its jovial feet planted firmly on the ground. Hearty tunes steeped in Holst's study of traditional English folk dances drive the opening and closing sections. In between rests a ceremonial hymn-like theme.

In the miniature tone poem *Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age*, Holst portrays the stages of human life: unlike the previous movements, which depict a single character trait, this one moves through a series of events. We hear an uncertain beginning, the struggles of maturation, and finally the emergence of wisdom, heard in the B-minor theme for the trombones, who paint a serene mood of acceptance and reconciliation. Next comes the dynamic conjuring act of *Uranus, the Magician*, who begins to show his tricks immediately. The suite concludes with the cool, disembodied meditations of *Neptune, the Mystic*. Themes are practically non-existent; in their place are fragments of melody and harmony, all manipulated at the very lowest dynamic level. Mid-way through, almost imperceptibly, an ethereal double chorus of women's voices enters, eventually fading into infinity.

Programme notes by Michael Bawtree

Garry Walker

Winner of the 1999 Leeds Conductor's Competition, Scottish born Garry Walker studied at the Royal Northern College of Music.

In October 1999, at very short notice, he replaced an indisposed Daniele Gatti in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's opening concert of their Barbican season. Thus began an on-going relationship leading to his appointment as Permanent Guest Conductor, a post he has now relinquished.

Garry Walker was Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2003 to 2007, Principal Conductor of Paragon Ensemble and now enjoys a close association with Red Note Ensemble, Scotland's premier contemporary music ensemble.

In the UK Garry Walker has worked with all the BBC orchestras, the Hallé, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, English Northern Philharmonia, London Sinfonietta, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Chamber orchestras have included the Northern Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO), English Chamber Orchestra (ECO) and Academy of St Martin's in the Fields (ASMF). With the SCO he has appeared at the St Magnus Festival, with the ECO in Lisbon and the City of London Festival, and with ASMF at the Barbican's Mostly Mozart Festival. He regularly appears at the Edinburgh Festival and in 2004 conducted a notable performance of Mahler's Symphony No.2 *Resurrection* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Outside the UK he has appeared with the Nieuw Ensemble, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, Collegium Musicum, Denmark, Musikkollegium Winterthur and the

Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin. Further afield he has had re-invitations to both the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Auckland Philharmonia and made his USA debut with the Utah Symphony Orchestra.

An experienced opera conductor, Garry Walker conducted both Britten's *Curlew River* and the world premiere of Stuart Macrae's opera *The Assassin Tree* at the Edinburgh Festival. He also conducted the *The Assassin Tree* at the Royal Opera House's Linbury Studio, David McVicar's much acclaimed production of Benjamin Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and Raskatov's *A Dog's Heart* for English National Opera, Cimarosa's *The Secret Marriage* (Scottish Opera), Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* (Royal Northern College of Music) and Poulenc's *La voix humaine* at the Linbury Studio Theatre. Outside the UK he has conducted *Curlew River* for Lyon Opera and a new production by Calixto Bieito of Hosakawa's *Hanjo* at the Ruhr Triennale.

Future plans include appearances with the Adelaide Symphony, a return visit to the Auckland Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony Orchestra, Dortmund Philharmoniker, Musikkollegium Winterthur, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Les Sirènes

Female Chamber Choir

Andrew Nunn Musical Director

Choir 1

Soprano I

Victoria Atkinson, Natasha Hendrickse-Welsh, Katie Oswell

Soprano II

Lucy Anderson, Carolyn Kelly, Lauren McQuistin

Mezzo-soprano

Susannah Bedford, Lynn Bellamy, Louisa Cheshire, Alex McFadzen

Choir 2

Soprano 1

Julia Daramy Williams, Fay Jennett, Helen Knight

Soprano 2

Charlotte Hoather, Rebecca Howard, Aileen Saunders, Claire Thompson

Mezzo-soprano

Hannah Potts, Ellen Smith, Beth Taylor, Kirsty Young, Lauren Young

Les Sirènes is a Glasgow-based female chamber choir consisting of twenty-six vocalists, all students and graduates of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. In October 2012, the choir was awarded the prestigious title of Choir of the Year after a competitive Grand Final held at London's Royal Festival Hall and later broadcast on BBC television and radio. As winners Les Sirènes will commission a new choral work by a composer of their choice, working with BBC Radio 3 over the coming months. In January 2013, the choir reached the semi-final stage of the Europe-wide choral competition Let the Peoples Sing and in June will record their début CD on the RCS Nimbus Alliance label, due for release in late 2013.

The ensemble has given the première performances of two works by composer Gareth Williams: *Gethsemane* in 2010 and *Discipline* in 2009, and is often called upon to collaborate with other artists. In October 2009 Les Sirènes performed with female vocal harmony group All Angels as part of the Paisley Choral Festival, and in December of the same year sang with the Orchestra of Scottish Opera as part of the Children's Classics concerts in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In 2008 the choir collaborated with director Marilyn Imry in a performance of a play called *The Bones Boys*, broadcast on BBC Radio Scotland.

The ensemble was established in 2007 by Musical Director Andrew Nunn and performs regularly across Scotland and beyond, having given concerts in renowned venues such as Glasgow Cathedral, the SECC, Dunkeld Cathedral, Paisley Abbey, Mackintosh Church, Queen's Hall, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and London's Cadogan Hall. The choir has also performed in more obscure locations, having 'sung on the subway' as part of the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) promotion of the Glasgow underground. Wherever they perform or whatever the occasion, Les Sirènes is passionate about performance.

Twenty-five year old **Andrew Nunn** holds an MMus and a BMus (Hons) from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He is currently working for a Masters in Conducting specialising in choral music, studying conducting with Alasdair Mitchell and singing with Gordon Wilson. Andrew is Musical Director of the highly acclaimed Les Sirènes Female Chamber Choir which he led to victory in the 2012 Choir of the Year competition.

In February 2013, Andrew became the Conducting Fellow of the National Youth Choir of Scotland, funded by the BBC Performing Arts Fund. As part of the fellowship, he will work alongside Christopher Bell with the National Choirs and undertake training and development in many aspects of working with choirs and young voices. In February 2012 he became the first Student Conductor of NYCoS, helping to prepare the flagship SATB choir for performances at the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International Festival. In October 2012 Andrew conducted the National Training Choir of Scotland in a performance at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, and members of the National Youth Choir of Scotland in a performance at the SECC Clyde Auditorium, Glasgow.

In September 2011, Andrew was awarded The Sir Alexander Gibson Memorial Fellowship for Choral Conductors with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra Chorus, working alongside chorus director Timothy Dean. In January 2013 he prepared the Children's Chorus for the RCS and Scottish Opera joint production of Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. Andrew has also conducted the Royal Conservatoire Chamber Choir in a recording of a new work *Scotland Behold* and in a concert celebrating of the 117th anniversary of the birth of composer Peter Warlock. Andrew holds a number of other conducting posts, including Director of Choirs at the East Glasgow Music School, Assistant Tutor for the Yorkshire Youth Choir, and Conductor of the Junior Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Chamber Choir, Thomas Coats Memorial Choral Society, Hutcheson's Choral Society and the Carlisle Community Choir.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Symphony Orchestra

“Not for the first time did I find myself gobsmacked on Friday night at the virtuosity of the students of the Royal Conservatoire's Symphony Orchestra.

You could almost sense the students saying ‘nae bother’ as Corti guided and stoked them ...: a juggernaut performance, with Corti in controlled overdrive and these amazing young musicians playing with apparent nonchalance, but as though it mattered; which, of course, it did.”

Michael Tumelty, *The Herald*, 20 February 2012
(Symphony Orchestra with Francesco Corti *Conductor*)

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is alive with orchestral activity ranging from chamber and opera orchestras to full-sized symphony orchestras.

In recent years the **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Symphony Orchestra** has performed with an impressive list of visiting conductors, including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Martyn Brabbins, Nicholas Cleobury, David Danzmayr, Stéphane Denève, James MacMillan, Joseph Swensen, Ilan Volkov, Garry Walker and Walter Weller.

Repertoire has included many of the major symphonic works, such as the Bartók Concerto for Orchestra; Beethoven Symphonies Nos.5, 6 and 9; Brahms Symphony No.4; Bruckner Symphonies Nos.4 and 7; Debussy *La Mer*; Mahler Symphonies Nos.1, 4, 5, 6 and 7; Rachmaninoff *Symphonic Dances*; Ravel *Daphnis et Chloé*; Sibelius Symphony No.2; Shostakovich Symphony No.12; and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and *Petrushka*, to name but a few.

The Symphony Orchestra also provides not only regular accompaniment for the Royal Conservatoire's many fine concerto soloists, but also for up to three opera productions each season, covering repertoire from Mozart to Puccini and Prokofiev.

In addition to the many in-house concerts, the Royal Conservatoire operates prestigious and innovative mentoring and apprenticeship schemes with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of Scottish Opera.

Strings

Violin I

Wen Wang
Gongbo Jiang
Veronika Furedi
Alex Finlaison
Catrin Pryce-Jones
Dannii Meagher
Hyein Jin
Lingxi Li
Zoe Hodgson
Anja Ormiston
Rebecca Cheminai
Rachael Smart
Zhe Xu

Violin II

Scott Lowry
Eve Kennedy
Alison Miller
Megan Tuohy
Heather MacLeod
Maggie Adamson
Hannah Gordon
Danny Miller
Prashanthi Rasaratnam
Anna-Louise Burns
Ruth Tarr
Yoan Hlebarov

Viola

Hua Zhong
Iain Jennison
Ben Kearsley
Emily Fowler
Yuan Li
Frances Clement
Sam Watkin
Ailish Oldfield
Daniil Titov
Sarah Stull

Cello

Julia Wagner
Yu-Chen Lin
David Sloan
Kevin Kirs Verstege
Megan Cuneo
James Hill
Jingwei Tang
Elias Rooney
Andrew Thomson
Alastair Morgan

Double Bass

Aileen Marshall
Wendy Hellman
Mark Cuneo
Daniel Griffin
Krzysztof Mickiewicz
Tamara Hardy

Harp

Mariann Rummy
Ana Carolina Marcelino

Brass, Woodwind and Percussion

Bax Tintagel

Flute

Rachel Coghlan
Carina Gascoine

Piccolo

Ola Henszel

Oboe

George Talmaciu
Si Yu

Cor anglais

Siobhan Parker

Clarinet

Luke Westcombe
Harriet Flather

Bass clarinet

Ewan Zuckert

Bassoon

Thomas Porter
Marcos Ceballos

Contrabasson

Chris McShane

French horn

Eneko O'Carroll
Christopher Gough
Michael Barr
James Watson
Robert Newth (bumper)

Trumpet

Holly Boddice
Eoin Tonner
Stephanie Mitchell
Etty Wake (bumper)

Trombone

Alex Trotter
Antonio J Marin
Joe Walters

Tuba

Kenny Brown

Timpani

Glynn Forrest

Percussion

Colin Hyson
Patrick Nolan
Jonathan Chapman
Ross Gunning

Britten Sinfonia da Requiem

Flute

Matthew Howells
Nikola Kyosev

Piccolo

Bass flute
Lee Holland

Oboe

George Talmaciu
Rebecca Watt

Cor Anglais

Siobhan Parker

Clarinet

Ewan Zuckert
Robert Digney
Calum Robertson

Bass Clarinet

Calum Robertson

Alto saxophone

Ross Montgomery

Bassoon

Chris McShane
Marcos Ceballos

Contrabasson

Thomas Porter

French horn

Eneko O'Carroll
Christopher Gough
Michael Barr
James Watson
Robert Newth (Bumper)

Trumpet

Holly Boddice
Eoin Tonner
Stephanie Mitchell
Etty Wake (bumper)

Trombone

Alex Trotter
Antonio J Marin
Emily Hanley

Tuba

Rachel Brown

Timpani

Glynn Forrest

Percussion

Colin Hyson
Patrick Nolan
Jonathan Chapman
Ross Gunning

Piano

Fionnula Ward

Holst *The Planets*

Flute

Isabella Hübener
Ola Henszel
Rachel Coghlan
Lee Holland

Piccolo

Rachel Coghlan

Piccolo

Alto flute

Lee Holland

Oboe

Sinziana Mugea
Susanna Gawn

Bass oboe

Siobhan Parker

Cor Anglais

Si Yu

Clarinet

Charlie Sheppard - Vine
Ross Montgomery
Harriet Flather

Bass clarinet

Ewan Zuckert

Bassoon

Ryan Sullivan
Thomas Porter
Donagh Marnane

Contrabassoon

Chris McShane

French horn

Andrew McLean
Begum Atilgan
Jenna Sloane
Rachel Muir
Samantha Wright
Robert Newth
Chris Gough (bumper)

Trumpet

David Moore
Ben Hirons
Gregor Beattie
Christopher Blatzer
Calum Tonner (bumper)

Trombone

Cillian O'Ceallachain
Christopher Mansfield
Gordon Seith

Euphonium

Scott Findlater

Tuba

Lauren McCormick

Timpani

Glynn Forrest
Joe Bostock

Percussion

Patrick Nolan
Colin Hyson
Thomas Lowe
Ross Gunning

Celeste

Donata Vaikute

Organ

Calum Robertson

John Wallace

Principal

Maggie Kinloch

Vice-Principal

Havilland Willshire

Dean of Music

Kurt Hans Goedicke

Distinguished Fellow in Timpani and Percussion

Mieko Kanno

Head of Strings

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Music Ensembles Manager



**Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland**

100 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, G2 3DB

Telephone: 0141 332 4101

Box Office: 0141 332 5057

www.rcs.ac.uk