



RSNO

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA

La Mer

Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Fri 8 Mar 2024 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
Sat 9 Mar 7.30pm

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La Mer

Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 8 Mar 2024 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Sat 9 Mar 7.30pm

Ophelia, Shakespeare's gentle, lovelorn heroine. Salome, the temptress. Cleopatra, the fabled queen. Tonight, the RSNO becomes each of them in turn, in a fantastical lost masterpiece by the 19th-century French composer Mel Bonis. And that's just the start of it, as Music Director Thomas Søndergård joins Scotland's international award-winning mezzo-soprano Catriona Morison to unleash flood tides of passion in an all-French evening inspired by the sea. In Edinburgh, we also welcome the young musicians of Big Noise Wester Hailes.

JOËLLE BROAD Saturn [4'] (Edinburgh only)

JOËLLE BROAD Mission Mars [2'] (Edinburgh only)

Side-by-side with **Big Noise Wester Hailes**

BONIS Trois Femmes de légende [19']

Ophélie Op165 No2

Salomé Op100 No2

Le Songe de Cléopâtre Op180 No2

SCOTTISH PREMIERE

CHAUSSON Poème de l'amour et de la mer Op19 [27']

INTERVAL

RAVEL Une barque sur l'océan [7']

DEBUSSY La mer [23']

Thomas Søndergård Conductor

Catriona Morison Mezzo-soprano

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Kindly supported by **RSNO Patrons**



The performances of Mel Bonis' *Trois Femmes de légende* is made possible with funding from the ABO Trust's Sirens programme, a ten-year initiative to support the performance and promotion of music by historical women composers.

The Glasgow performance will be recorded for the RSNO Archive.

Supported by the Iain and Pamela Sinclair Legacy

If viewing these notes at the concert, please do so considerably and not during performances.

Please silence all mobile telephones and alerts, and refrain from taking photographs, without flash, until the end of each piece.

RSNO

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA

RECOMMENDED BY
CLASSIC *f*M

A Midsummer Night's Dream

DND Thu 14 Mar: 7.30pm

EDN Fri 15 Mar: 7.30pm

GLW Sat 16 Mar: 7.30pm

Mendelssohn-Hensel

Overture in C Major

James Burton The Lost Words

Mendelssohn A Midsummer Night's
Dream, Incidental Music

Thomas Søndergård Conductor

RSNO Youth Chorus

Patrick Barrett RSNO Youth
Choruses Director

Pre-concert talk, 6.45pm

Patrick Barrett, Director, RSNO Youth Choruses

rsno.org.uk



The RSNO is supported by
the Scottish Government



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Welcome



The RSNO's 2023:24 Season continues this weekend with concerts in Perth, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Music Director Thomas Søndergård and the Orchestra are joined by mezzo-soprano Catriona Morison. Catriona is one of a handful of world-class Scottish mezzos, and it's great to have her back with us following her most recent appearance in 2021.

In Edinburgh, we also welcome the young people of Big Noise Wester Hailes to the Usher Hall stage, side-by-side with the RSNO's musicians. It's always such a privilege to show the participants' talents off to our audiences, and our players value collaborating with the next generation of musicians on such entertaining music. In a busy schedule of recording, travel and performing, these performances really do stand out for the Orchestra.

The remainder of the programme harks back to previous Music Director Stéphane Denève's love for French music. During his tenure, the Orchestra recorded and performed a wealth of scores by composers such as Debussy and Roussel, winning the Diapason d'Or de l'Année, one of the most prestigious music awards in Europe, for a Chandos recording featuring *La mer*. I'm sure Thomas will build on this tonight with his own special style!

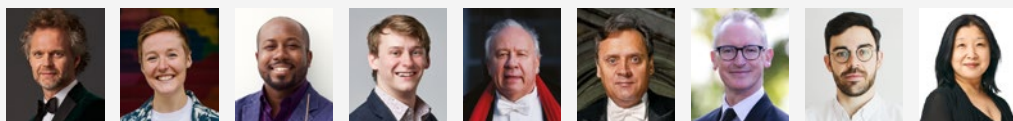
In the current awards season, our work on Bernard Herrmann's score for Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and Nicholas Ray's *On Dangerous Ground*, and on *Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora*, has won Best Archival Release and Best Original Score for a Video Game or Interactive Media respectively at the International Film Music Critics Association (IFMCA) awards. To be considered for such awards illustrates the quality and diversity of the Orchestra's work, and we are delighted to have more recording for classical, film and television output over the coming months. The trailer for a major recent project, Kevin Costner's *Horizon: An American Saga*, was released at the end of February, with music performed by the RSNO. Hosting Kevin and his team at Scotland's Studio was an exciting five days for the Orchestra and we eagerly await the film's release on 28 June.

I hope you enjoy the concert.

Alistair Mackie
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

1-9



10-18



19-27



28-36



37-45



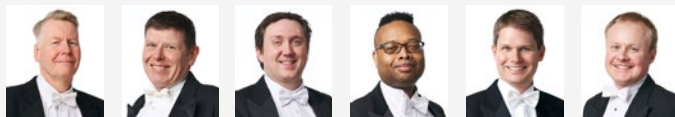
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ARTISTIC TEAM

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| Ellie Slorach | 2 |
| ENGAGEMENT CONDUCTOR | |
| Kellen Grey | 3 |
| ASSOCIATE ARTIST | |
| Derrick Morgan | 4 |
| ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR | |
| Neeme Järvi | 5 |
| CONDUCTOR LAUREATE | |
| Alexander Lazarev | 6 |
| CONDUCTOR EMERITUS | |
| Stephen Doughty | 7 |
| DIRECTOR, RSNO CHORUS | |
| Patrick Barrett | 8 |
| DIRECTOR, RSNO YOUTH CHORUSES | |

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| Caroline Parry | 13 |
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Joëlle Broad

Saturn and Mission Mars

Saturn

DURATION 2 minutes

Saturn was originally written by Joëlle for the Benedetti Foundation, and is being performed with their permission. Nicola Benedetti has worked closely with both the RSNO and Sistema Scotland, and has been Big Noise's 'Big Sister' for many years. This evening's concert is the first time *Saturn* has been performed with a full symphony orchestra. The piece depicts an intergalactic disco taking place on the planet's rings.

Mission Mars

DURATION 4 minutes

Mission Mars was written in the first year of Big Noise Raploch for a concert with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra string players. It was written for children near the start of their learning and without the need to use music. The musical material is based on the highest and lowest strings on the four different instruments of the string section. By focusing on playing open strings, young players are able to develop their bowing and sound production in an ensemble. For this performance, Joëlle has added extra wind and percussion parts, and this is the first time it has been played in this way. The piece finishes with a countdown from 10 before we 'blast off'.



Joëlle Broad **Composer**

Joëlle Broad is a musician, teacher, composer, mentor and workshop leader. She learned violin through the peripatetic music service on the Wirral. Participating in a rich experience of youth ensembles and orchestras led to her pursuing music as her career.

Joëlle studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and has worked with many Scottish arts organisations, including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Drake Music Scotland. She was one of the original team members at Big Noise Raploch in Stirling, the first Big Noise programme which began work in 2008, and worked as Curriculum Leader (Strings) across Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programmes until February of this year.

Joëlle's music has musical development at its heart and is committed to creating pieces that are musically interesting at the early stages of playing. She also teaches violin for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Junior Department in the primary instrumental programme.



Abigail Moulden

DOUBLE BASS

Alesha Nabeel

VIOLIN

Alex Cook

DOUBLE BASS

Brandon Williams

CELLO

Brodie Quinn

VIOLIN

Brooklyn Adams

VIOLIN

Charis Bailey

VIOLA

Charlie Halliday

VIOLA

Charlie Reilly

CELLO

Delia Constantin

VIOLIN

Ella Cormack

DOUBLE BASS

Ella Shevlin

CELLO

Ellie-Mei Brown

VIOLIN

Eloghosa Igbinedion

VIOLIN

Emmanuel Ogunsina

VIOLA

Faith Casson

VIOLIN

Franky Pratt

VIOLIN

Gabriela Walsh

VIOLIN

Grace Kennedy

VIOLIN

Henry Chuwkudalo

Ezeibenne Tuku

VIOLA

Holy Muyeza

VIOLA

Hubert Sucharski

VIOLIN

Ifeoluwa Aromona

VIOLIN

Irey Afuye

VIOLIN

Jamie Price

DOUBLE BASS

Jason Adebayo

VIOLIN

Jedidiah Egya

VIOLIN

Junior Ramsay

VIOLA

Kuba Zysk

CELLO

Lacey Taylor

CELLO

Laila Turnbull

VIOLIN

Lexi Rice

VIOLIN

Lily Gilroy

VIOLIN

Logan Sewell

VIOLIN

Maddison Muir

VIOLIN

Maisie McSorley

VIOLIN

Matthew Griffiths

DOUBLE BASS

Maya Czub

VIOLIN

Maya Patyna

VIOLIN

Michael Vhibi

CELLO

Mofeoluwa Adegoke

VIOLIN

Murray Archibald

VIOLA

Naomi Sikowsfie Owusu

CELLO

Olivia King

VIOLIN

Rahila Sadiq

CELLO

Rebeka Budai

VIOLA

Rueben Hunter

DOUBLE BASS

Saad Dewan

VIOLIN

Simin Hossain

VIOLIN

Zuzanna Pietruszka

VIOLIN

Mel Bonis (1858-1937)

Trois Femmes de légende



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Orchestral versions: BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conducted by Jessica Cottis, Cardiff, 8 March 2015

SCOTTISH PREMIERE

DURATION 19 minutes

Ophélie

Salomé

Le Songe de Cléopâtre

Mel Bonis may be a name largely unknown to 21st-century audiences, but in her day she was a highly prolific composer, with over 300 pieces to her name, spanning the genres from solo piano, organ and chamber music to choral and symphonic works.

Born Mélanie Hélène Bonis, to parents who were less than enthusiastic about her clear musical abilities, her lucky break came aged 16 when she was introduced to César Franck. He spotted her talent, and tutored her privately, before in 1876 she finally entered his class (among others) at the Paris Conservatoire, to study piano accompaniment and composition, her fellow students including Claude Debussy. However, in 1881 her parents pulled her out, disapproving of a romantic attachment she'd formed there.

Instead, 1883 saw her married to an older, twice-widowed businessman, after which subsequent duties as a mother removed her from public musical life. Yet she did not stop composing, and by the early 1900s she was not only able to reprise her career, but enjoyed such success with her songs, solo piano and chamber works that she was emboldened to finally complete her musical education, taking orchestration lessons with composer Charles Koechlin between 1908 and 1909.

In 1910 she became the first woman on the committee of the Société des Compositeurs de Musique (Composers Society). Still, while her works during this period enjoyed regular performances, her public profile as a composer ended with the Great War.

On to the *Femmes de légende* trilogy of tone poems. These began life around 1909 as solo or four-hands piano pieces. While they sit within a whole succession of similarly themed works Bonis wrote over the space of 15 years, all

depicting women of historical, mythological and dramatic legend, they were the only three she orchestrated, presumably at the end of her orchestral training with Koechlin, but the manuscripts aren't dated. None saw light of day, though, until her great-granddaughter, Christine Géliot, prepared them for publication in the 21st century, grouping them to create effectively a three-movement work.

As for the trilogy's musical language, while genre-wise Bonis is taking a leaf out of the old guard's book (France had a decades-long tradition of tone poems, several of which came from her own teacher Franck's pen), the actual sound world suggests a composer in the thrall of the sensuous-sounding new world of Impressionism and Symbolism, with its lush scoring and chromaticism-rich, oriental-inspired harmonies. Think Debussy's *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) meets Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1864), or indeed Richard Strauss' own 1905 operatic depiction of Salome. And while the impression is slightly of a composer yet to find her own unique symphonic voice, the handling of her large orchestra is both imaginative and skilful.

Shakespeare's *Ophélie* (Ophelia) opens with harp colour; the ensuing music's cool-flowing watery beauty is punctuated by passionate swells, simultaneously reminding us of the strength of her love, and of her eventual watery grave.

Salomé (Salome) drops us into shimmering desert heat, after which its five-beats-to-a-bar music alternates between steadily processing sections, and faster passages of upper-register, quicksilver delicacy, sparkling with glissandi. It's all audibly the daughter of Herodias – simultaneously innocent and dangerous, calculated and impetuous, spinning the fatal dance of seduction that will result in her being

granted her mother's wish for St John the Baptist's head to be brought to them on a plate.

Le Songe de Cléopâtre (The Dream of Cleopatra), the longest of the set, also has a harp opening, this time an ear-pricking ticking figure into which woodwind snake down, whole-tone and pentatonic harmonies seductively evoking the Orient, after which the score plays out as a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of moods, textures, colours and tempi over which high contrasts sometimes happen on the turn of a pin, but always with the sense of smoothly organic flow.

© Charlotte Gardner

Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)

Poème de l'amour et de la mer Op19



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Orchestral version: Paris, 8 April 1893

DURATION 27 minutes

La fleur des eaux

La mort de l'amour

When Ernest Chausson first began working on the *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* (Poem of Love and the Sea) in 1882, he had not long stepped away from his music studies at the Paris Conservatoire, where he had been an official pupil of Jules Massenet, and a less official one of César Franck, whose course he attended as an observer. Both composers shaped his style but so too did Wagner; in 1883, Chausson took his new wife, Jeanne Escudier, for their honeymoon to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal*. However, it would be another decade before he revised the *Poème*, readying it to be heard first in a version with piano (Chausson himself was at the keyboard) and then in its orchestral garb. Both versions were premiered in 1893.

And yet if Chausson's language is steeped in French Romanticism and Wagner, not least in the

way he transforms themes across the *Poème*'s three movements, this unusual piece has its own distinct flavour. Not long enough to be a song cycle, it is far more substantial than a single song; perhaps too song-like to be a dramatic monologue, it nonetheless carries operatic weight. Love – and its loss – are at the heart of the work, in which Chausson sets verses by his friend, the Symbolist poet Maurice Bouchor, turning them into an intense, richly perfumed, serious work.

If *La fleur des eaux* (The flower of the waters) breathes an air of sunny, pastoral simplicity at first, Chausson soon evokes more complex moods, as our narrator describes a heady world of scented lilacs, where a sun glows over dazzling ocean waves, and love tantalises. Chausson's glittering evocation of the sea surely paved the way for Debussy's *La mer*. But this halcyon vision turns bittersweet.

The central orchestral interlude, a study in melancholy marked *lent et triste* (slow and sad), makes use of hushed strings and plaintive bassoon, cello and horns. The music builds in intensity before dying away, back to quiet sadness.

Fluttering strings and glinting harp carry us into more joyful realms for *La mort de l'amour* (The death of love), and the singer rejoices with anticipation of seeing the 'blue and joyful isle'. But as we voyage across the amethyst sea – its rise and fall emulated in the music, no doubt also a metaphor for turbulent emotions – darker currents emerge. A fatal word appears in the eyes of the beloved: 'oblivion'. The final verse is full of regret: for the vanished spring, for lilacs and roses, for love.

© Rebecca Franks

La fleur des eaux

I

L'air est plein d'une odeur exquise de lilas
Qui, fleurissant du haut des murs jusqu'au bas,
Embaument les cheveux des femmes.
La mer au grand soleil va toute s'embraser,
Et sur le sable fin qu'elles viennent baiser
Roulent d'éblouissantes lames.

O ciel qui de ses yeux dois porter la couleur,
Brise qui vas chanter dans les lilas en fleur
Pour en sortir toute embaumée,
Ruisseaux qui mouillerez sa robe, o verts sentiers,
Vous qui tressaillerez sous ses chers petits pieds,
Faites-moi voir ma bien-aimée!

II

Et mon cœur s'est levé par ce matin d'été;
Car une belle enfant était sur le rivage,
Laisant errer sur moi des yeux pleins de clarté,
Et qui me souriait un air tendre et sauvage.

Toi que transfiguraient la jeunesse et l'amour,
Tu m'apparus alors comme l'âme des choses;
Mon cœur vola vers toi, tu le pris sans retour,
Et du ciel entr'ouvert pleuvaient sur nous des
roses.

III

Quel son lamentable et sauvage
Va sonner l'heure de l'adieu!
La mer roule sur le rivage,
Moqueuse, et se souciant peu
Que se soit l'heure de l'adieu.
Des oiseaux passent, l'aile ouverte,
Sur l'abîme presque joyeux;

The flower of the waters

I

The air is filled with an exquisite scent of lilac
which, flowering from the top of the walls to the
bottom,
perfumes the women's hair.
The whole sea goes to the great sun to be set
aglow,
and, over the fine sand which they come to kiss,
dazzling waves roll.

Oh sky which has to wear the colour of her eyes,
breeze which goes to sing among the lilacs in
bloom
so as to come out all scented,
streams which will moisten her dress, o green
paths,
you who will tremble beneath her dear little feet,
let me see my beloved!

II

And my heart arose on this summer's morning;
for a beautiful girl was on the beach,
letting eyes full of brightness wander over me,
and who smiled to me with a tender and wild
expression.

You whom youth and love transfigured,
you appeared to me like the soul of all things;
my heart flew towards you, you took it forever,
and roses rained upon us from the part-opened
sky.

III

What mournful and wild sound
will toll the hour of farewell!
The sea rolls over the beach,
teasing, hardly concerning itself
that it is the hour of farewell.
Birds pass by, wings outspread,
nearly joyful across the deep;

Au grand soleil la mer est verte,
Et je saigne silencieux
En regardant briller les cieux.

Je saigne en regardant ma vie
Qui va s'éloigner sur les flots;
Mon âme unique m'est ravie
Et la sombre clameur des flots
Couvre le bruit de mes sanglots.

Qui sait si cette mer cruelle
La ramènera vers mon cœur?
Mes regards sont fixés sur elle,
La mer chante, et le vent moqueur
Raille l'angoisse de mon cœur.

La mort de l'amour

IV

Bientôt l'île bleue et joyeuse
Parmi les rocs m'apparaîtra:
L'île sur l'eau silencieuse
Comme un nénuphar flottera.

A travers la mer d'améthyste
DouceMENT glisse le bateau,
Et je serai joyeux et triste
De tant me souvenir – bientôt!

V

Le vent roulait les feuilles mortes; mes pensées
Roulaient comme les feuilles mortes, dans la
nuit.
Jamais si doucement au ciel noir n'avaient lui
Les milles roses d'or d'où tombent les rosées.

in the full sun the sea is green,
and, silently, I bleed
while looking at the heavens gleaming above.

I bleed as I watch my life
departing over the waves;
my very soul is taken from me
and the deep clamour of the waves
smothers the sound of my sobs.

Who knows if this cruel sea
will guide her back towards my heart?
My gaze is fixed upon her,
the sea is singing, and the mocking wind
jeers at the anguish of my heart.

The death of love

IV

Very soon the blue and joyful isle
will appear to me among the rocks:
the isle will float upon the silent water
like a water-lily.

Across the amethyst sea
the boat gently slips,
and I shall be joyful and sad
to remember so much – soon!

V

The wind rolled the dead leaves; my thoughts
rolled like the dead leaves, in the night.
Never had the thousands of golden roses
sparkled so softly
in the black sky, from whence fall the dews.

Une danse effrayante, et les feuilles froissées,
Et qui rendaient un son métallique, valsaient,
Semblaient gémir sous les étoiles, et disaient
L'inexprimable horreur des amours trépassées.
Les grands hêtres d'argent que la lune baisait
Étaient des spectres: moi, tout mon sang se
glaçait
En voyant mon aimée étrangement sourire.

Comme des fronts de morts nos fronts avaient
pâli,
Et, muet, me penchant vers elle, je pus lire
Ce mot fatal écrit dans ses grands yeux: l'oubli.

VI

Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses
Ne reviendra plus à ce printemps ci;
Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses
Est passé, le temps des œillets aussi.

Le vent a changé, les cieux sont moroses,
Et nous n'irons plus courir, et cueillir
Les lilas en fleur et les belles roses;
Le printemps est triste et ne peut fleurir.

Oh! joyeux et doux printemps de l'année
Qui vins, l'an passé, nous ensoleiller,
Notre fleur d'amour est si bien fanée,
Las! que ton baiser ne peut l'éveiller!

Et toi, que fais-tu? pas de fleurs écloses,
Point de gai soleil ni d'ombrages frais;
Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses
Avec notre amour est mort à jamais.

Maurice Bouchor (1855-1929)

A terrifying dance, and the crumpled leaves
which rang with a metallic sound, waltzed,
seemed to moan beneath the stars, and told of
the inexpressible horror of the dead loves.
The great silver beaches which the moon kissed
were ghosts: me, all my blood froze
upon seeing my beloved smiling strangely.

Our brows had paled like the brows of the dead,
and, silent, leaning towards her, I was able to read
that fatal word written in her large eyes: oblivion.

VI

The season for lilac and the season for roses
will not return this spring;
the season for lilac and the season for roses
is passed, the season for carnations too.

The wind has changed, the skies are morose,
and we shall never again go to run, and gather
the lilac in bloom and the beautiful roses;
the spring is sad and cannot blossom.

Oh! Joyful and sweet springtime of the year
which came, last year, to light us with sunshine,
our flower of love is so withered,
alas, that your kiss cannot awaken it!

And you, what are you doing? Not a flower in
bloom,
no happy sun nor cool shade;
the season for the lilac and the season for roses
with our love has died forever.

© Translated by Christopher Goldsack

Catriona Morison

Mezzo-soprano



Scottish mezzo-soprano Catriona Morison is based in Berlin and gained widespread recognition in 2017 when she won the Main Prize and shared the Song Prize at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition. At that time she was a member of the opera ensemble in Wuppertal (2016-18), where she added a diverse range of roles to her repertoire, including Nicklausse (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*), Charlotte (*Werther*), Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Kleiner Araber (*Juliette*), Princess Clarice (*The Love for Three Oranges*) and Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*).

In 2015 she made her debut at the Salzburg Festival under Franz Welser-Möst as part of the Young Singers Project, and the same year also performed at the Salzburg Whitsun Festival. Her guest engagements in opera have taken her to the Edinburgh International Festival, Oper Köln, Bergen Nasjonale Opera, Staatsoper Hamburg and Nationaltheater Weimar. Recent additions to her repertoire include *The Composer* in Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Fricka in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* and Nerone in Monteverdi's (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*). This spring she appears in concert performances of *Die Walküre*

with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

In 2019 Catriona made her debut at the BBC Proms, performing Elgar's *Sea Pictures* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Elim Chan. Additionally, she premiered Errollyn Wallen's *This Frame is Part of the Painting*, a piece specially commissioned for her at the BBC Proms.

In the UK during 2023/24, she appears in four song recitals accompanied by Malcolm Martineau, in London and Oxford, and performed Detlev Glanert's *Prague Symphony* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Semyon Bychkov, at London's Barbican Centre. Elsewhere this season she performs Mahler's Second Symphony conducted by Jaap van Zweden at the Gstaad Festival, songs by Alma Mahler with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra under Vasily Petrenko and the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Paul McCreesh, Mahler's Eighth Symphony with the NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo under Fabio Luisi, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with both the Gewandhausorchester under Manfred Honeck and the Orchestre de Paris under Klaus Mäkelä, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in Rotterdam under John Butt, Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* in Utrecht and Amsterdam under Edo de Waart, and, for the first time, Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, including performances with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Herbert Blomstedt.

Song repertoire holds a profound significance for Catriona, as demonstrated by her most recent CD featuring songs by Grieg, Brahms, Josephine Lang and Schumann, accompanied by Malcolm Martineau. She has appeared in recital at the Wigmore Hall London, Edinburgh International Festival, Leeds Lieder Festival, Oxford Lieder Festival, Schubertiada Vilabertran, Heidelberger Frühling, and in Copenhagen and Barcelona.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Une barque sur l'océan



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Orchestral version: Paris, 3 February 1907

DURATION 7 minutes

Ravel composed his set of five piano pieces entitled *Miroirs* in 1905. One year later he orchestrated the third piece, *Une barque sur l'océan*. As in his piano composition *Jeux d'eau*, Ravel was especially good at evoking the play of water – whether fountains or the sea.

Une barque sur l'océan begins serenely, a wash of gently shimmering arpeggios being a constant feature. There are some momentarily threatening disturbances from the sea, its swell reflected as the dynamic rises and falls. After a succession of brief climaxes, yearning phrases lead to a bigger, more sustained climax, reinforced by percussion. Gradually the mood calms, though the moments of turbulence persist, so that one never loses the feeling of the sea's immense power. The ending is fragile – a gentle flourish from the celeste, then tremolando string harmonics and final notes on harp and glockenspiel.

Ravel uses a large orchestra, including two harps, with his usual consummate skill. Comparison with Debussy's *La mer* is inevitable. Debussy often exposes the violence of the sea, while Ravel is equally evocative but generally more subtle and impressionistic.

© Philip Borg-Wheeler

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

La mer



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Paris, 5 October 1905

DURATION 23 minutes

From dawn to midday on the sea

Play of the waves

Dialogue of the wind and the sea

Claude Debussy famously completed the orchestration of his 'three symphonic sketches' that comprise *La mer* (The Sea) not on a storm-tossed liner in the mid-Atlantic, nor gazing into the gently rippling waves of the balmy Mediterranean. Instead, he was looking out across the English Channel from genteel Eastbourne, on the south coast of England. It was March 1905. He'd begun work on the piece two years earlier while on holiday in Bichain, Burgundy – which is itself about 200 miles from the coast. But that's rather the point. Instead of attempting to depict the sea in music – and despite its movement titles highlighting specific times of the day and the effects of wind and water – *La mer* is a work of memory and imagination, not picture-painting.

'I have an endless store of memories of the sea,' Debussy wrote to a friend, referring to childhood summers in Cannes on the Mediterranean, as well as to later trips to the Brittany coast, 'and, to my mind, they are worth more than the reality, whose beauty weighs down thought too heavily.'

He resented being termed an 'impressionist', but there are undeniable parallels between the evocative yet elusive, sensuous musical images that Debussy conjures in *La mer* and what painters such as Monet were attempting, especially in their images conveying the reflections and shimmering textures of water. There are also echoes of Turner, whose seascapes from several decades earlier Debussy had admired on a trip to London in 1902 (although, ironically, he'd hated crossing the Channel). And of Japanese artist Hokusai, whose famous image *The Great Wave off Kanegawa* Debussy insisted should be used on the cover of his score.

Debussy's work on *La mer* came after the huge success in Paris of his single opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1902, and he was hoping for even greater acclaim with the orchestral piece, which he felt was more robust, more assertive than his delicate, pastel-shaded stage work. At its premiere, however, *La mer* had a rather cool reception. In fact, it had been controversial even in rehearsal, when the Lamoureux Orchestra's violinists tied handkerchiefs to the tips of their bows in protest at having to play such supposedly nonsensical music.

Any negative reaction to *La mer*'s first performance, however, was probably tied up more with Debussy's private life at the time than with a proper appraisal of the music itself. In 1905 he was a figure of scandal. While working on *La mer*, Debussy had moved in with his lover Emma Bardac, the wife of a banker, abandoning his wife Lily, who attempted suicide. Two weeks

after *La mer*'s premiere, Bardac gave birth to their daughter Claude-Emma, later known affectionately as Chou-Chou.

La mer has gone on, however, to become one of the composer's best-loved and most respected works, for both its unmistakable watery evocations, and its forward-looking approach to musical themes and form. It's been described – provocatively – as the greatest symphony ever written by a French composer (which wouldn't have pleased Debussy, declared enemy of the Germanic symphonic form and everything that came with it). And although *La mer* might sound nothing like Beethoven or Brahms, the careful if unconventional structuring of each movement and cross-references between its themes make the piece far more than a simple tone poem. Instead, it's a unified, truly symphonic creation.

Despite its title, From dawn to midday on the sea, *La mer*'s first movement does not slavishly depict a particular timeline – even if Debussy's friend Erik Satie quipped that he 'particularly enjoyed the bit at a quarter to 11'. There is, however, an undeniable progression from the muted, half-lit opening to the blaze of sunlight at its conclusion.

On that journey, the movement introduces themes that will recur throughout the piece, the first of which is a mysterious, curling melody on cor anglais and muted trumpet heard near the start. The movement's second main section begins with a sumptuous, dancing theme on eight solo cellos, leading to a murkier, more veiled section and then the quiet return of the cor anglais and muted trumpet's curling theme. The texture suddenly clears, however, for a hushed chorale on four horns – the first, brief announcement of the music that will close *La mer* in shining glory. The movement ends grandly with the sun blazing on the ocean.

The playful second movement, Play of the waves, is a flashing, quicksilver scherzo, an ever-changing mosaic of orchestral colours that seems to proceed spontaneously rather than obeying any traditional ideas of musical form. There are a scampering cor anglais and oboe theme, some fanfare-like interruptions from the trumpets, a couple of big swells of orchestral sound, and the movement ends mysteriously with a glitter of harp and glockenspiel.

Debussy unleashes the full force of his orchestra in the third movement, Dialogue of the wind and the sea. It opens with music suggesting the mighty surging of the ocean, or the rumble of an approaching storm, in which we can just about hear fragments of the first movement's themes, later cried out by a solo trumpet as if in distress. An aggressive climax heralds the final movement's restless main theme, first heard as the woodwind obsess over just a couple of notes. This builds to a thundering climax, and when the storm abates, it's with the first movement's glowing horn chorale, heard quietly again. There's an ecstatic restatement of the woodwind's obsessive theme, a stratospheric tone from the violins, a brief playful interlude that takes us back to the world of the second movement, then the horn chorale returns in all its glory, now across the whole brass section, and *La mer* races to an extrovert conclusion.

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Nicola Benedetti Plays Simpson

ABN Thu 21 Mar 2024: 7.30pm

EDN Fri 22 Mar 2024: 7.30pm

GLW Sat 23 Mar 2024: 7.30pm

Mark Simpson Violin Concerto
(Scottish Premiere & RSNO Co-commission)
Shostakovich Symphony No5

David Afkham Conductor
Nicola Benedetti Violin

Pre-concert talk, 6.45pm (EDN and GLW)

David Afkham and Mark Simpson in conversation
with RSNO Concerts Administrator Matthias Van Der Swaagh

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Thomas Søndergård

Conductor



Paris (Orchestre National de France), London (London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, London Symphony and Philharmonia), Amsterdam and Rotterdam (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic), and is a familiar figure in Scandinavia with such orchestras as the Oslo Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Danish National Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony, Finnish Radio Symphony and Helsinki Philharmonic. North American appearances have included the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Baltimore, St Louis, Toronto, Atlanta, Montreal, Vancouver, Houston and Seattle. He has also made highly successful tours to China, Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård has been Music Director of the RSNO since 2018, following six seasons as Principal Guest Conductor. The 2023/24 season has also seen him begin his tenure as Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra. Between 2012 and 2018 he served as Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW), after stepping down as Principal Conductor and Musical Advisor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra.

In addition to his regular appearances with the RSNO during the 2023:24 Season, Thomas led the Orchestra's Residency at Salzburg's Grosses Festspielhaus in October 2023, joined by pianist Lise de la Salle, and an extensive European tour with violinist Ray Chen in January 2024.

He has appeared with many notable orchestras in leading European centres, such as Berlin (Berliner Philharmoniker, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Konzerthausorchester Berlin), Munich (Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunk), Leipzig (Gewandhausorchester),

This season sees Thomas make his return to the London Symphony Orchestra, as well as his debut with the New York Philharmonic, where he will perform the US premiere of Olga Neuwirth's *Keyframes for a Hippogriff*. He also makes regular guest appearances throughout Scandinavia, debuting with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and at the Bergen International Festival, where he leads a full staging of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* to Grieg's complete incidental music. Return visits include the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, a joint collaboration with the Aalborg and Aarhus Symfoniorkestere, and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, celebrating his receipt of the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Foundation's award for his outstanding contribution to Danish musical life.

Royal Scottish National Orchestra



The Royal Scottish National Orchestra is one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras. Formed in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra, the company became the Scottish National Orchestra in 1950, and was awarded Royal Patronage in 1977. The Orchestra's artistic team is led by Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who was appointed RSNO Music Director in 2018.

The RSNO is supported by the Scottish Government and is one of the Scottish National Performing Companies. The Orchestra performs across Scotland, including concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and the BBC Proms. The RSNO has made recent tours to the USA, China and Europe.

The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving a 2020 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Chopin's Piano Concertos (soloist: Benjamin Grosvenor), conducted by Elim Chan, two Diapason d'or awards (Denève/Roussel 2007; Denève/Debussy 2012) and eight GRAMMY Award

nominations. Over 200 releases are available, including Thomas Søndergård conducting Strauss (*Ein Heldenleben*, *Der Rosenkavalier Suite*) and Prokofiev (Symphonies Nos 1 and 5); two discs of African American Voices featuring the music of George Walker, William Levi Dawson, Margaret Bonds and more, conducted by Kellen Gray; the complete symphonies of Sibelius (Gibson), Prokofiev (Järvi), Bruckner (Tintner) and Roussel (Denève); as well as further discs championing the music of William Grant Still (Eisenberg), Xiaogang Ye (Serebrier) and Thomas Wilson (Macdonald).

The RSNO's Engagement strategy, Music for Life, sees the Orchestra work with schools and community groups, connecting its music with the people of Scotland. Since March 2020, the RSNO has created multiple online Engagement programmes and Digital Seasons, ensuring the RSNO continues to bring world-class music to its audiences in Scotland and around the world on stage and on screen.

On Stage

FIRST VIOLIN

Emily Davis
GUEST PRINCIPAL
Savva Zverev
Emil Chakalov
Charlie MacClure
Matyas Mezes
Caroline Parry
Ursula Heidecker Allen
Elizabeth Bamping
Lorna Rough
Susannah Lowdon
Alan Manson
Liam Lynch
Veronica Marziano
Shulah Oliver-Smith

SECOND VIOLIN

Jacqueline Speirs
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Marion Wilson
Nigel Mason
Harriet Hunter
Anne Bünemann
Sophie Lang
Robin Wilson
Carole Howat
Helena Rose
Eddy Betancourt
Seona Glen
Joe Hodson

VIOLA

Tom Dunn
PRINCIPAL
Felix Tanner
Lisa Rourke
Claire Dunn
Katherine Wren
Maria Trittinger
Francesca Hunt
Beth Woodford
Elaine Koene
Sasha Buettner

CELLO

Pei-Jee Ng
PRINCIPAL
Betsy Taylor
Kennedy Leitch
Rachael Lee
Sarah Digger
Robert Anderson
Miranda Phythian-Adams
Susan Dance

DOUBLE BASS

Nikita Naumov
GUEST PRINCIPAL
Michael Rae
Moray Jones
Alexandre dos Santos
Olaya Garcia Alvarez
Aaron Barrera-Reyes

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Katherine Bryan
PRINCIPAL
Jenny Farley
Janet Richardson
PRINCIPAL PICCOLO

OBOE

Adrian Wilson
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Peter Dykes
Henry Clay
PRINCIPAL COR ANGLAIS

CLARINET

Timothy Orpen
PRINCIPAL
Robert Digney
Duncan Swindells
PRINCIPAL BASS CLARINET

BASSOON

David Hubbard
PRINCIPAL
Luis Eisen
Paolo Dutto
PRINCIPAL CONTRABASSOON

HORN

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David McClenaghan
Martin Murphy

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Christopher Hart
PRINCIPAL
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Mark Addison
Tom Watts
Marcus Pope

TROMBONE

Dávur Juul Magnussen
PRINCIPAL
Lance Green
Owen Pickering

TUBA

John Whitener
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TIMPANI

Paul Philbert
PRINCIPAL

PERCUSSION

Simon Lowdon
PRINCIPAL
John Poulter
Philip Hague

HARP

Pippa Tunnell
Sharron Griffiths

CELESTE

Hebba Benyaghla

Sistema Scotland



Photography © Stewart Attwood

Sistema Scotland is the charity that delivers the Big Noise social change and music education programmes, working with over 3,500 children and families to improve lives and strengthen communities across Scotland. Its immersive and long-term Big Noise programmes use music and nurturing relationships to help children and young people fulfil their potential. At Big Noise the symphony orchestra becomes a community which supports young people to gain an invaluable range of life skills. Independent evaluation shows that Big Noise supports children to improve their learning, wellbeing and confidence, bringing communities together and paving the way for positive futures. The programmes are delivered by inspirational staff musicians who act as role models and mentors, and foster supportive, long-term relationships.

Big Noise Wester Hailes is the newest programme in the Big Noise family. Launched in 2022, Big Noise Wester Hailes now works with around 400 children and their families from Clovenstone, Canal View, and Sighthill Primary and Nursery schools every week, supporting young people to reach their full potential. Tonight's concert is the first time children and young people from Big Noise Wester Hailes have had the exciting opportunity to perform alongside the RSNO.

Please support **Big Noise Wester Hailes** by visiting www.makeabignoise.org.uk or by scanning the QR code.



Big Noise Wester Hailes is delivered by Sistema Scotland with support from a range of public partners, trusts, foundations and individuals. In addition to Big Noise Wester Hailes (Edinburgh), Sistema Scotland also runs programmes in the targeted communities of Raploch & Fallin (Stirling), Govanhill (Glasgow), Torry (Aberdeen) and Douglas (Dundee).



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Painting: 'MacMillan: From Galloway' www.kirstymatheson.com



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The Planets

EDN Fri 19 Apr 2024: 7.30pm

GLW Sat 20 Apr 2024: 7.30pm

Ireland The Forgotten Rite

Elgar Sea Pictures

Holst The Planets

John Wilson Conductor

Alice Coote Mezzo-soprano

RSNO Chorus

Stephen Doughty RSNO Chorus Director

Pre-concert talk, 6.45pm

John Wilson in conversation with
RSNO Principal Flute Katherine Bryan

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Petrushka

EDN Fri 26 Apr 2024: 7.30pm

GLW Sat 27 Apr 2024: 7.30pm

Esa-Pekka Salonen Nyx
Errollyn Wallen Violin Concerto
(UK Premiere and RSNO Co-commission)
Stravinsky Petrushka

Joana Carneiro Conductor
Philippe Quint Violin

In memory of
Gerald Larner and Lynne Walker

Pre-concert talk, 6.45pm
RSNO Viola Katherine Wren

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GLW Sat 4 May 7.30pm

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One of the wonders of the RSNO is how it brings high-quality music not only to concert halls, but to the wider community. From hospital settings to care homes, from our Astar app for families with newborns to our National Schools Concert Programme, our music touches so many lives in Scotland and beyond. Your support is the

cornerstone of all that we do, as it allows us to continually build and develop.

Thank you for being part of this wonderful Orchestra's journey, as we adapt and grow towards a bright future.



Thomas Søndergård
MUSIC DIRECTOR, RSNO

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RSNO Benefactors are beacons of philanthropic inspiration, providing truly transformative financial support to the Orchestra that enables us to build and deliver long-term strategic plans. Benefactors share the RSNO's vision for orchestral music and work with us to drive

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The RSNO Conductors' Circle is an inspirational group of individual supporters at the heart of the RSNO's Individual Giving programme. Our members' annual philanthropic gifts enable us to realise the Orchestra's most ambitious goals. Conductors' Circle members support inspirational concert performances for our audiences alongside transformational education programmes in communities across Scotland, via our ground-breaking initiative Music for Life.

The RSNO is very grateful for the continued support of its Conductors' Circle:

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We would also like to thank those generous donors who wish to remain anonymous.

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From musical activities in schools with the musicians of the future to working in community venues across Scotland, as a Chair Patron you are enabling RSNO musicians to explore the many facets of their art and the positive impact it has on people's lives. Supporting an individual musician puts you at the heart of the RSNO family. You're connected directly to the musicians on stage and get to enjoy privileged behind-the-scenes access. RSNO musicians truly appreciate our Chair Patrons and enjoy developing personal relationships with our supporters.

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If you would like more information or would like to discuss how you can become part of the RSNO Family of Supporters, please contact Jane Donald, Director of External Relations, at jane.donald@rsno.org.uk



We would like to thank all those who continue to generously support the RSNO's Play Your Part Appeal.



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Leaving a gift to the RSNO in your will is the single most important way you can help us to make music and to create memories. Your legacy will support the work of the Orchestra for years to come, ensuring that we can continue to bring great music to a new generation of children, young people and adults right across Scotland.

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For more information please visit rsno.org.uk/memories

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Torran McEwan, Individual Giving and Partnerships Officer, in the strictest confidence, at torran.mcewan@rsno.org.uk

To the many among you who have pledged to leave a gift already – thank you.



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Charitable trusts and foundations have a distinguished history of supporting the RSNO, both on and off stage. From one-off donations for specific projects to multi-year funding for our flagship outreach initiatives, including the National Schools Concert Programme and Young Creatives, every grant in support of our work is truly appreciated. We are grateful to the following trusts and foundations for their generosity:

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We are also grateful to a number of trusts that wish to stay anonymous.

If you would like more information about our work and how you can make a difference, please contact Kirsten Reid, Trusts and Projects Coordinator, at kirsten.reid@rsno.org.uk

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Our Circle members are a vital part of the RSNO family. You, our community of music-lovers, inspire and support us. To all our existing Circle members, thank you. Your unwavering support allows us to continue bringing the joy of music to all across Scotland.

When you join the RSNO Circle you gain access to exclusive benefits such as priority single ticket booking, our exclusive *Inner Circle* magazine, the RSNO Circle e-newsletter and invitations to special events such as Open Rehearsals. You also help us to bring music to so many people, from children attending our free schools concerts to people in care homes watching our digital care packages.

To find out more about joining the Circle please visit rsno.org.uk/circle or get in touch with Torran McEwan, Individual Giving and Partnerships Officer, at torran.mcewan@rsno.org.uk

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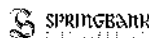
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