

TONIGHT'S CONCERT

Britten and Haydn 'London' Symphony

Thursday 13 March 2025
Barbican

7pm

Albert Roussel

Le festin de l'araignée – Symphonic Fragments

Maurice Ravel arr Anthony Girard

Histoires naturelles

Interval

Benjamin Britten

Les illuminations

Joseph Haydn

Symphony No 104, 'London'

Barbara Hannigan conductor & soprano

Stéphane Degout baritone

London Symphony Orchestra

Concert finishes at approximately 9.10pm

Welcome



A special welcome to this evening's performance conducted by Barbara Hannigan, LSO Associate Artist, as she brings her unique position as acclaimed singer and conductor to the concert hall. Tonight, in the first of her three concerts with us at the Barbican this March, she programmes music that spans three centuries, from 'the father of the symphony' Joseph Haydn to the 20th century with Albert Roussel, Maurice Ravel and Benjamin Britten. It was wonderful to hear her unique role in the opera suite from George Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence* with Sir Simon Rattle earlier in January. Tonight, she is soprano soloist for Britten's song cycle *Les illuminations*, an evocative setting of poems by Arthur Rimbaud.

We are delighted to welcome baritone Stéphane Degout, with whom we had the pleasure of working in Aix-en-Provence in 2021. Tonight, he sings Maurice Ravel's *Histoires naturelles*, a song cycle (arranged for orchestra by Anthony Girard) which sets poems by Jules Renard focusing on five different creatures: peacock, cricket, swan, kingfisher and guinea fowl.

The concert opens with symphonic fragments from Roussel's *Le festin de l'araignée* (The Spider's Feast). Symphony

No 104 by Joseph Haydn – a composer for whom Barbara Hannigan and the Orchestra have developed a special affinity in recent seasons together – brings a Classical dimension to this evening's programme.

I hope you enjoy tonight's concert and that you will be able to join us again soon. This Saturday, Sir Antonio Pappano, LSO Chief Conductor, conducts Wynton Marsalis' 'Jungle' Symphony, joined by Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis. Next week, Barbara Hannigan conducts programmes that reflect her artistry as a curator as well as a conductor, with music by Béla Bartók and Joseph Haydn alongside the UK premiere of Golfam Khayam's piece *Je ne suis pas une fable à conter* (I am not a tale to be told). We look forward to seeing you there.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kathryn McDowell'. The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Dame Kathryn McDowell DBE DL
Managing Director

Coming Up

Thursday 20 March
Barbican

7pm

Vivier, Haydn and Bartók

Miracles and myths abound, from Béla Bartók's surreal ballet to Jean Sibelius' Finnish landscape – plus, a captivating new piece by Golfam Khayam and Haydn in a tempestuous mood, with singer and conductor Barbara Hannigan.

Thursday 3 April
Barbican

7pm

MacMillan and Shostakovich 12

James MacMillan's dedicatee Nicola Benedetti performs his Violin Concerto No 2, and Principal Guest Conductor Gianandrea Noseda's Shostakovich cycle nears its completion.

Welcome to tonight's group bookers
Ms Adele Friedland & Friends
James Mortimer

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Le festin de l'araignée – Symphonic Fragments

Albert Roussel

- 1 **Prélude**
(Prelude)
- 2 **Entrée des fourmis**
(Entrance of the ants)
- 3 **Danse du papillon**
(Dance of the butterfly)
- 4 **Éclosion de l'éphémère**
(Hatching of the mayfly)
- 5 **Danse de l'éphémère**
(Dance of the mayfly)
- 6 **Funérailles de l'éphémère**
(Funeral of the mayfly)
- 7 **La nuit tombe sur le jardin solitaire**
(Night falls on the lonely garden)



1912–13



17 minutes

Programme note by
Edward Bhesania

Albert Roussel's ballet *Le festin de l'araignée* (The Spider's Feast) was first staged in 1913, at the Théâtre des Arts, Paris, at a time when Serge Diaghilev's new company, the Ballets Russes, had recently taken the city by storm. In the previous three years, Diaghilev had been responsible for Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* and the sexually charged ballet version of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Debussy's *Jeux*, premiered only a month after Roussel's ballet, explored a three-way flirtation on a tennis court.

A pupil of Vincent d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum de Paris – the fustier (but younger) cousin to the Paris Conservatoire – Roussel was cut from a less modernistic cloth but the scenario, set in and around a spider's web in the corner of a garden, allowed for a novel staging. In the story, the spider (a role taken by the dancer and contortionist Henriette Sahary-Djeli) awaits her prey while insects go about their business: ants transport a fallen rose petal, a butterfly is caught in the web, a pair of praying mantises bicker. A mayfly is born and expires after her dance. Ultimately, one of the mantises deals a mortal blow to the spider. It's dog eat dog in the insect world – and so it is, the moral seems to be, in the human realm too.

Roussel drew together seven fragments for his concert suite (published in 1914), which for many years was his most popular piece. (The composer Darius Milhaud recalled Roussel once complaining: 'It's terrible. They are always playing *Le festin de l'araignée*. I wrote four symphonies. No one plays them.')

The opening 'Prélude' sets the scene in the peaceful garden, with a pastoral flute melody over muted strings. Announced by the side drum, a procession of industrious ants enters; the music becomes effortful, almost grotesque, as they carry away their petal. The butterfly appears and dances a light waltz, during which she is enticed by the spider to dance closer to the spider's lair. The butterfly's entrapment is captured by chilling violins (prefiguring Bernard Herrmann's shower-scene effect in the *Psycho* film score by nearly 50 years). After the butterfly expires, a dark bed of strings underpins the mystery of the hatching mayfly, which soon proceeds to dance before also expiring (downward-swooping wind and solo harp glissando). Now comes the mayfly's funeral with its solemn tread. Presently, the cortège disappears into the distance and finally, as night falls, we return to the calm garden scene, as at the beginning. We have come full circle. Nothing has changed and yet everything has changed.

Albert Roussel

1869 to 1937 (France)



Contemporaries

Claude Debussy,
Erik Satie

Key events

1889–94: Serves in
the French Navy

1904–06:

Composes his first
major orchestral
work, *Le poème
de la forêt*

1909: Spends time
in French Indo-
China, now Vietnam

1914–18: Serves as
an ambulance driver
in World War I

1923: Premiere of
his opera-ballet
Padmâvatî

Listen to

Symphony No 3
[youtube.com](#)

Composer profile by
Edward Bhesania

Praised for the freshness of his imagination and the intellectual rigour resulting from his training at the Schola Cantorum de Paris, Albert Roussel was one of the foremost French composers in the period between the Romantics Charles Gounod and César Franck, and the 20th-century reformers Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel.

Roussel was born in Tourcoing, northern France, in 1869. He lost both his parents by the age of eight and went to live first with a grandfather and then with an aunt and uncle. He spent five years in the Navy before deciding to study composition in Paris. Four years later, he entered Vincent d'Indy's class at the Schola Cantorum, where, from 1902, he taught for twelve years; his pupils there include Edgard Varèse and Erik Satie. In 1909, he and his wife Blanche travelled to what was then French Indo-China, a journey that later inspired two key works: the orchestral *Évocations* (1910–11,

the success of which led to the commission for the ballet *Le festin d'araignée*) and the opera-ballet *Padmâvatî* (1913–18).

Aside from his four symphonies (the first titled *Le poème de la forêt* (The Poem of the Forest)) and the *Rapsodie flamande* (1936), he wrote chamber and vocal compositions in addition to a number of stage works in a variety of forms: the 'lyric tale' *La naissance de la lyre* (1922–24, after Sophocles), the ballet *Bacchus et Ariane* (1930) and the comic opera *Le testament de ma tante* (1932–33), as well as the ballet *Aeneas* (1935). In his last decade, he turned towards a leaner, punchier style, moving away from an impressionistic outlook to a neo-Classical one.

His friend and collaborator Louis Laloy, who wrote the libretto for *Padmâvatî*, described Roussel as a 'mild, reserved and contemplative' man with 'fine, lucid and penetrating' thoughts. For Nadia Boulanger, a lynchpin of Parisian musical life, he was simply 'one of the most original artists of our time'.

Histoires naturelles

Maurice Ravel arr Anthony Girard

Stéphane Degout
baritone

- 1 **Le paon**
(The peacock)
- 2 **Le grillon**
(The cricket)
- 3 **Le cygne**
(The swan)
- 4 **Le martin-pêcheur**
(The kingfisher)
- 5 **La pintade**
(The guinea-fowl)



1906



18 minutes

Programme note
by **Kate Hopkins**

Maurice Ravel was fascinated by the animal kingdom. In addition to owning several beloved Siamese cats, he depicted animals in a number of his compositions, most notably the one-act opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (1917–25) – in which the cast includes cats, squirrels, a bat and a dragonfly – and *Histoires naturelles* (1906). This witty song cycle for medium voice and piano sets five texts from Jules Renard's *Histoires naturelles*: a collection of prose poems that depict the animal kingdom. The poems' irony and wit have led writers to compare them to the famous fables of La Fontaine. Ravel wrote that Renard's texts especially appealed to him because of their 'direct, clear language' and 'profound, hidden poetry'. He aimed to reflect this through a declamatory vocal style 'closely related to the inflections of the French language'. Meanwhile, the piano parts provide vivid portraits of the song cycle's five very different creatures.

Histoires naturelles received its premiere at Paris' Salle Érard on 12 January 1907, with Ravel accompanying the mezzo-soprano Jane Bathori. The reaction was lively and very mixed: while some members of the audience were shocked by the vocal declamation and the apparently trivial subject matter, others much enjoyed the piece. It has gone on to become one of Ravel's most popular vocal works. Although conceived for a mezzo-soprano, it is now chiefly sung by baritones. Ravel's pupil Manuel Rosenthal was the first

composer to orchestrate the work; tonight, we hear it in a new arrangement by the French composer Anthony Girard.

In 'Le paon', the peacock makes his entrance to a dark-hued string melody – whose pompous dotted rhythms are inspired by the courtly Baroque 'French overture' – and wind fanfares. However, he soon spoils the grand effect with his characteristic screech. 'Le grillon' evokes the tiny cricket's industry through delicate textures, a high-lying vocal line and fidgety woodwind motifs. Only in the closing bars does the music relax. The rippling woodwind figuration and delicate orchestration of 'Le cygne' create a dreamy, tender atmosphere – until the humorous closing bars jolt us back to reality. In 'Le martin-pêcheur', rich harmonies, shimmering string and woodwind textures and a slow, rapt vocal line capture a fisherman's wonder at seeing a kingfisher perch on his rod. This peaceful atmosphere is shattered in the fifth and final song, 'La pintade', where explosive brass outbursts, strutting figures in the strings, oboes and clarinets and rapid bursts of text convey the aggression of the guinea-fowl, who never stops screaming.



Interval – 20 minutes

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Maurice Ravel

1875 to 1937 (France)



Contemporaries

Claude Debussy,
Manuel de Falla

Key events

1904: Has his first major successes with the orchestral song cycle

Shéhérazade and the String Quartet

1912: Premiere of his ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*

1929–31: Composes Piano Concerto in G and Piano Concerto for the Left Hand: his last major compositions

Listen to

Daphnis et Chloé
and *Boléro*

Isolive.co.uk

Maurice Ravel himself knew that he was not the most prolific of composers. 'I did my work slowly, drop by drop. I tore it out of me by pieces,' he said. There are no symphonies in Ravel's *oeuvre*, and only two operas, and although we often think of his music as rich and picturesque – like that of, say, Claude Debussy – Ravel conceived most of it on the smallest of scales. Even his orchestral works and ballets often grew out of pieces for piano.

But from these small kernels, Ravel had the ability to create colour and texture like no other. He was a master of orchestration, with a fastidious eye for detail and a keen awareness of both the capabilities and the limitations of each instrument.

Though he is often categorised as an 'impressionist' (a label he disputed) thanks to the sweeping colours and textures of his scores, and their shifting, ambiguous harmonies, there is nothing vague or imprecise about his music.

Ravel drew his inspiration from the likes of Rameau, Couperin, Mozart and Haydn, and considered himself first and foremost a classicist, a master of precision and invention. He held melody in the highest regard, and whether in his grand orchestral masterpieces like *Daphnis et Chloé* and *Boléro*, the fiendishly difficult solo piano works such as *Gaspard de la nuit*, or the deceptively simply *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, this unswerving commitment to melody shines through.

Composer profile
by **Jo Buckley**

'It was a sumptuous performance of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, so vividly and dramatically characterised that the ballet seemed to play out in my mind's eye.'

The Times

Daphnis et Chloé

RAVEL

Sir Antonio Pappano

Known for its rich harmonic textures and expansive scoring, *Daphnis et Chloé* is one of Ravel's largest and most loved orchestral masterpieces. Join the London Symphony Orchestra and Chief Conductor, Sir Antonio Pappano, on this dreamlike musical journey through Greek mythology, where passion, nature and divinity intertwine.



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Histoires naturelles

Text & Translation

Original Text

Le paon

Il va sûrement se marier aujourd'hui.

*Ce devait être pour hier.
En habit de gala, il était prêt.*

*Il n'attendait que sa fiancée.
Elle n'est pas venue.
Elle ne peut tarder.*

*Glorieux, il se promène
avec une allure de prince indien
et porte sur lui les riches présents d'usage.*

*L'amour avive l'éclat de ses couleurs
et son aigrette tremble comme une lyre.*

La fiancée n'arrive pas.

*Il monte au haut du toit
et regarde du côté du soleil.*

Il jette son cri diabolique:

'Léon! Léon!'

*C'est ainsi qu'il appelle sa fiancée.
Il ne voit rien venir et personne ne répond.
Les volailles habituées
ne lèvent même point la tête.
Elles sont lasses de l'admirer.
Il redescend dans la cour,
si sûr d'être beau
qu'il est incapable de rancune.*

Son mariage sera pour demain.

*Et, ne sachant que faire
du reste de la journée,
il se dirige vers le perron.
Il gravit les marches,
comme des marches de temple,
d'un pas officiel.*

Translated Text

The peacock

He surely will be getting married today.

It should have been yesterday.
Dressed for a gala, he was ready.

He was only waiting for his fiancée.
She didn't come.
She tarried.

Magnificent, he strolls
with the allure of an Indian prince
and brought the customary rich presents.

Love kindled a burst of colors
and his crest quivers like a lyre.

His fiancée does not arrive.

He climbs to the top of the roof
and from its edge beholds the sun.

He sounds his diabolical cry:

'Leon! Leon!'

Thus does he call his fiancée.
He sees nothing come, and no one answers.
The birds, accustomed to this,
do not even raise their head.
They are bored of admiring him.
He comes down and enters the courtyard,
so sure of his own beauty
that he is incapable of rancour.

His wedding will be tomorrow.

And, not knowing what to do
for the rest of the day,
he heads toward the porch.
He climbs its stairs,
like the stairs of the temple,
with an officious tread.

Histoires naturelles

Text & Translation

*Il relève sa robe
à queue toute lourde des yeux
qui n'ont pu se détacher d'elle.*

Il répète encore une fois la cérémonie.

Le grillon

*C'est l'heure où, las d'errer,
l'insecte nègre revient de promenade
et répare avec soin le désordre de son domaine.*

D'abord il ratisse ses étroites allées de sable.

*Il fait du bran de scie qu'il écarte
au seuil de sa retraite.*

*Il lime la racine de cette grande herbe
propre à le harceler.*

Il se repose.

Puis il remonte sa minuscule montre.

*A-t-il fini? Est-elle cassée?
Il se repose encore un peu.*

Il rentre chez lui et ferme sa porte.

*Longtemps il tourne sa clé
dans la serrure délicate.*

Et il écoute:

Point d'alarme dehors.

Mais il ne se trouve pas en sûreté.

*Et comme par une chaînette
dont la poulie grince,
il descend jusqu'au fond de la terre.*

On n'entend plus rien.

*Dans la campagne muette,
les peupliers se dressent comme des doigts
en l'air et désignent la lune.*

He picks up his tailed robe
so heavy from eyes
that cannot detach themselves.

He repeats the ceremony one more time.

The cricket

It is the hour when, bored with wandering,
the black insect returns to the promenade
and tidies up his domain.

First he rakes his narrow sandy paths.

He makes sawdust that he piles
on the threshold of his hideaway.

He files the root of the tall grass,
appropriate for attacking with.

He rests.

Then he mounts once more his minuscule watch.

Has he finished? Is it broken?
He rests again for a little while.

He returns home and closes his door.

A long while he turns the key
in the delicate lock.

Then he listens;

Nothing alarming outside.

But he does not find security.

And, like a small chain
whose teeth a pulley gnashes,
he descends into the depths of the earth.

He no longer hears anything.

In the mute countryside,
the poplars stand erect like fingers in the air,
pointing toward the moon.

Le cygne

*Il glisse sur le bassin, comme un traîneau blanc,
de nuage en nuage. Car il n'a faim que des
nuages floconneux qu'il voit naître,
bouger, et se perdre dans l'eau.*

*C'est l'un d'eux qu'il désire.
Il le vise du bec, et il plonge tout à
coup son col vêtu de neige.*

*Puis, tel un bras de femme sort
d'une manche, il retire.*

Il n'a rien.

Il regarde: les nuages effarouchés ont disparu.

*Il ne reste qu'un instant désabusé,
car les nuages tardent peu à revenir, et,
là-bas, où meurent les ondulations de l'eau,
en voici un qui se reforme.*

*Doucement, sur son léger coussin de plumes,
le cygne rame et s'approche ...*

*Il s'épuise à pêcher de vains reflets,
et peut-être qu'il mourra,
victime de cette illusion,
avant d'attraper un seul morceau de nuage.*

Mais qu'est-ce que je dis?

*Chaque fois qu'il plonge, il fouille du bec
la vase nourrissante et ramène un ver.*

Il engraisse comme une oie.

The swan

He glides upon the basin, like a white sleigh,
from cloud to cloud. For he is hungry only
for the snowy clouds that he sees born,
move, and become lost in the water.

He desires to grab one from the waters.
He aims with his beak, and he plunges
suddenly, his flight dressed in snow.

Then like a woman's arm emerging
from a sleeve, he withdraws.

He has nothing.

He sees: the scared clouds have disappeared.

He stays disenchanted only a moment,
for the clouds tarry a little before returning,
and, over there, where the water's
undulations die, here is one forming anew.

Softly, on his little pillow of feathers,
the swan paddles and approaches ...

He tires himself out fishing for vain reflections,
and perhaps he will die,
victim of this illusion,
before catching a single piece of cloud.

But what am I saying?

Each time he plunges, he digs with his beak
into nourishing silt and returns with a worm.

He fattens himself like a goose.

Histoires naturelles

Text & Translation

Le martin-pêcheur

*Ça n'a pas mordu, ce soir,
mais je rapporte une rare émotion.*

*Comme je tenais ma perche de ligne tendue,
un martin-pêcheur est venu s'y poser.*

*Nous n'avons pas d'oiseau plus éclatant.
Il semblait une grosse fleur bleue
au bout d'une longue tige.
La perche pliait sous le poids.
Je ne respirais plus, tout fier d'être pris
pour un arbre par un martin-pêcheur.*

*Et je suis sûr qu'il ne s'est pas
envolé de peur,
mais qu'il a cru qu'il ne faisait que passer
d'une branche à une autre.*

La Pintade

*C'est la bossue de ma cour.
Elle ne rêve que plaies
à cause de sa bosse.*

*Les poules ne lui disent rien.
Brusquement, elle se précipite et les harcèle.*

*Puis elle baisse sa tête, penche le corps,
et, de toute la vitesse de ses pattes maigres,
elle court frapper, de son bec dur,
juste au centre de la roue d'une dinde.*

Cette poseuse l'agaçait.

*Ainsi, la tête bleuie, ses barbillons à vif,
cocardière, elle rage du matin au soir.
Elle se bat sans motif,
peut-être parce qu'elle s'imaginer
toujours qu'on se moque de sa taille,
de son crâne chauve et de sa queue basse.*

The Kingfisher

Nothing bit this evening,
but I felt once more a rare emotion.

As I held my pole with line out,
a kingfish landed on it.

There is no more striking bird.
It seemed like a giant blue flower
at the end of a long stem.
The pole bent under its weight.
I dared not breathe, proud to have been taken
for a tree by a kingfisher.

And I was certain that he did
not take off from fear,
but because he believed he was only passing
from one branch to another.

The guinea-fowl

It is my beloved hunchback.
She only dreams of cankers
because of her hump.

The hens do not speak to her.
Abruptly, she bolts and attacks.

Then she lowers her head, bends her body,
and speeding her skinny legs,
she strikes quickly with her strong beak,
aiming for a turkey in the middle of the circle.

That showoff gets on her nerves.

Thus, with her blue-stained head,
its plumage frayed,
she rages from dawn till dusk.
She fights without cause,
perhaps because she imagines
that she is being mocked because of her size,
because of her bald head, and her low tail.

*Et elle ne cesse de jeter un cri discordant
qui perce l'aire comme un pointe.*

*Parfois elle quitte la cour et disparaît.
Elle laisse aux volailles pacifiques
un moment de répit.
Mais elle revient plus turbulente et plus criarde.
Et, frénétique, elle se vautre par terre.*

Qu'a-t'elle donc?

La sournoise fait une farce.

Elle est allée pondre son oeuf à la campagne.

Je peux le chercher si ça m'amuse.

*Et elle se roule dans la poussière
comme une bossue.*

Original text by Jules Renard (1864–1910)

And she continually sounds a discordant cry
that pierces the air like a knife.

At times she leaves the courtyard
and disappears.
She gives the peaceful birds a moment's respite.
But she returns, more turbulently and more shrill.
And, frenetically, she sprawls out on the ground.

What is she doing?

The cunning prankster.

She left to lay an egg in the country.

I can find it if I choose.

And she rolls around in the
dust like a hunchback.

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Les illuminations

Benjamin Britten

Barbara Hannigan
soprano & conductor

- 1 **Fanfare**
- 2 **Villes**
- 3 **Phase and Antique**
- 4 **Royauté**
- 5 **Marine**
- 6 **Interlude**
- 7 **Being Beauteous**
- 8 **Parade**
- 9 **Départ**



1939



21 minutes

Programme note
by **Lucy Walker**

At first glance, Benjamin Britten and the French poet Arthur Rimbaud make an unlikely pair. Take a look at their respective teenage years. Britten was born in Suffolk to a middle-class family, took himself precociously to music college aged 16, enjoyed sponge pudding and custard and was rarely seen without a tie. By contrast, the 16-year-old Rimbaud frequently ran away from home, got drunk and wrote rude poetry, and shortly after launched into a torrid affair with fellow poet Paul Verlaine, fuelled by hashish and opium. However, while the pair were outwardly wildly different, Britten's own subversiveness was often to be found boiling under the surface – even if it needed encouragement to break free. His friend and collaborator W H Auden introduced Britten to Rimbaud's vivid, proto-surreal poetry and Britten wrote something quite unique in response. It was not the first time he had set French words – one of his teenage experiments had been *Quatre chansons françaises* for voice and orchestra – but it was the first time he'd let rip on such exotic scenes: castles of crystal; silver chariots; a 'Paradise of mad grimaces'.

It was composed for high voice and string orchestra and produced over several months in 1939. Having already written several works for string orchestra, including the

very successful *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, Britten was experienced in drawing out a variety of colours from string instruments. The orchestra plays fanfares in the opening, strums like a guitar in 'Antique', melts into sumptuousness in 'Being Beauteous' and frequently gives way to exquisite solo spots. Rimbaud's texts are mostly prose, apart from 'Marine,' but Britten holds them together with a refrain which appears three times, and in three different moods: 'J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage' ('I alone hold the key to this wild parade'). The singer acts as a kind of host to the bizarre scenes that follow – think of the suave but sinister Emcee in *Cabaret* – ranging in tone from declamatory to gentle to somewhat eerie.

Throughout, perhaps sheltered by the non-English language here, Britten seems to be letting his hair down and channelling some of Rimbaud's free-wheeling spirit. There is an unhinged quality not often heard in his vocal works, notably in 'Marine' and 'Parade'. But there are also moments of tenderness that are bold indeed for the times. 'Being Beauteous', the most soaringly erotic song of the group, is dedicated to P.N.L.P. – Peter Neville Luard Pears, with whom Britten was just embarking on a 37-year-long relationship.

Benjamin Britten

1913 to 1976 (United Kingdom)



Contemporaries

Michael Tippett,
Elizabeth Maconchy

Key events

1934: Comes to prominence conducting the premiere of his *Simple Symphony*

1945: Premiere of his first opera, *Peter Grimes*

1945: Premiere of the *War Requiem*, a great anti-war statement

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Spring Symphony
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With the LSO

1946: World premiere of *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*

Composer profile
by **Philip Reed**

Benjamin Britten received his first piano lessons from his mother, who encouraged her son's earliest efforts at composition. In 1924, he heard Frank Bridge's tone poem *The Sea* and three years later, he became Bridge's pupil. In 1930, he gained a scholarship to the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition with John Ireland and piano with Arthur Benjamin.

Britten attracted wide attention when he conducted the premiere of his *Simple Symphony* in 1934. He worked for the GPO Film Unit and various theatre companies, collaborating with such writers as W H Auden and Christopher Isherwood. His lifelong relationship and working partnership with Peter Pears developed in the late 1930s. At the beginning of World War II, Britten and Pears remained in the US; on their return, they registered as conscientious objectors and were exempted from military service.

The first performance of the opera *Peter Grimes* in 1945 opened the way for a series of magnificent

stage works mainly conceived for the English Opera Group. In June 1948, Britten founded the Aldeburgh Festival of Music and the Arts, for which he subsequently wrote many new works. By the mid-1950s he was generally regarded as the leading British composer, helped by the international success of operas such as *Albert Herring*, *Billy Budd* and *The Turn of the Screw*. One of his greatest masterpieces, the *War Requiem*, was first performed on 30 May 1962 for the festival of consecration of St Michael's Cathedral, Coventry, its anti-war message reflecting the composer's pacifist beliefs.

A remarkably prolific composer, Britten completed works in almost every genre and for a wide range of musical abilities, from those of schoolchildren and amateur singers to such artists as Mstislav Rostropovich, Julian Bream and Peter Pears.

Les illuminations

Text & Translation

Original Text

Fanfare

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

Villes

Ce sont des villes! C'est un peuple pour qui se sont montés ces Alleghanys et ces Libans de rêve! Des chalets de cristal et de bois qui se meuvent sur des rails et des poulies invisibles. Les vieux cratères ceints de colosses et de palmiers de cuivre rugissent mélodieusement dans les feux.

Des cortèges de Mabs en robes rousses, opalines, montent des ravines. Là-haut, les pieds dans la cascade et les ronces, les cerfs tettent Diane. Les Bacchantes des banlieues sanglotent et la lune brûle et hurle. Vénus entre dans les cavernes des forgerons et des ermites. Des groupes de beffrois chantent les idées des peuples. Des châteaux bâtis en os sort la musique inconnue. Le paradis des orages s'effondre. Les sauvages dansent sans cesse la fête de la nuit.

Quels bons bras, quelle belle heure me rendront cette région d'où viennent mes sommeils et mes moindres mouvements?

Phrase et Antique

J'ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher; des guirlandes de fenêtre à fenêtre; des chaînes d'or d'étoile à étoile, et je danse.

Gracieux fils de Pan! Autour de ton front couronné de fleurettes et de baies, tes yeux, des boules précieuses, remuent. Tachées de lies brunes, tes joues se creusent. Tes crocs luisent. Ta poitrine ressemble à une cithare, des tintements circulent dans tes bras blonds. Ton cœur bat dans ce ventre où dort le double sexe. Promène-toi, la nuit en mouvant doucement cette cuisse, cette seconde cuisse et cette jambe de gauche.

Translated Text

Fanfare

I alone hold the key to this wild parade.

Towns

These are towns! This is a people for whom these Alleghenies and these Lebanons were raised up! Crystal and wooden chalets move on invisible rails and pulleys. The old craters, surrounded by colossuses and copper palm trees, roar melodiously in the flames.

Processions of Mabs in russet and opaline robes climb the ravines. Up there, Diana suckles stags, with their feet in the cascade and brambles. Suburban Bacchantes sob, and the moon burns and howls. Venus enters caverns of blacksmiths and hermits. Groups of belfries sing the people's ideas. From castles built of bones pour forth unknown music. The paradise of storms collapses. The savages dance ceaselessly the festival of the night.

What lovely arms, what beautiful hour will bring back to me that region from whence come my slumber and my smallest movements?

Phrase and Antique

I hung strings from steeple to steeple; garlands from window to window; gold chains from star to star, and I dance.

Gracious child of Pan! Around your brow, crowned by tiny flowers and berries, your eyes, precious globes, stir. Stained by brown dregs, your cheeks are hollowed. Your fangs glisten. Your bosom resembles a zither, its chiming spreading about in your fair arms. Your heart beats in that belly where the double sex sleeps. Walk in the night, moving gently this thigh, that other thigh, and that left leg.

Royauté

*Un beau matin, chez un peuple fort doux,
un homme et une femme superbes
criaient sur la place publique: 'Mes
amis, je veux qu'elle soit reine!' 'Je veux
être reine!' Elle riait et tremblait. Il parlait
aux amis de révélation, d'épreuve terminée.
Ils se pâmaient l'un contre l'autre.*

*En effet ils furent rois toute une matinée
où les tentures carminées se relevèrent
sur les maisons, et tout l'après-midi, où ils
s'avancèrent du côté des jardins de palmes.*

Marine

*Les chars d'argent et de cuivre –
Les proues d'acier et d'argent –
Battent l'écume –
Soulèvent les souches des ronces,
Les courants de la lande,
Et les ornières immenses du reflux,
Filent circulairement vers l'est,
Vers les piliers de la forêt,
Vers les fûts de la jetée,
Dont l'angle est heurté par des
tourbillons de lumière.*

Interlude

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

Being Beauteous

*Devant une neige un Être de Beauté de haute
taille. Des sifflements de mort et des cercles
de musique sourde font monter, s'élargir et
trembler comme un spectre ce corps adoré:
des blessures écarlates et noires éclatent dans
les chairs superbes. Les couleurs propres de la
vie se foncent, dansent, et se dégagent autour
de la vision, sur le chantier. Et les frissons
s'élèvent et grondent, et la saveur forcenée de
ces effets se chargeant avec les sifflements
mortels et les rauques musiques que le monde,
loin derrière nous, lance sur notre mère de
beauté – elle recule, elle se dresse. Oh! Nos os
sont revêtus d'un nouveau corps amoureux.*

Royalty

*A beautiful morning, among a most gentle
people, a superb man and woman, cry out in
a public square: 'My friends, I wish to make
her your queen!' 'I wish to be your queen!,'
she cries, and trembles. He speaks to his
friends of revelation, of finished ordeals.
They swoon, one against the other.*

*Indeed, they were kings all that morning while
the crimson hangings went up on the houses,
and all that afternoon, when they advanced
toward the coast through gardens of palms.*

Marine

*Chariots of silver and copper –
Prows of steel and silver –
Stir up the foam –
Lift up the roots of bramble,
The currents of the land,
And the immense tracks of the ebb,
Running out in a circle towards the east,
Toward the pillars of the forest,
Toward the piles of the jetty,
Whose corner is struck by
whirlpools of light.*

Interlude

I alone hold the key to this wild parade.

Being Beauteous

*In front of the snow stands a tall Beauteous
Being. The hissing of death and circles of
muffled music make this adored body climb,
expand, and tremble: black and scarlet wounds
burst in the superb flesh. The proper colors
of life darken, dance, and give off around the
vision, upon the yard. And the shudders rise
and fall, and the maniacal flavor of these effects
being charged with the mortal hissing and
raucous music that the world, well behind us,
hurls on our mother of beauty – she withdraws,
she stands up. O! Our bones are dressed
once more in a new amorous body.*

Les illuminations

Text & Translation

*Ô la face cendrée, l'écusson de crin, les bras
de cristal! Le canon sur lequel je dois m'abattre
à travers la mêlée des arbres et de l'air léger!*

Parade

*Des drôles très solides. Plusieurs ont exploité
vos mondes. Sans besoins, et peu pressés
de mettre en œuvre leurs brillantes facultés
et leur expérience de vos consciences. Quels
hommes mûrs! Des yeux hébétés à la façon
de la nuit d'été, rouges et noirs, tricolores,
d'acier piqué d'étoiles d'or; des faciès
déformés, plombés, blêmis, incendiés; des
enrouements folâtres! La démarche cruelle
des oripeaux! Il y a quelques jeunes ...*

*Ô le plus violent Paradis de la grimace enragée!
Chinois, Hottentots, bohémiens, niais, hyènes,
Molochs, vieilles démenches, démons sinistres,
ils mêlent les tours populaires, maternels,
avec les poses et les tendresses bestiales. Ils
interpréteraient des pièces nouvelles et des
chansons, bonnes filles. Maîtres jongleurs,
ils transforment le lieu et les personnes,
et usent de la comédie magnétique.*

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

Départ

*Assez vu. La vision s'est
rencontrée à tous les airs.*

*Assez eu. Rumeurs des Villes,
le soir, et au soleil, et toujours.*

*Assez connu. Les arrêts de la vie.
Ô Rumeurs et Visions!
Départ dans l'affection et le bruit neufs!*

Original text by Arthur Rimbaud (1854–91)

O ashen face, with shield of hair, and arms
of crystal! The cannon on which I must
throw myself down, amid the scuffle
of trees and the light breeze!

Parade

What sturdy odd fellows. Several have exploited
your worlds. Without needs, and little concerned
with putting their brilliant minds and their
experience of your consciences to work. What
mature men! Dazed eyes like a summer night,
red and black, tri-colored, steel dotted with
golden stars; deformed features, leaden, made
pale, made to burn; their foolish cries! The cruel
walk of rags! There are some young ones ...

O the most violent Paradise of the fanatical
grimace! Chinese, Hottentots, Bohemians,
deniers, hyenas, Molochs, old demented ones,
sinister demons, they mix popular and maternal
tricks with bestial poses and tenderness. They
interpreted new plays and, nice girl, songs.
Master jugglers, they transform the place
and the people and use magnetic comedy.

I alone hold the key to this wild parade.

Departure

Enough seen. Visions have
been met in every respect.

Enough has been. Rumors of towns,
at night, and in the light of day, and always.

Enough known. The decrees of life.
O rumors and visions!
Depart in new affection and new noise.

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COMING UP IN 2025

Season Highlights

Shostakovich Symphony No 12
MacMillan Violin Concerto No 2
with Gianandrea Noseda
and Nicola Benedetti
Thursday 3 April 7pm

Janáček The Excursions of Mr Brouček
with Sir Simon Rattle
Sunday 4 & Tuesday 6 May 7pm

Mozart Violin Concerto No 5
Strauss Ein Heldenleben
with Sir Antonio Pappano
and Lisa Batiashvili
Sunday 25 May 7pm

LSO On Film: The French Connection
with Dirk Brossé
Sunday 22 June 7pm

Symphony No 104, 'London'

Joseph Haydn

- 1 **Adagio – Allegro**
- 2 **Andante**
- 3 **Menuetto and Trio: Allegro**
- 4 **Finale: Spiritoso**



1795



28 minutes

Programme note
by **Lindsay Kemp**

The death in 1790 of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy brought an important change in the life of his court music director, Joseph Haydn. Haydn had happily served the Esterházy family for nearly 30 years, and, as he approached the age of 60, had scarcely ventured outside the 50-mile triangle between the Prince's Viennese residence and his country palaces at Eisenstadt and Eszterháza. However, Nikolaus' successor, Prince Anton, did not share his father's enthusiasm for music. Haydn was kept on, but, with the rest of the court's musical establishment disbanded, his position became a largely titular one. He was effectively a free agent.

It was at this time that Johann Peter Salomon, a London-based impresario, violinist and orchestra leader, saw his chance, and hastened to Austria to invite Haydn to become resident composer for his concert series in Hanover Square. Haydn accepted, and by early 1791 was in England. The personal reactions of this wheelwright's son to the celebrity status he enjoyed in this foreign land can only be guessed, but it is clear that the whole adventure of the visit, which lasted until the summer of 1792, and of a second that he made in 1794–95, had a rejuvenating effect that was to fuel his creative powers not only while he was here, but also for the next decade.

Central to his composing activities in England were his twelve 'London' symphonies (Nos 93–104), state-of-the-art examples of the genre which carefully catered to the taste of their intended audience. Haydn wrote to a friend that he had had to 'change many things for the English public', and we may guess that he was referring to the scale of his new symphonies, the gestural breadth which admitted both a wealth of appealing detail and a joy in the sonorities of Salomon's large orchestra, and perhaps the 'popular' feel of many of their melodies.

Alone of these symphonies, the last has attracted to itself the nickname 'London', a recognition perhaps of its culminative position in the canon, though in its combination of genial good humour, intellectual strength and musical surprises it is certainly a worthy representative of the set as a whole. Though he lived another 14 years, Haydn did not write another symphony, channelling his energy instead into the oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, much chamber music, and the works which, surprisingly, can be considered the nearest thing to a continuation of his symphonic thinking: the six late Masses.

That, however, is another story. Symphony No 104 is Haydn's last, and a fitting summation of his achievement in bringing the symphonic genre to a central

Joseph Haydn

1732 to 1809 (Austria)

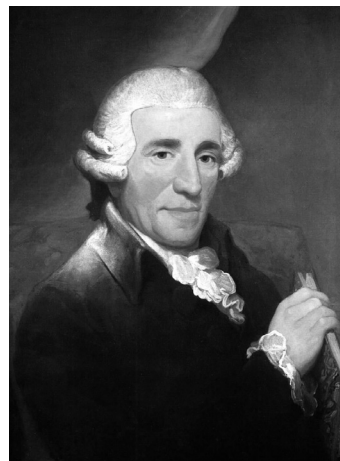
position in Western music. Like most of his late symphonies, it begins with a slow introduction, in this case a surprisingly mournful-sounding one in D minor which eventually gives out on to an Allegro of more predictably relaxed cheerfulness. Haydn is extremely economical with his material, as so often; much of the music here is based on fragments of the first song-like theme, and at the point where many composers would introduce a second theme, he instead restates the first in a new key. The slow movement has the feel of a variation set, though its theme is heard through only once before a powerful contrasting section in the minor, and only once after, this time with constantly evolving decorations and digressions.

The Menuet introduces the flavour of some grand ball and contrasts it with the genteel folk atmosphere of the central Trio, before the drone-driven finale takes the rustic flavour to another level. No less monothematically inventive than the first movement, this 'Spiritoso' makes an exhilarating finish to Haydn's symphonic career: 'The whole company was thoroughly pleased,' wrote the composer after the premiere on 4 May 1795, 'and so was I.'

Joseph Haydn was one of the most versatile and influential composers of his age. He received early musical training as a choirboy at Vienna's St Stephen's Cathedral and, in 1761, became Kapellmeister to the music-loving Esterházy family at their magnificent but isolated estate at Eszterháza, the 'Hungarian Versailles'. There he wrote a vast number of solo instrumental and chamber pieces, masses, motets, concertos and symphonies, besides at least two dozen stage works.

By 1790, Haydn was tired of the routine of being a musician in service. He envied his young friend Mozart's apparent freedom in Vienna, but was resigned to remaining at Eszterháza Castle. The death of Prince Nikolaus prompted unexpected and rapid changes in Haydn's circumstances. Nikolaus' son and heir, Prince Anton, cared little for what he regarded as the lavish and extravagant indulgence of music. He dismissed all but a few instrumentalists and retained the nominal services of Haydn, who became a free agent again and returned to Vienna.

In old age, Haydn fashioned several of his greatest works, the oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, his six Op 76 String Quartets and his so-called 'London Symphonies' prominent among them. Back in Vienna, Haydn, the son of a master wheelwright, was fêted by society and honoured by the imperial city's musical institutions.



Contemporaries

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Key events

1761: Becomes an employee of the Esterházy family
1790: Is able to move to Vienna after Prince Nikolaus Esterházy's death
1791–92 and 1794–95: Makes two very successful trips to London
1798: Premiere of his oratorio *The Creation*

Listen to

Haydn: An Imaginary Orchestral Journey with Sir Simon Rattle
Isolive.co.uk

Composer profile by
Andrew Stewart

Barbara Hannigan

conductor/soprano



Next on stage with the LSO

Wednesday 19 March

6.30pm, Barbican

Bartók, Khayam and Haydn

Thursday 20 March, 7pm, Barbican

Vivier, Khayam, Sibelius,

Haydn and Bartók

Embodying music with an unparalleled dramatic sensibility, soprano and conductor Barbara Hannigan is an artist at the forefront of creation. More than 30 years since her professional debut, Hannigan has created magical working relationships with world-class musicians, directors and choreographers, for audiences worldwide. Her artistic colleagues include John Zorn, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Simon Rattle, Sasha Waltz, Kent Nagano, Vladimir Jurowski, Andreas Kriegenburg, Andris Nelsons, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Christoph Marthaler, Antonio Pappano, Katie Mitchell and Kirill Petrenko. The late conductor and pianist Reinbert de Leeuw has been an extraordinary influence and inspiration on her development.

The Grammy Award-winning Canadian musician has shown a profound commitment to the music of our time and has given the world premiere performances of nearly 100 new creations, with extensive collaborations with composers including Pierre Boulez, John Zorn, Henri Dutilleux, György Ligeti, Zosha di Castri, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Golfam Khayam, Salvatore Sciarrino, Gerald Barry, Pascal Dusapin, Brett Dean, George Benjamin and Hans Abrahamsen.

A passionate musician of unique and courageous choices, Hannigan is renowned for creating innovative orchestral programmes, combining new and older repertoire in a highly dramatic and authentic manner. Having begun her career as a soprano, tackling some of the most difficult and virtuoso roles in the repertoire, she then turned her hand to conducting, making her debut in 2011 at age 40 at the Châtelet in Paris, and now balances her engagements as singer or conductor on a free and original path. She has held the position of Principal Guest Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra since 2019, and in 2026 she will begin her tenure as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra.

In recent years she has conducted world-class orchestras including the Concertgebouw and Cleveland Orchestras, the London Symphony Orchestra and Rome's Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, has ongoing relationships with festivals including Aix-en-Provence and Spoleto, and has had starring soprano roles on opera stages including London's Covent Garden, Teatro San Carlo in Naples, Paris Opéra's Palais Garnier, and the opera houses of Berlin, Hamburg and Munich.

Stéphane Degout

baritone



French baritone Stéphane Degout graduated from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Lyon, and is a former member of the Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Lyon. He performs regularly for opera houses including the Paris Opéra, Berlin State Opera, La Monnaie, the Royal Opera House, Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Bavarian State Opera and the Zurich Opera. He has also appeared at festivals including Salzburg, Glyndebourne, Edinburgh and Aix-en-Provence. Roles that he has sung include Papageno (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*), Guglielmo (Mozart's *Così fan tutte*), Count Almaviva (Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*), Wolfram (Wagner's *Tannhäuser*), Valentin (Gounod's *Faust*) and the title roles in Thomas' *Hamlet*, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* and *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*. He has created roles in operas including Benoît Mernier's *La Dispute* and Philippe Boesmans' *Au monde* and *Pinocchio*.

As a recitalist, Degout has performed across Europe, and recently sang Schumann's *Dichterliebe* at the Lausitz Festival with Martha Argerich. Concert appearances have included performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Riccardo Muti, the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* and Fauré's *Requiem* under Alain Altinoglu at La

Monnaie, Brussels, and with the Orchestre National de France under Emmanuel Krivine. He also works regularly with René Jacobs, John Nelson, Nathalie Stutzmann, Raphaël Pichon, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Barbara Hannigan.

During the 2024/25 season, Stéphane Degout performs the title role in Berg's *Wozzeck* with the Opéra National de Lyon and Michael in Turnage's new opera *Festen* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. On the concert stage, he rejoins Ensemble Pygmalion, Opéra National de Lyon, Orchestre de Cannes and the Munich Philharmonic for repertoire including Brahms' *German Requiem*, Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, Fauré's *Requiem* and Martin's *In terra pax*.

Degout has recorded for labels including Harmonia Mundi, B Records, Naïve and Deutsche Grammophon, in repertoire including Brahms' *German Requiem*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Puccini's *La bohème* and George Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence*. He was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2012 and has won many awards, including Male Singer of the Year at the 2022 International Opera Awards. Stéphane Degout is Master-in-Residence of the vocal section of Belgium's Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel.

London Symphony Orchestra

On Stage

Leader

Benjamin Gilmore

First Violins

Rebecca Chan
Laura Dixon
Elizabeth Pigram
Claire Parfitt
Laurent Quénelle
Sylvain Vasseur
Caroline Frenkel
Dmitry Khakhamov
Julia Rumley

Second Violins

Julián Gil Rodríguez
Thomas Norris
Sarah Quinn
Naoko Keatley
Belinda McFarlane
Csilla Pogány
Paul Robson
Helena Buckie
Victoria Irish
Aleem Kandour

Violas

Eivind Ringstad
Gillianne Haddow
Anna Bastow
Germán Clavijo
Thomas Beer
Julia O'Riordan
Sofia Silva Sousa
Robert Turner

Cellos

David Cohen
Laure Le Dantec
Ève-Marie Caravassilis
Daniel Gardner
Henry Hargreaves
Joanna Twaddle

Double Basses

Rodrigo Moro Martín
Toby Hughes
Philip Nelson
Ben Griffiths

Flutes

Gareth Davies
Imogen Royce

Piccolo

Sharon Williams

Oboes

Juliana Koch
Rosie Jenkins

Cor Anglais

Aurélien Laizé

Clarinets

Chris Richards
Chi-Yu Mo

Bassoons

Rachel Gough
Martin Field

Horns

Diego Incertis
Sánchez
Jonathan Maloney

Trumpets

James Fountain
Adam Wright

Timpani

Nigel Thomas

Percussion

Sam Walton
David Jackson

Harp

Bryn Lewis

Celeste

Elizabeth Burley