

Welcome to the 2022 BBC Proms



Welcome to the BBC Proms 2022. I am delighted that, in this centenary year of the BBC, we can return to the first full eight-week season since 2019, and to the scale and ambition for which the Proms is famous. We see the return of big orchestral and choral repertoire,

visits from some of the world's finest symphony orchestras, family concerts with big screens, and Relaxed Proms in a more informal environment. This is the Proms as we know and love them, and we hope you will find much to enjoy.

When in 1927 the BBC, just five years into its existence, took over the running of the Proms, the introduction of broadcasts – first on radio and then also on TV – enabled our founder-conductor, Henry Wood, to reach the widest audiences that were so central to his vision. In 2022 that partnership is stronger than ever. The BBC's own orchestras and choirs play a central role in our programme, and other BBC collaborations include the return of our hugely popular CBeebies Proms and a celebration of the remarkable work of the Natural History Unit. We also have a special new commission from the band Public Service Broadcasting that draws together material from the BBC archive to create a new work reflecting the origins of the organisation.

Mixing the familiar with the lesser-known is one of the cornerstones of the Proms. There will always be a place for the central pillars of the repertoire, but I hope you will also want to know more about Ethel Smyth, George Walker and Doreen Carwithen – composers less frequently heard on the concert platform. They sit alongside a huge range of contemporary work that embraces Oscar-winning composer Hildur Guðnadóttir, composer-performer Jennifer Walshe and Minimalist icon Philip Glass. This summer also features our first ever Gaming Prom, as well as celebrations of the legendary Aretha Franklin, singer and actress Cynthia Erivo and distinguished sarod player Amjad Ali Khan.

This year our concerts venture into all corners of the UK, as well as to other London venues. But our home remains here at the Royal Albert Hall, where so many extraordinary Proms events have taken place. Here's to a memorable summer of shared musical exploration!

David Pickard
Director, BBC Proms

BBC Proms

THE BBC PRESENTS THE 128TH SEASON OF HENRY WOOD PROMENADE CONCERTS

Tonight at the Proms

Tonight's concert, presented by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under its Music Director Thomas Søndergård, has a strong transatlantic strand to it, with Nicola Benedetti giving the Proms premiere of Wynton Marsalis's Violin Concerto, which fuses jazz and Scottish folk tunes in a homage to their two heritages. Bernstein's *West Side Story* (from which we hear the Symphonic Dances) stunned the world when it was unveiled in 1957 and the issues it tackles remain as pertinent today as they ever were.

We travel back to Britain for the remaining two works, which are, like the Bernstein, drawn from stage works. In the Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes* Britten conjures the magnificence of the ocean and the danger that lurks within its waves. Thomas Adès's very first opera, *Powder Her Face* (based on the scandalous divorce of Margaret, Duchess of Argyll), announced the arrival of a major new talent and tonight we hear his scintillatingly scored Suite No. 1.



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Royal Albert Hall

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Please do not take photos, or record any audio or video during the performance

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relating to the 2022
BBC Proms season, scan here



PROM 67 • TUESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 7.30pm–c9.50pm

Thomas Adès Three-Piece Suite from 'Powder Her Face' (Suite No. 1) 12'

Wynton Marsalis Violin Concerto 43'

first performance at the Proms

INTERVAL: 20 minutes

Benjamin Britten Four Sea Interludes from 'Peter Grimes' 16'

Leonard Bernstein Symphonic Dances from 'West Side Story' 24'

Nicola Benedetti *violin*

Royal Scottish National Orchestra Sharon Roffman *leader*

Thomas Søndergård *conductor*



RADIO **3** FOUR SOUNDS iPLAYER

This concert is broadcast live by BBC Radio 3 and shown on BBC Four on Friday at 8.00pm. You can listen on BBC Sounds and watch on BBC iPlayer until Monday 10 October.

THOMAS ADÈS (born 1971)

Three-Piece Suite from 'Powder Her Face' (Suite No. 1) (1995, arr. 2007)

- 1 Overture
- 2 Waltz
- 3 Finale

Powder Her Face was Thomas Adès's first opera, completed when he was 24, a work in which scandal-rag sensationalism associated with Margaret, Duchess of Argyll, is matched with high sophistication.

We observe the Duchess living a life of hedonism and debauchery in classy hotel rooms but somehow preserving the secrecy of herself, within a musical arena in which popular song and dance styles are folded into intricate textures that display the young composer's enthusiasm for the later music of György Ligeti and the wild polyrhythms of Conlon Nancarrow. Conceiving the piece as a chamber opera, with just four singers, Adès chose a small and distinctive accompanying ensemble of three clarinets, a brass trio and a string quintet with piano, harp, accordion and percussion. More than a decade later – with much experience in writing for the orchestra now behind him, and much experience, too, in arranging – he decided to create this orchestral sequence, which the Philharmonia introduced under his direction at the 2007 Aldeburgh Festival.

The first movement comprises the overture, going into the start of the first scene. A brief outburst of hysterical

laughter introduces a swathe of foxtrot glamour, which is then subjected to various kinds of rhythmic and harmonic distortion, as if the dance were being heard or remembered by someone after their ninth cocktail. In the opera this music introduces and partly underpins the stage image of a hotel electrician posing in the Duchess's fur coat and high heels, to the audible amusement of another member of staff, a maid. The sequence comes to an end just before the first words are sung.

This is the glitzy, tawdry but also enigmatic world of the Duchess, who is sung by a dramatic soprano, with the three other singers taking various roles as the opera proceeds. The short third scene, set at the Duchess's lavish wedding, is a waltz song for a waitress (formerly maid) and thereby falls into a bewitching tradition of such songs in opera – except that this time the singer is excluded from the dance. Each triple-time bar of the waltz is one beat of the waitress's duple rhythm: the dancing is going on somewhere else (hence its delicate sound), perhaps in her head, while she surveys the food she has to serve and imagines what it would be like to be rich.

The waltz occasionally trips out of sync with the 3/4 metre, but it gamely keeps going on. At some points, especially in this re-orchestration, it moves towards the magical air and sea sounds the composer developed for his second opera, *The Tempest* (2003–4). At other times it is joined by different music rising from below or lurking there – like the fish and vegetables in aspic the waitress describes, or like unwelcome thoughts in a mind set to a perpetual whirligig.

After a suspiciously neat and charming cadence in A flat, as if the music were executing a prim curtsy, some of the ensuing interlude leads directly into the tango finale. In the opera this is a 'sheet-folding tango', with the maid and electrician back on stage, wrapping the piece up. As



Beauty spot: Joan Rodgers as the Duchess, appearing in an outsized powder compact in the Royal Opera's production of *Powder Her Face* at the Linbury Studio Theatre, June 2008

touches of the overture's foxtrot seep back, the rhythm becomes more complicated, but without losing the drive of the dance, which carries the music to its close.

Programme note © Paul Griffiths

A critic for over 30 years, including for *The Times* and *The New Yorker*, Paul Griffiths is an authority on 20th- and 21st-century music. Among his books are studies of Boulez, Cage and Stravinsky, as well as *Modern Music and After* and *A Concise History of Western Music*. His most recent novels are *Mr Beethoven* (2020) and *The Tomb Guardians* (2021).

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Thomas Adès made his first Proms debut as composer, his second as executant and his third as conductor. It was in 1995 that Kent Nagano and the Hallé gave the London premiere of ... *but all shall be well*. In 1997 Adès the pianist played alongside Rolf Hind and the Orchestra of St John's, Smith Square, in John Lubbock's Late Night Prom performance of Colin McPhee's *Tabuh-tabuhan* (for two pianos and orchestra). Having directed his own *Concerto conciso* from the keyboard at a Late Nighter with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group in 1998, Adès made his podium debut proper in 1999, steering the BCMG through music by Ives and Nancarrow; Sir Simon Rattle took over after the interval for Leonard Bernstein's Broadway musical *Wonderful Town*. The Three-Piece Suite from Adès's first opera reached these concerts shortly after its unveiling at the 2007 Aldeburgh Festival. At the Proms, members of the Philharmonia were conducted by Christoph von Dohnányi in a short first half shared with Webern's realisation of the six-part Ricercar from Bach's *Musical Offering*. Next came Bartók's opera, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*.

© David Gutman

David Gutman is a writer and critic who since 1996 has contributed extensively to the BBC Proms programmes; his books cover subjects as wide-ranging as Prokofiev and David Bowie, and he reviews for *Gramophone* and *The Stage*.

Delve into Proms history for yourself by searching the online database of all Proms performances at bbc.co.uk/proms/archive.

THOMAS ADÈS

Thomas Adès studied at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and then read Music at King's College, Cambridge, graduating in 1992. Two years earlier he had composed his *Five Eliot Landscapes* for voice and piano, a remarkable Op. 1 both relating to song-cycle tradition and spectacularly transcending it. In 1993 Adès's Park Lane Group recital at the Purcell Room, including his *Still Sorrowing* for prepared piano, brought instant acclaim and the effective start of a triple international career as composer, pianist and conductor.

Adès's response to this meteoric rise was to develop further his already remarkable technical and stylistic range. *Traced Overhead* (1996) for piano reaffirmed his flair for glittering, intricate instrumental sonority, articulated in cascading figuration and complex metres. By then he had also composed, among much else, *Life Story* (1993), a bleak setting of Tennessee Williams, and a *Sonata da caccia* (1993) for Baroque oboe, horn and harpsichord, in tribute to a favourite composer, François Couperin.

This wide stylistic reach came together in Adès's first opera, *Powder Her Face* (1995), a portrait of the disintegrating lifestyle of Margaret, Duchess of Argyll after her divorce in 1963. This was followed by *America: A Prophecy* (1999), a far from millennially optimistic setting of a South American Mayan text, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic.

The Tempest, commissioned by the Royal Opera, was premiered at Covent Garden in February 2004. Setting a libretto by Meredith Oakes based on Shakespeare's play, the opera was received with huge acclaim for its virtuoso interplay of fantasy, spectacle and spellbinding musical



baritone soloists, premiered at the 2013 Proms with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer.

Adès's third opera, *The Exterminating Angel* – based on Luis Buñuel's film, and setting Tom Cairns's libretto (written in collaboration with the composer) – was commissioned jointly by the Salzburg Festival, the Royal Opera and the Metropolitan Opera. The result was a *tour de force* of the composer's now mature operatic mastery, deploying intricate groupings of multiple solo roles, in a score remarkable for its powerful emotional charge. Adès conducted the world premiere at the 2016 Salzburg Festival, and the Royal Opera House premiere the following year.

A pianist and conductor of rare gifts regularly at the disposal of music besides his own, Adès was Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival from 1999 to 2008. A three-year period as Artistic Partner with the Boston Symphony Orchestra culminated in the first performance of his Piano Concerto in 2019, with soloist Kirill Gerstein. The major project since then has been *Dante*, a three-part ballet score for orchestra and pre-recorded voices: the complete cycle, 'Inferno', 'Purgatorio' and 'Paradiso' was premiered by the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden in 2021. In the previous year Adès had completed *Märchentänze* ('Dances from Fairytale'), based on English folk-song sources, subsequently arranging the original violin-and-piano score in a version with orchestral accompaniment. Also in 2021 came *Alchymia*, a clarinet quintet drawing on and brilliantly transforming original words or music by Shakespeare, Byrd, Dowland and Berg.

Profile © Malcolm Hayes

Malcolm Hayes is a composer, writer, broadcaster and music journalist. He contributes regularly to *BBC Music Magazine* and edited *The Selected Letters of William Walton*. His BBC-commissioned Violin Concerto was performed at the Proms in 2016.

invention; it has since been staged many times around the world. More concert-hall works followed, among them *Totentanz*, for orchestra with mezzo-soprano and

WYNTON MARSALIS (born 1961)

Violin Concerto in D (2015)

first performance at the Proms

- 1 Rhapsody
- 2 Rondo Burlesque
- 3 Blues
- 4 Hootenanny

Nicola Benedetti *violin*

This piece was written for Nicola Benedetti. It takes inspiration from her life as a travelling performer and educator who enlightens and delights communities all over the world with the magic of virtuosity. Scored for symphony orchestra, with tremendous respect for the demands of that instrument, it is nonetheless written from the perspective of a jazz musician and New Orleans bluesman. We believe that all human beings are connected in the essential fundamentals of life: birth, death, love and laughter; that our most profound individual experiences are also universal (especially pain); and that acknowledging the depth of that pain in the context of a groove is a powerful first step towards healing.

Nicky asked me to ‘invite a diverse world of people into the experience of this piece’. Because finding and nurturing common musical ground between differing arts and musical styles has been a lifetime fascination of mine, I was already trying to welcome them. It may seem simple enough, but bringing together different perspectives is never easy. The shared vocabulary between the jazz orchestra and the modern orchestra sits largely in the areas of texture and instrumental technique. Form,

improvisation, harmony and methods of thematic development are very different. The biggest challenges are: how to orchestrate the nuance and virtuosity in jazz and blues for an ensemble not versed in those styles (a technical issue); and how to create a consistent groove without a rhythm section (a musical/philosophical issue).

Because modern living is an integrated experience, it is not difficult to discover organic connections. Turning those insights into something meaningful and playable, however, is another story. It has to be lived and digested. That’s why I looked for real-life examples in the history of jazz–symphonic collaborations and to the environment and experience that connect Nicky and me. I considered aspects of her Scottish ancestry, the great Afro-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass’s love of legendary Scottish poet Robert Burns, my love and inextinguishable respect for Scottish baritone saxophonist Joe Temperley (and his gleeful recitation of pungent limericks), and the luminous but obscure achievements of Afro-American keyed bugler Francis Johnson, father of the American cornet tradition and one of the first published American composers ... who was also a fine fiddler. These sources led me to reconnect with the Anglo-Celtic roots of Afro-American music.

...

The piece opens with Nicky whispering a solo note before the orchestra enters, as if to say ‘And so it came to pass’ or ‘Once upon a time’. Then we are into a form constructed in fours – as in the four corners of the earth, where her travels take her.

Each of the four movements – ‘Rhapsody’, ‘Rondo Burlesque’, ‘Blues’ and ‘Hootenanny’ – reveals a different aspect of her dream, which becomes reality through the public storytelling that is virtuosic performance.



The annual Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans, whose raucous sense of celebration finds its way into the second movement of Wynton Marsalis's Violin Concerto

The first movement, 'Rhapsody', is a complex dream that becomes a nightmare, progresses into peacefulness and dissolves into ancestral memory. The second movement, 'Rondo Burlesque', is a syncopated, New Orleans jazz, calliope, circus clown, African gumbo, Mardi Gras party in odd metres. The third movement, 'Blues', is the progression of flirtation, courtship, intimacy, sermonising, final loss and abject loneliness that is out there to claim us all. The fourth and final

movement, 'Hootenanny', is a raucous, stomping and whimsical barnyard throw-down. She excites us with all types of virtuosic chicanery and gets us intoxicated with revelry and then ... goes on down the Good King's highway to other places yet to be seen or even foretold. As in the blues and jazz tradition, our journey ends with the jubilation and uplift of an optimistic conclusion.

Programme note © Wynton Marsalis

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Probably the first musician to sign exclusive recording contracts for both classical music and jazz at the same time, Wynton Marsalis first appeared here with his Septet in a Late Night Prom in 1993. There followed two sensational Saturday night engagements with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. 'Stompin' at the Proms' in 2002 and 'Out here to swing!' in 2004 showcased a 15-strong ensemble in a mix of classics and new compositions. Marsalis has been less visible in recent years, although in 2019 a lullaby blending ragtime, spiritual and Scottish ballad elements snuck in courtesy of Nicola Benedetti. After the scheduled account of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto, her choice of encore was 'As the Wind Goes', the second of the five movements comprising Marsalis's *Fiddle Dance Suite* written expressly for her. She retreated from the stage, still playing.

© David Gutman

WYNTON MARSALIS

Few musicians have excelled so prominently in the fields of jazz and classical music as Wynton Marsalis, with Grammy Awards for recordings in both genres. He has worked tirelessly as a trumpeter and bandleader since his teenage years and, dovetailed with this, he has always composed. His first pieces, including *Father Time*, appeared on his eponymous debut album in 1982 and he has created music for almost every ensemble he has worked with since. He has also been extremely active in jazz education, not just through the annual Essentially Ellington competition for youth bands in the United States (won in 2022 by the Osceola County School in Florida) but as recently as June this year premiering his piece *Back to Basics* at the San Francisco Jazz Gala with the SF Jazz High School All-Stars Orchestra.

Catching up with Marsalis is like trying to stop a speeding bullet. His itinerary with his own septet, with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and as a motivator and educationalist means that he is constantly on the move. In July he toured with the J@LCO in the USA before bringing the smaller group to Europe for concerts in Italy, and then appearing with the Septet at Marciac, France, during early August.

As a composer he has always stretched himself in works such as his extended jazz oratorio *Blood on the Fields* (1994; it went on to win the Pulitzer Prize three years later), *Blues Symphony* (first heard in Atlanta in 2009) and the *Abyssinian Mass* (given its first European performance at the Barbican in 2012). Tonight's Violin Concerto was written in 2015 and his *Concerto for Tubist and Orchestra* was premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra, with Carol Jantsch, last year.



Pakistan, exploring the interstices between jazz and South Asian music. 'I've never really believed in segregating the music into different areas. We are all part of a continuum,' he told me for a Radio 3 interview. And describing how his characteristic energy goes into composing, he says: 'Concentration and diligence are required. You hear a sound and then pursue it in the most direct fashion. On the page, you play with it just like you played with inanimate objects as a child – you play with the notes, rhythms, chords and textures.' Based on tonight's piece, that seems a highly effective method.

Profile © Alyn Shipton

Alyn Shipton presents *Jazz Record Requests* on BBC Radio 3 and is the author of *On Jazz: A Personal Journey* (CUP, 2022).

INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

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Continuing our series looking at cultural milestones of 1922 – the year the BBC was founded – Lisa Mullen hears how the Hollywood Bowl was inaugurated as a musical venue in Los Angeles; she is joined by Michael Goldfarb and Mark Glancy.

Available on BBC Sounds until 10 October



A conversation with Marsalis always covers a huge range of territory and he is as likely to speak of working as a soloist in Haydn's Trumpet Concerto under the baton of Raymond Leppard as he is about more recent collaborations with the Sachal Jazz Ensemble from

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913–76)

Four Sea Interludes from 'Peter Grimes', Op. 33a (1943–5)

- 1 Dawn
- 2 Sunday Morning
- 3 Moonlight
- 4 Storm

It was in the small Californian town of Escondido that the travel-weary Benjamin Britten stumbled upon a magazine profile of the Suffolk poet George Crabbe. Reading the accounts of Crabbe's early life in Aldeburgh, Britten became both insatiably fascinated and intensely homesick. Soon the composer and his partner Peter Pears set sail for England, bringing their three-year American adventure to an end. On a homebound Swedish freighter in April 1942 Britten and Pears sketched the scenario for *Peter Grimes*: the Crabbe-based opera that would prove pivotal in both their careers.



The waves breaking onto Aldeburgh beach on a stormy winter's evening; it was here that Britten found inspiration for the opera that made his name, *Peter Grimes*, including the highly atmospheric quartet of Sea Interludes

Britten's image of the fisherman Grimes who is described in Crabbe's poem *The Borough* was that of an outsider, a man hardened by a brutal society. 'The more vicious the society, the more vicious the individual,' commented the composer in 1948 as the opera was preparing to travel back across the Atlantic for its American debut, after a June 1945 premiere in London. The title-character, written for performance by Pears, was battered by a hostile community and an equally hostile ocean, eventually – and not entirely guiltlessly – taking his own life.

The four orchestral interludes that permeate the opera depict the sea as it meets the Suffolk coast (Britten's later opera *Billy Budd* would provide an altogether different sonic depiction of the sea – that of the wide expanse of ocean experienced from a large vessel far from land). They also mirror the unfolding drama. In *Peter Grimes* the sea – like the inhabitants of the small fishing village clearly based on the town of Aldeburgh – is by turns threatening and welcoming, murderous and compassionate.

...

'Dawn' is stark, with woodwinds awaking to a gentle flutter above thick, undulating blocks of brass and low strings – these are the grey-blue colours of first light on the Aldeburgh beach, punctuated by the searching large leap (a minor ninth) that becomes one of the fisherman's musical mottos.

'Sunday Morning' prefaces the scene outside the church at which Grimes's confidante, Ellen Orford, entertains the fisherman's apprentice with knitting; the sunlit sea is sharp, bright and choppy, with the peal of church bells calling the villagers to worship.

'Moonlight' begins calmly as quiet strings move in search of tectonic stability; a xylophone and flute reflect like

moonlight on the still orchestral waters before brass and drums colour a huge folding-outwards like an oceanic yawn.

'Storm' is appropriately turbulent, the loud passages surrounding a no-man's-land of brittle instrumental exchanges, like the storm's ominous lull.

Programme note © Andrew Mellor

Andrew Mellor is a freelance journalist and critic, and author of *The Northern Silence: Journeys in Nordic Music and Culture* (Yale UP)

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

No surprise that the Four Sea Interludes (with or without the Act 2 Passacaglia) should have enjoyed more exposure at the Proms than *Peter Grimes* itself. Those orchestral highlights were first heard here in the 1945 season, the year of the opera's sensational premiere. Adrian Boult (whose conducting Britten disliked) was on the podium. Malcolm Sargent, of whom the composer was also suspicious, dipped a toe in the water in 1947, directing just two of the interludes and again appending the Passacaglia. Sargent went on to record the Four Sea Interludes on Columbia 78s which Britten dismissed as 'most disappointing', with 'in one case (side 3) ludicrously bad balancing'. Since that time the pieces have become standard fare, clocking up more than a dozen appearances, most recently in 2018 when Juanjo Mena and the BBC Philharmonic delivered a 20th-century Anglo-American programme. While the Storm has sometimes been plundered for descriptive purposes in family-friendly daytime events, the complete stage work was presented by Covent Garden forces in 1975 and semi-staged by English National Opera in 2012.

© David Gutman

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

In June 1976, at the beginning of the 29th Aldeburgh Festival, Benjamin Britten hosted a party in the gardens of the Red House, his home since 1957. He was desperately ill (he would die six months later) but *The Times* had announced that morning that he was now Baron Britten of Aldeburgh, in the County of Suffolk, and celebrations were in order. He was grateful for the recognition, feeling himself eclipsed by a vibrant, emerging generation of British composers.

Britten could not have predicted either the highs or perceived lows of his remarkable career. Born in 1913 into an upper-middle-class family in Lowestoft, he wrote works throughout childhood of great commitment if not startling originality. Yet studies with Frank Bridge from 1927 exposed him to the techniques of Continental modernism and instilled real discipline in his music – ideas and qualities he thought lacking in his studies at the Royal College of Music from 1930 to 1933.

After graduation Britten wrote incidental music for film, stage and radio, which served as his apprenticeship as an opera composer. For the film *Coal Face* (1935) he collaborated with the poet W. H. Auden, who broadened his literary taste and political engagement, as evinced by their orchestral song-cycle *Our Hunting Fathers* (1936). Disenchanted by the critical response to his serious music, in early 1939 he followed Auden and Christopher Isherwood to America. There he hit his stride in works such as the Violin Concerto (1938–9), *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1939–40) and *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* (1940), written for his partner, the tenor Peter Pears.

America helped define him as a person and a composer but his roots remained in Suffolk, the county to which



he returned in 1942 and in which he spent the rest of his life. There, registered as a conscientious objector, he wrote the opera *Peter Grimes*, which in 1945 launched his international career. There was no ingrained operatic culture in mid-20th-century Britain, a fact that made the

dozen or so stage works that followed – from *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946) to *Death in Venice* (1973) – all the more remarkable.

As a peerless pianist and conductor Britten engaged with the music of his heroes – Schubert, Mozart and Mahler – and as a composer he explored the deep, destructive currents of humanity. ‘I feel ... with Mozart,’ he said in 1960, ‘that he is writing about Figaro and his relationship with Susanna and the Countess, and is not always quite clear of the tremendous moral significance that these pieces are going to have for us.’ The same applies to Britten’s own works, the moral significance and popularity of which have only increased in the years since his death.

Profile © Paul Kildea

Paul Kildea is a conductor and author whose books include *Selling Britten* (2002) and, as editor, *Britten on Music* (2003). His biography *Benjamin Britten: A Life in the Twentieth Century* was published in 2013.

MORE BRITTEN AT THE PROMS

TOMORROW, 11.00am • PROM 68

Four Sea Interludes from ‘Peter Grimes’ – Sunday Morning; Storm

SATURDAY 10 SEPTEMBER, 7.15pm • PROM 72

The National Anthem (arr. Britten)

For full Proms listings, and to book tickets, visit bbc.co.uk/proms.

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–90)

Symphonic Dances from 'West Side Story' (1957, arr. 1960)

Prologue – 'Somewhere' – Scherzo – Mambo – Cha-Cha –
Meeting Scene – 'Cool' Fugue – Rumble – Finale

It was the choreographer Jerome Robbins who dreamt up the idea of a 'social music drama' based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, with the action transplanted and updated from Verona to the Lower East Side of Manhattan. What's more, 'East Side Story' (as the piece was initially dubbed) would drag the familial conflict of Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers into the arenas of race, religion and gang rivalry.

Although Robbins had come up with the original concept in 1949, work on the score only began in earnest some six



The Jets still riding high in this 50th-anniversary world tour of *West Side Story*, a 'social music drama' that has lost none of its impact or relevance since its birth in 1957

years later. Bernstein had already collaborated with Robbins on his ballet scores *Fancy Free* (1944) and *Facsimile* (1946), as well as the 1944 musical *On the Town*. In addition, Bernstein was beginning to make quite a name for himself as a conductor (the 25-year-old had caused a sensation when he replaced an ill Bruno Walter at a New York Philharmonic concert, broadcast nationwide on 14 November 1943). The playwright Arthur Laurents added an edgy realism to *West Side Story*'s drama, which was now set in Manhattan's Upper West Side. A budding lyricist by the name of Stephen Sondheim was recruited to write the libretto. Opening in Washington in August 1957, *West Side Story* transferred to Broadway the following month, where it ran for 732 performances. Robert Wise's 1961 big-screen adaptation (starring Natalie Wood) cemented that enormous success – and Bernstein's reputation – across the globe.

Bernstein concocted the set of *Symphonic Dances* in 1960, meticulously sharing orchestration duties (as in the original show) with Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal. Lukas Foss conducted the world premiere with the New York Philharmonic on 13 February 1961 at a 'Valentine for Leonard Bernstein' gala concert to raise money for the orchestra's pension fund. Not for Bernstein a predictable medley of greatest hits; rather he fashions a superbly proportioned symphonic essay, whose cumulative intensity and emotional tug leave a powerful impression.

There are nine linked sections in all. In the 'Prologue' the tension between the two street gangs, the Jets (White) and Sharks (Puerto Rican), spills over into violence. Next comes a dream sequence, the haunting strains of 'Somewhere' yielding to an airy 'Scherzo' depicting a utopian space beyond the city boundaries. Reality kicks in again at the ferociously competitive high-school dance ('Mambo'). Here is where the lovers Tony and Maria first encounter each other, dance

('Cha-Cha') and chat ('Meeting Scene'). The Jets try to put a lid on their simmering rage ('Cool' Fugue), but the almighty confrontation that ensues ('Rumble') ends with the death of both rival gang-leaders. The heartbreaking 'Finale' incorporates Maria's achingly tender 'I have a love', before a final quotation from 'Somewhere' entertains the suggestion of a truce and longed-for reconciliation.

Programme note © Andrew Achenbach

Andrew Achenbach is a freelance classical music journalist, annotator, consultant and long-standing reviewer for *Gramophone* magazine.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Bernstein appeared twice at the Proms as conductor in the 1980s but his music arrived earlier, in 1975, when Aaron Copland inaugurated his own BBC Symphony Orchestra conducting date with his friend's *Candide* overture. Much more of Bernstein's output has been sampled since his death in both mainstream 'classical' programmes and special 'crossover' events. Soprano Dawn Upshaw pointed the way with her 1996 Late Night 'Dawn at Dusk' showcase, placing material from three Bernstein musicals alongside such previously disenfranchised talents as Richard Rodgers, Stephen Sondheim and Marc Blitzstein. *West Side Story* was finally performed with the score substantially complete in an authorised concert version presented by the John Wilson Orchestra on successive nights in 2018. The purely orchestral *Symphonic Dances* extracted from the show made their Proms debut during Sir Mark Elder's Last Night of 1987. The sequence was heard most recently in 2016, when the BBC Concert Orchestra offered a transatlantic programme of music with Shakespearean connections under conductor Keith Lockhart. Especially memorable was the fifth rendition of 2007, when the 'Mambo' was encored after a costume change by Gustavo Dudamel's Simón Bolívar National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela.

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LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Leonard Bernstein grew up near Boston in a middle-class Jewish family. His earliest musical memories were of being at the synagogue, but he devoured new music at the piano during his teens, put on productions of Gilbert & Sullivan with family and friends, and went to concerts whenever he could. His student years at Harvard (1935–9) left him frustrated by the traditional curriculum, but meeting Aaron Copland in 1937 was a turning point: Bernstein admired Copland's music enormously, and the older man quickly became a father-figure, confidant and the closest thing Bernstein had to a composition teacher.

Bernstein's composing breakthrough came in 1944 with the premieres of three works: the 'Jeremiah' Symphony, the ballet *Fancy Free* and the musical *On the Town*; the previous year he had also become the assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic and made a sensational debut standing in at short notice for Bruno Walter in a nationally broadcast concert. Bernstein's letters from the time find him agonising over whether to devote himself to composition or carry on conducting, and whether he should write musicals or aspire to something more 'serious'. He never resolved these quandaries but concert pieces such as the Symphony No. 2, 'The Age of Anxiety' (1949, rev. 1965) and the violin concerto *Serenade* (1953–4), as well as the 'Jeremiah' Symphony, sit happily alongside the musical *Wonderful Town* (1953) and his film score for *On the Waterfront* (1954): it's Bernstein's prodigious variety that makes him such a charismatic figure in American music.

A few days after *West Side Story* opened in 1957, Bernstein became Principal Conductor of the New York Philharmonic – more evidence of the brilliant and bewildering range of his gifts and, as an educator,



his flair for explaining music at the Young People's Concerts inspired a generation. Bernstein hated to be alone and he was at his best working with other people, whether talking to an audience, making music with an orchestra or collaborating on stage works. The success of *West Side Story* was never repeated – nor could it be, as conducting took up more time. A sabbatical was set aside for a new musical in 1964 but this was abandoned –

although its accidental but happy outcome was *Chichester Psalms* (1965). The more Bernstein was in demand as a conductor, the more he believed that composing was his true vocation. With its dancers, rock and blues bands, marching band and street musicians, as well as choirs and full orchestra, *Mass* (1971) was perhaps his most daring theatre piece, but his last musical, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (1976), was a disaster on Broadway, despite its beautiful score. Even with his busy conducting schedule, Bernstein still made time to compose and short pieces such as *Halil* (1981) show that he still had memorable things to say. Among other late pieces, *A Quiet Place* (1983) was his only full-length opera. Bernstein died in 1990 but his multifaceted legacy endures, above all through compositions that reflect his passionate embrace of every kind of music.

Profile © Nigel Simeone

Nigel Simeone is editor of *The Leonard Bernstein Letters* (2013) and author of a book about *West Side Story* (2009).

MORE BERNSTEIN AT THE PROMS

TOMORROW, 11.00am • PROM 68
Symphonic Dances from 'West Side Story'

For full Proms listings, and to book tickets, visit bbc.co.uk/proms.

The Proms Listening Service

As Radio 3's *The Listening Service* revisits earlier episodes reflecting a range of this summer's Proms themes, presenter **Tom Service** takes a wide-angle view of each theme in this weekly column



Week 8 Getting to grips with Beethoven

What did Beethoven really believe? The *Missa solemnis* is music that's made not of sublime certainty, but of cosmic questioning. It's a negotiation of his mortal place – and all of ours, as human beings – in relation to the quasi-eternities of centuries of sacred musical tradition, the beliefs expressed in the Latin liturgy and the idea and the practice of God and godliness. It's music in which, inspired by the examples of Haydn's Masses, Beethoven goes further in scale, sound-world and expressive ambition than any Mass-setting had done before.

Similarly, the 'Eroica' Symphony isn't about filling a pre-made symphonic form, it's not a tribute to the powers of instrumental music as Beethoven found them to be in the orchestral conventions of Vienna at the start of the 19th century: it's a testing and a pushing of the boundaries human and musical expression, so that a symphony could no longer be a marginal entertainment but a manifesto for a new way of thinking and feeling about the world.

Instead of certainty, Beethoven's music is consistently on the side of question and change, of never taking anything for granted, of testing every assumption and idea, form, structure and preconception to breaking point – and beyond. That's why the fugues of the *Missa solemnis* don't sound so much like expertly wrought counterpoint that bears witness to Beethoven's study of Palestrina and earlier polyphony, as well as choral music by his favourite composer,

Handel – even though they surely are among the ecstatic heights of the art of the choral contrapuntalist – but instead, they feel like fugues that shake the foundations of the sky with their power and urgency. They transcend mere music to become celestial shouts in which the voices don't sound a homogenised unity of utterance but threaten to tear the entire texture of the piece apart, releasing an irresistibly terrifying centri-fugal energy.

The central belief that underlies Beethoven's music is a principle of dynamic, restless change. That's the creative fire that burns throughout his music-making as a composer in the works we can experience today, and it's also what fuelled who he was as a pianist and an improviser in his lifetime.

Just after the dawn of the new century, Beethoven's music for *The Creatures of Prometheus*, made in 1800–01, is another sound of his foundational belief in the power of music not only to describe but to create change. As Prometheus stole Zeus's fire to make humankind, Beethoven's life is testament to the transformational power of music, which he wrangled and fought with, and which he forced into all the shapes he could as a material, a clay made of the souls of his listeners. And Beethoven's credo – his fearless commitment to change, to question, to transcend – only becomes more urgent, not less.

Beethoven features this week at the Proms on Monday 5, Wednesday 7 and Thursday 8 September at 7.30pm.

Join Tom Service on his Proms-themed musical odysseys in *The Listening Service* on BBC Radio 3 during the season (Sundays at 5.00pm, repeated Fridays at 4.30pm). You can hear all 200-plus editions of the series on BBC Sounds. Tom's book based on the series is now available, published by Faber.



Thomas Søndergård *conductor*

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård became Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in 2018, following six seasons as Principal Guest Conductor. He was Principal Conductor of the BBC National

Orchestra of Wales (2012–18), having previously been Principal Conductor and Musical Advisor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra.

He has appeared with major European orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Radio Symphony and Konzerthaus orchestras, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Netherlands and Rotterdam Philharmonic orchestras. In the UK he has conducted the London Philharmonic, London Symphony, BBC Symphony and Philharmonia orchestras. A familiar figure in Scandinavia, he appears with the major orchestras of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. North American appearances include the Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Seattle, Toronto and Vancouver Symphony orchestras, and he has toured to China, Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Highlights of the current season include the RSNO's resumption of live performances, his return to the Royal Danish Opera for *Die Walküre* and New Year concerts, and debuts with the Montreal Symphony, Bergen Philharmonic and Minnesota orchestras.

In January Thomas Søndergård was decorated with the Order of the Dannebrog by Her Majesty Margrethe II, Queen of Denmark, and in July it was announced that he would succeed Osmo Vänskä as Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra.



Nicola Benedetti *violin*

Nicola Benedetti's wide appeal as an advocate for classical music has made her one of the most influential artists of today.

She opens the new season performing Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with the City of

Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Kazuki Yamada. Further engagements include the world premiere of Sir James MacMillan's Violin Concerto with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, a tour to Japan with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and performances with the Boston, Gothenburg and St Louis Symphony orchestras, the Hallé, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and Orchestre de Paris.

She won a Grammy Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo in 2020, and her latest recordings include concertos by Elgar and Vivaldi. Other recent recordings include an album composed for her by Wynton Marsalis, including the Violin Concerto she performs tonight and *Fiddle Dance Suite*. Last year *BBC Music Magazine* named her Personality of the Year for her online support of young musicians during the pandemic.

Nicola Benedetti was appointed MBE in 2013 and CBE in 2019, and was awarded the Queen's Medal for Music in 2017. She is Vice President of the National Children's Orchestras, Big Sister of Sistema Scotland and Patron of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland's Junior Orchestra, Music in Secondary Schools Trust and Junior Conservatoire of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Next month she becomes Director of the Edinburgh International Festival.

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra was established in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra. It has performed full time since 1950, when it was renamed the Scottish National Orchestra, and it was awarded royal patronage in 1977. The orchestra's artistic team is led by Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who was appointed Music Director in 2018, with Elim Chan as Principal Guest Conductor.

The RSNO is supported by the Scottish Government and is one of the Scottish National Performing Companies, with regular concerts across the country, including annual seasons in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness. It regularly appears at the Edinburgh International Festival, and this year returned to the St Magnus Festival in Orkney and went on a European tour with Midori and Lise de la Salle.

Its numerous recordings have been nominated for eight Grammy Awards and won the *Diapason d'Or* in 2007 and 2012. The orchestra received a 2020 *Gramophone* Award for Chopin's piano concertos with Benjamin Grosvenor, conducted by Elim Chan.

The Learning and Engagement programme Music for Life works with schoolchildren and community groups to connect the orchestra and its music with the people of Scotland. Since March 2020 the organisation has created a series of Digital Seasons, as well as multiple online Learning and Engagement programmes and behind-the-scenes content. Last October the RSNO launched its first combined Live and Digital Season, continuing to bring world-class music to its audiences in Scotland and around the world on stage and on screen.

Music Director

Thomas
Søndergård

Principal Guest Conductor

Elim Chan

Conductor Laureate

Neeme Järvi

Conductor Emeritus

Alexander Lazarev

Assistant Conductor

Kellen Gray

First Violins

Sharon Roffman
leader
Emily Davis
associate leader
Tamás Fejes
assistant leader
Patrick Curlett
Naori Takahashi
Caroline Parry
Laura Embry
Ursula Heidecker
Allen
Elizabeth Bamping
Lorna Rough
Alan Manson
Gillian Risi
Gongbo Jiang
Catherine James

Second Violins

Tijmen Huisigh†
Jacqueline Speirs
Marion Wilson
Harriet Wilson
Nigel Mason
Paul Medd
Anne Bünemann
Sophie Lang
Robin Wilson
Kirstin Drew
Helena Rose
Colin McKee

Violas

Tom Dunn*
Felix Tanner
Asher Zaccardelli
Susan Buchan
Lisa Rourke
Nicola McWhirter

Claire Dunn
Maria Trittinger
Francesca Hunt
David McCreadie

Cellos

Karen Stephenson†
Betsy Taylor
Kennedy Leitch
Gunda
Baranaukaite
Rachael Lee
Sarah Digger
Robert Anderson
Lucy Arch
Susan Dance

Double Basses

Roberto Carrillo-
Garcia†
Michael Rae
Paul Sutherland
Aaron Barrera-
Reyes
Piotr Hetman
Christopher
Sergeant
Sophie Butler
Kirsty Matheson

Flutes

Katherine Bryan*
Helen Brew
Janet Richardson

Piccolo

Janet Richardson*

Oboes

Adrian Wilson *
Peter Dykes
Henry Clay

Cor Anglais

Henry Clay

Clarinets

Timothy Orpen *
Jonathan Parkin
Katy Ayling
Duncan Swindells

Bass Clarinet

Duncan Swindells *

Saxophone

Gareth Brady

Bassoons

David Hubbard *
Luis Eisen
Paolo Dutto

Contrabassoon

Paolo Dutto *

Horns

Christopher
Gough *
Alison Murray
Andrew McLean
David
McClenaghan
Martin Murphy

Trumpets

Christopher Hart *
Kaitlin Wild

Jason Lewis
Toby Street

Trombones

Dávur Juul
Magnussen *
Lance Green
Alastair Sinclair

Bass Trombone

Alastair Sinclair *

Tuba

John Whitener *

Timpani

Paul Philbert *

Percussion

Simon Lowdon *
John Poulter
Tom Hunter
Stuart Semple
Philip Hague

Harp

Pippa Tunnell

Piano/Celesta

Lynda Cochrane

Drum Kit

Matt Skelton

* *Principal*

† *Guest Principal*

*The list of players
was correct at
the time of going
to press*

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