

MAHLER

in miniature



Presented by

THE INVERNESS MAHLER PLAYERS

MARTINU Nonet
DEBUSSY Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
MAHLER Symphony No. 4

Tomas Leakey - conductor
Emily Mitchell - soprano

Dornoch Strathpeffer Nairn
5th, 6th, 7th June 2013

WELCOME

The Inverness Mahler Players are delighted to present the first concert of our series "Mahler in Miniature". We are thrilled to be joined tonight by soprano Emily Mitchell and hope that you enjoy our very special programme.

PROGRAMME

Bohuslav Martinů: Nonet for wind quintet, string trio and double bass, H374

- I. Poco Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Allegretto

Claude Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune (chamber arrangement by Arnold Schoenberg)

Interval

Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 4 in G major (chamber arrangement by Klaus Simon)

- I. Bedächtig. *Nicht eilen*- Recht gemächlich (Deliberately. *Unhurriedly* – Very leisurely)
- II. In gemächlicher Bewegung. Ohne Hast (At a leisurely pace. Without haste)
- III. Ruhevoll (Poco adagio) (peaceful)
- IV. "Das Himmlische Leben" Sehr behaglich (Very comfortable)

Tomas Leakey conductor

Emily Mitchell soprano

The Inverness Mahler Players

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890-1959) Nonet for wind quintet, string trio and double bass H374

Bohuslav Martinů, the son of a shoemaker, was born in Polička in Czechoslovakia. After studying at the Prague Conservatory he had a busy career - initially as a violinist in the Czech Philharmonic and later as a composer, moving to Paris in 1923 to study with Albert Roussel. He fled to New York during the Second World War before returning to Prague in 1945. The Nonet was composed in 1959 - the last year of his life - for the thirty-fifth anniversary of the 'Czech Nonet', a chamber ensemble which is still active today. The first movement begins radiantly, bursting into life with a bold statement from the clarinet immediately answered in the strings and then passed between the players. It continues throughout in much the same vein, displaying a sunny geniality and quirkiness which is often reminiscent of Haydn. The Andante is much more sombre, but never lugubrious. The finale is once more high-spirited and life-affirming, with no hint of the shadow of the terminal illness from which Martinů was by this time dying.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918) Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

"The flute of the faun brought new breath to the art of music". These are the words of the avant-garde composer, conductor and Debussy's fellow countryman, Pierre Boulez. There are several works which can be considered to hail the beginning of the end of tonality and the dawn of the new era of musical modernism. Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* and Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* are two such works, but in its less extroverted way the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* was just as instrumental in the destruction of an old musical language and the creation of a new one.

First performed in Paris in 1894, the inspiration for this piece was Stéphane Mallarmé's symbolist poem *L'après-midi d'un faune*. It describes a faun's impression of his erotic encounters with forest nymphs upon waking from his afternoon sleep. The work does not follow the narrative of the poem literally as Debussy explained: "The music of this prelude is a very free illustration of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature."

The sense of intoxication and instability is immediately apparent through the chromatic drop of a tritone in the famous opening flute solo (an interval characterised by its difficulty to sing and which was described by early composers as *diabolus in musica*). The music then unfolds gradually, coming to a central climax before returning from whence it came, with the exotic and unusual addition of crotales (Chinese cymbals). This arrangement, the making of which was supervised by Schoenberg, dates from the early 1920s, and was made for the "Society of Private Musical Performances" which was active in Vienna around this time. Piano and harmonium are added to make up for the absence of harps, horns and the inner parts of the wind section.

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860-1911) Symphony No.4 in G-major (arr. Klaus Simon)

"A symphony must be like the world: it must embrace everything". There is no doubt that Mahler's symphonies embrace everything; from the highest joy to the depths of despair, from the ugly sounds of contemporary life to peaceful countryside scenes, there really is something of the complete human condition present in each of his works. This is one of the things that lends him enormous popularity in today's world.

The Fourth is, at fifty-five minutes, the shortest of his symphonies and also the most lightly scored, with no heavy brass. It was first performed in Munich on the 25th November 1901, with the composer conducting. As with most of his works, the genesis of the symphony was quite complicated and Mahler considered a number of different plans before settling on the one he finally adopted. The song "Das Himmlische Leben" which forms the finale of the symphony was in fact the first part of it to be composed. It was one of four poems he set to music in 1892 and the text is taken from the collection of German folk songs and poems, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. He considered including it in his already enormous 3rd Symphony, but in the end decided to make it the finale of a new work. This song has been described by Mahler as "both the goal and source" of his symphony. This is achieved through musical means – many of the ideas from the finale are prefigured in the first three movements.

The first movement begins with the 'sleigh bell' idea (characterised by the musicologist philosopher Adorno as the "once upon a time" in this fairy tale) before continuing in a wonderfully good-natured and Viennese theme. The first movement follows most of the conventions of sonata form - the form for symphonic works developed by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The central section introduces an element of uncertainty, and a new theme is introduced in the flute, later to be recognised as a precursor of the main theme of the finale. The motifs are then "shuffled like a pack of cards" and become more and more disorderly before a "call to attention" from the trumpet (oboe in the reduction) restores order. The genial music of the opening returns and brings the movement to a rousing finish.

The second movement is best described by Mahler himself: "Death strikes up the dance for us; she scrapes her fiddle bizarrely and leads us up to heaven". The first violinist is instructed to have two instruments at her disposal, one of which is tuned a tone higher than normal. This contributes to the eerie and macabre feeling of this movement.

In the third movement Mahler presents us with a set of variations interspersed with anguished sections which he marks *klagend* (lamenting). In the words of renowned Mahler scholar Henry-Louis La Grange, "No other composer writing in the Beethovenian tradition could have created music so serene, so serious and so profound." The coda of the movement presents a sudden outburst of triumph, throwing open the gates of heaven, and the main theme of the finale is quoted. The music dies out rather than ends, and in Mahler's words: "When man, now full of wonder, asks what all this means, the child answers him with the fourth movement."

Like the Debussy, Mahler's Fourth Symphony was first arranged for chamber ensemble by Schoenberg pupil Erwin Stein, for Schoenberg's "Society for Private Musical Performances". The present arrangement, from 2007 by Klaus Simon, is made in the same spirit but expands the ensemble slightly, including vital parts for horn and bassoon which were missing in the earlier arrangement.

Das Himmlische Leben

Wir genießen die himmlischen Freuden,
d'rum tun wir das Irdische meiden,
Kein weltlich Getümmel
hört man nicht im Himmel!
Lebt alles in sanftester Ruh!
Wir führen ein englisches Leben!
sind dennoch ganz lustig daneben;
wir tanzen und springen,
wir hüpfen und singen.
Sankt Peter im Himmel sieht zu.

Johannes das Lämmlein auslasset,
der Metzger Herodes d'rauf passet.
Wir führen ein geduldig's,
unschuldig's, geduldig's,
ein liebliches Lämmlein zu Tod!
Sankt Lucas den Ochsen tät schlachten
ohn' einig's bedenken und Achten,
der Wein kost' kein Heller
im himmlischen Keller,
die Englein, die backen das Brot.

Gut' Kräuter von allerhand Arten,
die wachsen im himmlischen Garten,
gut' Spargel, Fisolen
und was wir nur wollen.
Ganze Schüsseln voll sind uns bereit!
Gut' Äpfel, gut' Birn und gut' Trauben;
die Gärtner, die alles erlauben.
Willst Rehbock, willst Hasen
auf offener Straßen
sie laufen herbei!
Sollt' ein Fasttag etwa kommen
alle Fische gleich mit Freuden
angeschwommen!
Dort läuft schon Sankt Peter
mit Netz und mit Köder
zum himmlischen Weiher hinein.
Sankt Martha die Köchin muß sein

Kein' Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden
die uns'rer verglichen kann werden.
Elftausend Jungfrauen
zu tanzen sich trauen.
Sankt Ursula selbst dazu lacht.
Cäcilia mit ihren Verwandten
sind treffliche Hofmusikanten!
Die englischen Stimmen
ermuntern die Sinnen,
daß Alles für Freuden erwacht.

The Heavenly Life

We enjoy heaven's delights,
so can dispense with earthly things.
No worldly turmoil
is to be heard in heaven:
everything lives in peace and calm.
We lead the lives of angels
yet are very gay about it;
we jump and dance,
we skip and sing.
St. Peter in heaven looks on.

St. John lets the lamb go;
Herod the butcher marks it well.
We lead a patient,
innocent, loveable
little lamb to its death.
St. Luke slaughters the ox
without giving it a second thought.
Wine costs not a farthing
in heaven's cellars;
the angels bake the bread.

Tasty vegetables of every kind
grow in heaven's garden:
Good asparagus, beans
and whatever we want.
Whole dishfuls are ready for us!
Good apples, pears and grapes;
the gardeners let us have anything.
If you want deer or hare
on an open spit
they come running up!
Should a fast-day occur,
all fish gladly swim along!
St. Peter already hurries,
with his net and his bait,
into the heavenly fishpond.
St. Martha must be the cook.

There's no music on earth
that can be compared to ours.
Eleven thousand virgins
set to dancing;
even St. Ursula laughs to see it.
Cecilia and her kin
are the splendid Court musicians!
The angelic voices
gladden our senses,
so that everything awakes to pleasure.
(Translation ©1968 Lionel Salter)

TOMAS LEAKEY – conductor

Tomas Leakey began his musical life as a trombonist in the Highland Regional Youth Orchestra. He later joined the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, playing under such conductors as Vernon Handley and Christopher Adey. At the University of Cambridge he studied Natural Sciences but was also very active on the music scene as a pianist, trombonist and later as a conductor. In his third year he was the director of the Christ's College Orchestra.

Tomas studied conducting with the late George Hurst at the Sherborne Summer School of Music, where in 2012 he was invited to assist Hurst in open rehearsals of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, Mozart's Symphony No. 40, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony. He also studies conducting with Denise Ham at the Blackheath Conservatoire in London, and with Toby Purser and Susan Dingle. In March 2013 he set up and conducted an educational project in which a full performance of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* was taken round several local schools, and culminated in a sold-out public performance in Inverness Town House.

In September 2013 Tomas will be commencing the Master of Music programme in Orchestral Conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff.

EMILY MITCHELL – soprano

Scottish soprano, Emily Mitchell was classically trained at the RSAMD (now Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), where she gained a Bachelor in Music and a Masters in Music under the tutelage of Margaret Aronson. She continues her vocal study with soprano Jane Irwin.

Emily has given many performances across Europe; the Messiah in Berlin and Potsdam and recitals at the Transeuropeanes Festival, Rouen. Beethoven and Haydn Scots Songs in Heilbronn, Wuerttemberg; with the Dunedin Consort as a ripienist, Handel's Messiah in Versailles and Bach's Bminor Mass at Torroella de Montgri Festival, Spain.

Emily's operatic experience includes Chorus/*The Magic Flute* for Scottish Opera; Echo/*Ariadne Auf Naxos* (cover) and Ninette/*L'amour Pour Trois Oranges* (cover) for RSAMD production; Sandman/*Hänsel und Gretel* for Aberdeen International Youth Festival; Helena/*A Midsummer Nights Dream* and Countess Almaviva/*Le Nozze di Figaro* for Ian Fleming Opera Scenes RSAMD.

She has appeared with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in a concert performance of Poulenc's *Les Carmélites* and in Kurt Weil's *The Rise and Fall of Mahagony* conducted by H.K.Gruber at the Usher Hall in the Edinburgh International Festival.

Emily has been broadcast on BBC Radio Scotland in *Mendelssohn Rediscovered* and BBC Radio 3 several times including the *BBC Proms*. Her most recent appearance was with the BBC SSO and the London Symphony Chorus singing in the Scottish premiere of MacMillan's *St John Passion*. She made her BBC Proms début in August 2010 at the Royal Albert Hall with the BBC SSO, conducted by Donald Runnicles in Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music*.

Emily toured Britain as the soloist in a production for babies, *The Presents* from director Katherine Morley and renowned children's composer Paul Rissmann. As a regular performer with the Dunedin Consort, Emily has performed in Bach's *B minor Mass* and *Magnificat*, Handel's *Messiah* and *Dixit Dominus* and has recorded Handel's *Esther* with Linn Records. Emily has performed as a soloist in many oratorio engagements, including Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and *Exultate Jubilate*, Haydn's *Creation*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at Canterbury Cathedral, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Faure's *Requiem*, Brahms *Requiem*, Rutter *Requiem* and *Magnificat*, Howard Goodall's *Eternal Light*, Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and *Messiah*, Howells *Hymnus Paradisi*, Bach *Magnificat* and Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*.

THE INVERNESS MAHLER PLAYERS

The Inverness Mahler Players is a new ensemble founded specially for the musical project "Mahler in Miniature". The players are all based in the Highlands and come from all walks of life: professional musicians as well as highly skilled amateurs. Many are also members of the Highland Chamber Orchestra and our sister ensemble, The Inverness Stravinsky Players.

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| First violin | Eleanor Cameron |
| Second violin | Friedegund Riehm |
| Viola | Della Hickey |
| Cello | Rick Lusher |
| Double bass | Susan Drever |
| Flute/piccolo | Ruth Binks |
| Oboe/cor anglais | Leslie Callander |
| Clarinet/bass clarinet | Mhairi Callander |
| Bassoon | Bruce Gordon |
| Horn | Morag Redwood |
| Piano | Fiona Sellar |
| Harmonium | Gordon Tocher |
| Percussion | Alison Russell and Scott Nairn |
| Soprano | Emily Mitchell |
| Conductor | Tomas Leakey |

If you enjoyed this evening's performance then look out for our future concerts. The next concert tour will feature Mahler's First Symphony, and in the more distant future we will be performing *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth Symphony.

You can stay updated with all of this by 'liking' us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/InvernessMahlerPlayers

You can also follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MahlerPlayers>.

Alternatively, send your email address to invernessmahlerplayers@gmail.com and we will add you to our mailing list with information about future concerts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Leakey's Bookshop and Cafe for selling our tickets commission free.

Eden Court and all the numerous local businesses who displayed our posters and flyers.