



Mahler Players Concerts, 21 - 23 June 2019

Welcome to our concert! We present what is, to the best of our knowledge, the North of Scotland premiere of Wagner's *Die Walküre*, which will be sung in German with English surtitles.

PROGRAMME

Arnold Schoenberg: *Verklärte Nacht*

Interval

Richard Wagner: *Die Walküre Act 1* (arr. King and Longworth)

Peter Wedd *Siegmund*
Claire Rutter *Sieglinde*
Iestyn Edwards *Hunding*
The Mahler Players
Tomas Leakey *Conductor*

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG (1874 - 1951) *Verklärte Nacht*

Composed over the course of three weeks in 1899 in a white-hot blaze of inspiration, *Verklärte Nacht* ("Transfigured Night") is Schoenberg's first unquestionable masterpiece. Though rooted in the language of his predecessors – particularly that of Brahms and Wagner – it also demonstrates a uniqueness of harmony and structure, which points the way to his future, more obviously revolutionary, works.

Originally written for string sextet, *Verklärte Nacht* was itself controversial at its 1902 premiere in Vienna. The Vienna Music Society refused it for performance because one of the chords was uncatalogued in the harmony textbooks of the time. With characteristic dry humour Schoenberg remarked in later years "*thus (the work) cannot be performed since one cannot perform that which does not exist*". A venue was eventually found for the premiere, but according to Schoenberg the first performance "*ended in a riot and in actual fights*", with one contemporary famously declaring "it sounds as if someone had smeared the score of [Wagner's opera] *Tristan und Isolde* while it was still wet".

To our ears today, however *Verklärte Nacht* is a lusciously Romantic work, with beautiful melodies and harmonies and it remains probably Schoenberg's best-loved work.

Perhaps partly responsible for the controversy amongst the conservative elements of early 20th Viennese society was the subject matter. The work is a response to an 1896 poem by the German writer Richard Dehmel. The poem describes a man and a woman walking together through a forest in the moonlight. The woman tells the man that she is carrying a child, not his, but

conceived by a stranger. The man replies: "the universe is gleaming: a special warmth will transfigure the strange man's child and you will bear the child for me". The couple embrace and continue to walk through the bright night.

Verklärte Nacht is in one uninterrupted movement, with the musical sections corresponding loosely to the sections of the poem. Schoenberg expanded the scoring from sextet to string orchestra in 1917 and made a further revision in 1943, and it is this version that is most often performed today and will be performed this evening.

Programme note by Tomas Leakey

RICHARD WAGNER (1813 – 1883) *Die Walküre* Act 1

Introduction and background

Die Walküre is the second opera in Wagner's gigantic tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, often referred in English as "The Ring Cycle". It comprises almost 15 hours of music, 34 named characters and is performed over four evenings in the course of a week. It is unparalleled in its scope and remains the greatest example of Wagner's concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("total work of art"). There was a span of 26 years from when he began sketching the story in 1848 to when he finished scoring the final bar of the final opera *Götterdämmerung* in 1874.

The story is Wagner's own unique combination and remoulding of elements from a wide range of medieval Norse and German myths and legends, with his overall approach also profoundly influenced by Greek drama. Concerning gods, mythological characters and heroes, involving the quest for power through the renunciation of love and an all-powerful ring, it is nonetheless a deeply human work and nowhere is this clearer than in *Die Walküre*. Of the four operas, it is *Die Walküre* that is most often performed on its own. Of its three Acts, it is the first Act which is the most immediately personal, with its doomed *Wälsung* twins Siegmund and Sieglinde. Separated when they were children, they fall in love when 'fate' (controlled by their father Wotan, the king of the Gods) throws them together once more in a cruel and unforgiving world.

Die Walküre Act 1: The storyline

Siegmund, during a raging storm, finds shelter in a hut in the forest, and collapses from exhaustion. He is discovered by Sieglinde, who offers him water and tends him. Though wary of each other at first, they instinctively realise they have a deep connection and Sieglinde persuades Siegmund to wait until her husband, Hunding, comes home. Hunding is suspicious and immediately notes the similarity of appearance between the (unbeknownst to them all) *Wälsung* twins. Siegmund (or "Wehwalt" as he calls himself) tells of his early life with his mysterious father "Wolfe", the murder of his mother and disappearance of his sister, his wanderings in the world and struggle to be accepted and finally the situation that led to him fleeing through the forest. He had tried to rescue a woman who was being married off by her kinsmen against her will and in doing so had lost his weapons and was forced to flee. Hunding realises these are kinsmen of his and swears revenge. By the rules of hospitality, however, he will

Arranging Act 1 of *Die Walküre*, by Matthew King

Peter Longworth and I had a very practical working arrangement: Peter worked mainly on Wagner's string parts (which are intensely active!) reducing them for a smaller number of players, while I pared down the wind and brass material from the large forces of the original to the much smaller chamber group available: 1 flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 1 bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, trombone and tuba. The harp part had to be reduced from two players to one, and the timpani part remained largely as Wagner wrote it. Peter and I communicated daily as we worked on the reduction, and sometimes made creative suggestions as we went along.

Of course, it is always a privilege to work closely on a masterpiece of this order. As we proceeded through the act, the quality and consistency of Wagner's inspiration was very striking. His extraordinary narrative pacing whereby the drama is rendered "white hot" with the intensity of the music, the beauty of the thematic material and its development, the extraordinary harmonic invention, the range of texture, his choice of instrumental colours, all these things struck us with new force on every page. The process of reduction was not a mechanical one: we had to find close equivalents to Wagner's original instrumental colours by combining the instruments we had available in such a way that the sounds would still resemble his original choices. Of course sometimes Wagner's instrumentation can be very intimate and chamber-like anyway and, when that was the case, not much had to be changed, but in passages where he employed instruments that we couldn't use (the four Wagner Tubas for example for Hunding's fiercely brassy leitmotif, or the numerous occasions when large orchestral textures occur, particularly in the final scene) we then had to find all kinds of new creative solutions. We hope that we have managed to preserve the spirit of the original, even if we sometimes depart from the letter. Our hope is that the extraordinary breadth and range of Wagner's instrumental imagination will not be audibly compromised by the reduction, and will still communicate with all its original force.

PETER WEDD – Siegmund

Peter Wedd grew up in rural Derbyshire. In his late twenties Peter enrolled at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he studied singing with Mr. William McAlpine. Peter later moved his studies to the National Opera Studio in London, and not long after that he won a position at the Royal Opera Covent Garden as a Principle House Tenor.

Most recently the artist has performed among others Florestan/Fidelio at ABAO, Bilbao, Hermann/Pikovaya Dama at Den Norske Opera, Siegmund/Die Walküre at Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, Lohengrin/Lohengrin at Theater Krefeld und Mönchengladbach as well as Prince/Rusalka at Oper Leipzig.



Future engagements include a.o. Don José/Carmen at Norwegian National Opera in Oslo, Sigurd at Opéra nationale Lorraine de Nancy as well as Siegmund/Die Walküre at Oper Frankfurt in Germany.

Other notable engagements include Lohengrin/Lohengrin at Welsh National Opera and also at Teatr Wielki in Warsaw as well as at Greek National Opera.

Peter developed his singing through the repertoire of Mozart, Italian Lyric and Slavic operas, before finding his place as one of the leading young Dramatic/Heldentenors of today's opera world. He continues to expand his Wagnerian Heldentenor roles such as Lohengrin, Siegmund and Tristan, yet he remains passionate for many other dramatic roles including Otello, Peter Grimes, Herman, Samson and more.

Peter's work in the dramatic and Helden repertoire was made possible by the ongoing and close working relationship he developed with his teacher and mentor the great heldentenor John Treleaven.

Peter is much in demand for his vocal abilities where he combines strong vocal endurance with beautiful *Messa di Voce*. This is enhanced by rich acting skills as well as intense physicality in his performances. He has worked worldwide with many notable conductors such as Sir Charles Mackerras, Robin Ticciati, Richard Hickox and Stefan Soltesz; and international stage directors such as Antony McDonald, Arnaud Bernard, Yuval Sharon and Katie Mitchell. Peter also enjoys the symphonic concert platform, in which he is especially well known for his interpretation of L. van Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Edward Elgar's "The Dream of Gerontius" and Gustav Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde" as well as the 8th Symphony. Peter combines his love of singing and theatre with the practise and discipline of the Alexander Technique, Yoga & Meditation, as well as being himself a Reiki practitioner.

CLAIRE RUTTER – Sieglinde



The renowned British soprano, Claire Rutter opens the 2018-19 Season at English National Opera performing in *Opera For All* to mark 50 years of opera in residence at the London Coliseum. She travels to Scottish Opera to sing *Fidelia Edgar* before covering the title role in Opera North's *Aida*. In Scotland the artist sings the role of Sieglinde *Die Walküre* in concert with The Mahler Players and ends the season at Dorset Opera in the role of Abigaille *Nabucco*.

Next season Claire returns to English National Opera for the role of Foreign Princess *Rusalka* in a new production which tours to Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg.

Last season the artist sang performances in the title role *Tosca* at Icelandic Opera and at Welsh National Opera, where she appeared as Leonora *La Forza del Destino*. During the summer she returned to Grange Park Opera where she

took on the role of Amelia *Un Ballo in Maschera* in their new theatre at West Horsley. Recent and future engagements include the title role *Vanessa* for Wexford Festival Opera, Mother *L'Enfant Prodigue* and Fidelia *Edgar* for Scottish Opera, the title role in *La Gioconda* for Malmö Opera, and Sieglinde *Die Walküre* for Grange Park Opera.

The artist began her studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and joined the ensemble at the National Opera Studio where she was sponsored by English National Opera. She went on to build her career singing the title roles in ENO's new productions of *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Tosca* and *Aïda*, as well as appearing on the ENO stage as Donna Anna *Don Giovanni*, Amelia, Elvira *Ernani*, Gilda *Rigoletto* and Violetta *La Traviata*.

Other great UK successes include Minnie *La Fanciulla del West*, Violetta, Elvira and the title roles in new productions of *Norma*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Tosca* all of which she sang at Grange Park Opera. For three years, Claire was a company principal at Scottish Opera, where her roles included Maddalena *Andrea Chenier*, Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte*, Elettra *Idomeneo*, Countess Almaviva *Le nozze di Figaro*, the title role in *Turandot*, Rosalinde *Die Fledermaus*, Gilda *Rigoletto*, Violetta, and Leonora *Il trovatore*.

A US debut came with the role of Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte* at Dallas Opera which earned her a nomination for the Maria Callas Award, and she recently returned to sing Donna Anna. In France she sang Donna Anna at Opéra National de Bordeaux, Opéra National de Montpellier, Opéra National du Rhin, and Flemish National Opera; Donna Anna, Aïda and Amelia for Finnish National Opera; Countess Almaviva *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Tosca* for Opéra de Bordeaux and for Pacific Symphony and for Theater Basel; Mimi *La bohème* at the Beijing International Festival; Minnie *La Fanciulla del West* for Minnesota Opera; Aïda for Opera Australia; Amelia *Un ballo in maschera* for Florida Grand Opera; Alice Ford *Falstaff* for Santa Fe Opera; Violetta for Den Norske Opera; and Sieglinde *Die Walküre* at Opéra de Rennes.

In concert, Miss Rutter has appeared in a variety of repertoire with the UK's top orchestras, including the BBC Concert Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; the English Chamber Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Ulster Orchestra, collaborating with conductors such as Marin Alsop, Jane Glover, Sir Richard Armstrong, Stephen Barlow, Francesco Corti, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Mark Elder, Edward Gardner, David Hill, Stephen Lord, Gianluca Marcianò, David Parry, Vassily Petrenko and Tobias Ringborg.

Future appearances include her return to Icelandic Opera in the role of Sieglinde *Die Walküre*. She makes her return to the podium under the baton of Mark Elder and the Hallé Orchestra for Verdi Requiem.

IESTYN EDWARDS – Hunding

Olivier Award winning bass-Baritone, published poet and best-selling memoir author, Iestyn trained at Guildhall, then studied with Iris Dell'Acqua. After seasons with British Youth Opera and a season of cathedral recitals, he has concentrated on the after dinner and corporate circuit and was the subject of a Channel 4 series of "shorts". He

toured in the award-winning one-man autobiographical opera play *Along Came Bill* and has also performed for all the senior members of the British Royal Family. He appeared annually at the White Bait Suppers and toured four times entertaining British Service personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan.



MATTHEW KING – arranger

Described by Judith Weir, Master of the Queen's Music, as "one of Britain's most adventurous composers, utterly skilled, imaginative and resourceful", Matthew King is a Kent-based composer and pianist with an international reputation. Reviewers have described his music as "exhilarating" (The Sunday Times) and "teeming with ideas...with a jauntiness of rhythm and texture" (The Times) as well as possessing "distinctive beauty with disarming theatre sense" (Independent on Sunday).

Matthew King's recent projects include a piano concerto, premiered in San Diego in June 2018 and a sequence of 20 piano sonatas. His chamber opera *The Pied Piper*, was produced in Salzburg and Nuremberg in 2018; his cantata, *Il Pastorale, l'Urbano e il Suburbano*, was premiered in 2015 at Aldeburgh and his music theatre piece, *Schoenberg in Hollywood* was first performed at Milton Court concert hall in London in 2015.

Older pieces include *Sonatas* which compresses all of Beethoven's 32 sonatas into a single minute, *King's Wood Symphony* for massed horns and electronics 2007 (premiered in a wood near Challock, Kent, and described in The Independent as "unmissable") and *Velocity*, a Hitchcock-influenced tone-poem, premiered by the Aurora Orchestra in 2012. His *Totentango* was first performed by the London Symphony Orchestra in 2010 and his opera *Das Babylon Experiment* in Nuremberg in 2008. His community opera *On London Fields* won a Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Education in 2004.

Matthew King is Professor of Composition at Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, and from 1998 to 2001 was head of Composition at the Yehudi Menuhin School.

PETER LONGWORTH – arranger



Described as “dazzlingly-atmospheric” (the Glasgow Herald), Peter’s music has been performed internationally in countries including the United States, Canada, Japan, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and the the Netherlands, as well as in UK venues such as the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Cadogan Hall, the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, St John’s Smith Square and Saint Martin in the Fields. Ensembles who have commissioned his work include the London Mozart Players, the Edinburgh Quartet, the Hebrides Ensemble, the Mahler Players and the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. His music has also been recorded by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra for Ablaze Records, and workshopped publicly by both the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. An alumnus of the London Philharmonic Orchestra’s Young Composers Programme and the RSNO Composers Hub, Peter studied composition with Matthew King at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and with Mark-Anthony Turnage at the Royal College of Music. A finalist in the 2014 Keuris Composers Contest and the 2015 Philip Bates Composition Prize, Peter’s work often draws on his strong affinity with Italian culture for inspiration. He is a professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and is currently studying for a PhD at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland under the supervision of Stuart MacRae and Matthew King.

TOMAS LEAKEY – conductor

As Music Director of the Mahler Players, a chamber orchestra he founded in 2013 and with whom he has conducted around 50 performances, Tomas has conducted many works by Mahler including Symphonies 1, 4, 5, 9, *Adagio* from 10, *Das Lied von der Erde* and most of the other song cycles. He has also commissioned and given the world premieres of four new works, including *Birth-Rebirth* by leading Scottish composer Stuart MacRae. With this orchestra he has also conducted a range of demanding 20th Century works, including by Boulez, Schoenberg, Webern and Stravinsky.



He is currently leading the orchestra through the Wagner Project, which has featured performances of hour-long orchestral extracts from *Parsifal* and *Götterdämmerung*. In June 2019 Tomas will conduct performances of Act 1 from *Die Walküre*, in a new chamber orchestra version by Matthew King and Peter Longworth, with soloists Claire Rutter, Peter Wedd and Iestyn Edwards.

Passionate about inspiring the next generation, Tomas has also led the Mahler Players through three large-scale educational projects, in which Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, Walton's *Façade* and the BBC Ten Pieces were performed in schools across the north of Scotland to hundreds of schoolchildren.

Tomas began his musical life as a trombonist in the Highland Regional Youth Orchestra. He later joined the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. At the University of Cambridge he was very active on the music scene as a pianist and trombonist and it was there he started conducting.

Tomas studied conducting with George Hurst at the Sherborne Summer School of Music and with Denise Ham in London. In 2017 he took part in the Orkney Conductors' Course, studying with Alexander Vedernikov and conducting the Norwegian Radio Symphony Orchestra and BBC Singers. In 2016 he took part in the Järvi Winter Academy and undertook a year's study at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama from 2013 – 2014. At the 2016 Aberystwyth Musicfest Tomas was the joint winner of the Orion Conductors' Prize.

EMMA DONALD – leader



From the Highlands of Scotland, Emma has been playing the violin since the age of 8. Growing up, she enjoyed learning both classical and traditional Scottish music, and has strived to keep both passions running simultaneously. She has a first class honours degree in music from the University of Edinburgh, where she was leader of the three main student orchestras. This has given her the opportunity to work with inspiring conductors including Will Conway, Chris George and Russell Cowieson. Since graduating, she performs regularly with orchestras such as Mahler Players and Amicus Orchestra. Emma is a founding member of Fyrish String Quartet, the Hans Gal Trio, and the neo-trad fiddle and clarsach duo, Turadh. She has worked with Scottish Ballet, and with up and coming opera group, Magnetic Opera, where she was the soloist for their production of Menotti's *The Medium* in London.

Emma is a full time musician based in Edinburgh. She has built up a portfolio career that includes community music work, individual and ensemble teaching, and solo and group performance.

THE MAHLER PLAYERS

The Mahler Players were founded in 2013 as a high-level chamber orchestra for musicians, mainly based in the Highlands, to make music together. As part of the now completed *Mahler in Miniature* project they performed chamber versions of Mahler's First, Fourth, Fifth, Ninth and *Adagio* from the Tenth Symphonies, *Das Lied von der Erde*, and most of the other Mahler song cycles. They have

commissioned and given the premieres of four new works, including *Birth-Rebirth* by Stuart MacRae in 2016. Their performance of Mahler's Ninth Symphony in September 2016 was given a four-star review and described as "outstanding" by Michael Tumelty in *The Herald Scotland*. More recently they have worked on the music of Richard Wagner as part of the Wagner Project, including performances of 'orchestral fantasies' on *Götterdämmerung* and *Parsifal*.

1ST VIOLINS:

Emma Donald (leader),
Simon Evans, Anne Wood, Rebecca
Minio-Paluello, Sarah Perricone

2nd VIOLINS:

Eleanor Cameron, Francis Moore-
Colyer, Hazel Younger, Sophie
Cushnie

VIOLAS:

Rachel Farmer, Teresa Ferreira,
Adam Csenki

CELLOS:

Katy Bell, Sandy Scott-Brown, John
McRae, Irimi Dimitriadou

DOUBLE BASS:

Chris Sergeant

FLUTE/PICCOLO:

Catherine O'Rourke

OBOE/COR ANGLAIS

Leslie Callander, Krys Hawryszczuk

CLARINET/ BASS CLARINET

Mhairi Callander, Mike Weare

BASSOON:

Bruce Gordon

HORNS:

Rob Farmer, Wendy Ritchie

TRUMPET:

Alasdair Grant

TROMBONE

Mark Bell

TUBA

Mark Reynolds

TIMPANI

Alison Russell

HARP:

Erica Sinclair

Support us

The Mahler Players have exciting plans for the next few years, including continuing the Wagner Project through further collaborations with composers Matthew King and Peter Longworth, including *Siegfried* Act 3 and *Tristan und Isolde* Act 2. We hope to also commission Matthew King to write a new Symphony based on late sketches by Wagner and plan, in addition to our work on Wagner, to continue giving symphonic concerts of wide-ranging repertoire.

With the support of Creative Scotland, our corporate sponsors HRI-Munro Architecture and generous individuals we can offer hugely subsidised tickets. As our regular audience members will have noticed, we had to increase our prices for this set of concerts, but the new prices still represent a remarkable offer, with a subsidy of over £70 on each full-price ticket purchased today.

In the coming months we will be undertaking a Crowdfunding campaign, but if you would like to support the Mahler Players in the meantime then please get in touch with us! Help could be in the form of an individual donation, sponsorship deal with a business or in-kind support as simple as inviting your friends and spreading the word about our concerts when you hear about them. We look forward to hearing from you!

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