

MAHLER UNWRAPPED

100
LONDON CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

26 April 2022, 7.30pm



Live at St John's Smith Square, London



ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE

TONIGHT'S CONCERT:

MAHLER UNWRAPPED



26 April 2022, 7.30pm – St John's Smith Square, London

London Chamber Orchestra

John Findon, Tenor

Marcus Farnsworth, Baritone

Christopher Warren-Green, Conductor

Dr Leah Broad, Presenter

MAHLER, TRANS BAKSA

Blumine (Discarded from Symphony No. 1)

MAHLER UNWRAPPED

Dr Leah Broad

— 20 minute interval —

MAHLER, ARR. SCHOENBERG

Das Lied von der Erde

Live at St John's Smith Square, London

Parts of this filmed concert may be shared online for a limited time only – keep your eyes peeled!



Dr Leah Broad, presenter

**Welcome to the iconic St John's Smith Square,
for an evening celebrating Gustav Mahler.**

Uncompromising in everything he did, Gustav Mahler was equally admired and hated in his lifetime. As a conductor, he was ruthless — his singers were so offended by his criticisms that a couple challenged him to duels. He applied the same standard to his composing, declaring that a symphony must do nothing less than 'be like the world. It must contain everything.' This concert takes us on a journey through everything in Mahler's world. We will travel from excitement, hope, and romance of *Blumine*, written in the wake of youthful love — to fear, resignation, and acceptance in *Das Lied von der Erde*, written shortly after Mahler was diagnosed with the heart condition that would kill him just a few years later. As always, LCO would like to welcome you downstairs to a post-concert drinks reception following the performance.



Jocelyn Lightfoot – CEO, Three Worlds Group

**Welcome, everyone, to tonight's concert
with a bit of a twist.**

Orchestral music has such a long and rich history — going back in time and seeing the world from the composer's eyes brings the music to life in a unique way. There is no-one better to do this for us than Dr Leah Broad! She is taking the music world by storm with research which not only enlightens our understanding of music but brings it into our world, making it more relevant than ever. LCO sounds the most "LCO" when Christopher Warren-Green is conducting, so hold on to your seats. Plus, how lucky we are to have the unmatched Marcus Farnsworth and John Findon to sing? Enjoy being transported into Mahler's world and I look forward to joining you for a drink in the Crypt after the concert.



LONDON CHAMBER ORCHESTRA





VIOLINS

Clio Gould
Manon Derome
Gina McCormack
Charles Sewart
Ciaran McCabe
Sophie Lockett
Peter Nall
Valeria Kucharsky

Kathy Shave
Alex Caldon
Kirsty Mangan
Harriet Murray
Stella Di Virgilio
Seleni Sewart
Anais Boyadjieva
Yuliya Ostapchuk

VIOLAS

Joel Hunter
Kate Musker
Marian Ruetschi
Becky Low
Lowri Thomas
Daisy Spiers

CELLOS

Joely Koos
Becky Knight
Hannah Sloane
Desmond Neysmith

DOUBLE BASS

Andy Marshall
Laura Murphy

FLUTE / PICCOLO

Karen Jones

OBOE / COR

Alison Alty

CLARINET / BASS

Mark van de Wiel
Jonathan Parkin

BASSOONS

Meyrick Alexander

HORN

Jo Withers

TRUMPETS

Ross Brown
Just Blumine

PERCUSSION

Julian Poole

PIANO / CELESTE

Dawn Hardwick



PROGRAMME NOTES

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Blumine (1884-88)

When Gustav Mahler began composing the piece that would eventually become *Blumine*, he was a man driven wild by love. Only just in to his twenties, he was employed as a conductor at an opera house in Kassel, and had fallen hopelessly head over heels for one of the singers, a woman called Johanna Richter. She was a formidable singer, able to perform the hardest pieces in the repertoire with a grace that endeared her to local audiences and, it seems, to Mahler. He was spellbound. 'She is everything that is lovable in this world', he wrote to a friend. 'I would shed every drop of my blood for her.'

Mahler's somewhat exaggerated, melodramatic descriptions of his love for Richter were completely characteristic of his early years. He was a man of intense feelings, strong opinions, exacting standards — and direct, sometimes blunt expression. Mahler became famous first not as a composer, but as an opera conductor. In the 1880s he was only just beginning to make a name for himself, and he did this by setting himself up as a reformer. Intent on raising the standards of any opera house he worked at to the highest levels of professionalism, he was uncompromising and demanding with both singers and orchestra. This won Mahler respect among some colleagues — but it also left him with a

considerable number of enemies. He dished out criticism so liberally that over the coming years he was challenged to duels by singers, and even briefly given a police escort home to stop his insulted players from assaulting him!

It's this passionate, difficult, and idealistic personality that we can hear in *Blumine*, which started life as theatre music. The version we're hearing today was adapted from the music Mahler composed in 1884 for a set of romantic theatre scenes called *The Trumpeter of Säckingen*, telling a friend that he had finished it in just 'two days and I must confess I am very pleased with it.' As a result, *Blumine* is full of overtly dramatic musical gestures that would have been very familiar to Mahler's audiences from the opera and the theatre.

The opening trumpet line over the strings is stereotypically romantic, suggesting moonlight glimmering on water — the sumptuous, rising melody is the kind that would accompany lovers running in to one another's arms. Tension creeps in to the middle of the scene in the

“... the sumptuous, rising melody is the kind that would accompany lovers running in to one another's arms...”

ominous, plucked bass line, a technique that was often used in the theatre to accompany the villain, or to symbolise danger. But the love theme returns again in the violin part, drawing us away from jeopardy into a world where love is triumphant, the protagonists reunited. These theatrical tropes were so effective that they became the foundations of film music, recycled and adapted in Hollywood movies. Today, when film composers are writing a love scene they still often use the kind of musical ideas that Mahler was working with over a hundred years ago.

For Mahler, though, it was a long journey from the theatre to the concert hall. When he wrote *The Trumpeter* he was in love with Johanna Richter, but by the time he finished *Blumine* in 1888 he was in love with another woman. Her name was Marion von Weber, and there was only one problem — she was already married to another man. It was a doomed affair. The details of their relationship are unclear, but it seems that Mahler wanted to elope with her, and their plans got as far as booking a train together to run away. Only Mahler, however, turned up to the station. Marion may have jilted Mahler but she still left her mark on his music; on the last page of *Blumine* he wrote 'To M. on her birthday', inscribing their romance into his score.

Not only had Mahler's love interests changed by 1888, but composition was starting to be more important to him. *Blumine* was initially intended to be a movement in his First Symphony, even though he later edited it out, leaving it as a stand-alone piece. Symphonies are large pieces for orchestra, usually in three or four movements, and in Mahler's day were considered major artistic statements. Only somebody who took themselves extremely seriously as a composer would attempt to write one. For

Mahler, it seems, it was the affair with Marion that inspired him to make this first grand compositional gesture. He later said that ‘the symphony begins where the love affair ends’. It wasn’t intended as a description of his feelings for her, or the events of their relationship. Instead he explained that ‘the reason why a composition comes into being at all is bound to be something the composer has experienced, something real.’ In *Blumine* Mahler gives us his experience of young love, with all its hopes and torments, mixed with the ambitions of a man who is trying to find his place in the world.

– Dr. Leah Broad

Gustav Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde (1908)

From youthful exuberance to resigned fatality — what a different man we encounter in *Das Lied von der Erde*. In the twenty years separating these two works Mahler had lived a full, energetic life; he composed a further seven symphonies, married the beautiful, fiercely intelligent composer Alma Schindler in 1902, had two children with her, and was promoted to the position of director at the Vienna State Opera, the most coveted opera job in the whole of Austria. By 1906, it seemed as though Mahler had everything.

1907, however, was a year of personal and professional heartbreak. He resigned from his role at the Opera — officially because he wanted more time to compose, but also because of anti-semitism targeted at him in the press, the opera house’s continued resistance to his stagings, and the administration denying him time off to write. In July

his daughter Maria died from scarlet fever and diphtheria, after ten days of severe illness. Mahler had ‘worshipped her from the very start’, and was completely devastated by her death. And then he was diagnosed with the heart condition that would kill him

“ ... he wrote to one of his colleagues; ‘and now at the end of life am again a beginner who must find his feet.’ ”

just three years later. ‘I’ll just tell you that at a blow I have simply lost all the clarity and quietude I ever achieved’ he wrote to one of his colleagues; ‘and now at the end of life am again a beginner who must find his feet.’

In the midst of this crisis Mahler turned to poetry. He had been reading *The Chinese Flute*, a collection of Chinese poems translated in to German. As his wife Alma put it,

Mahler found that ‘these poems and their infinite melancholy answered to his own.’ Particularly appealing, no doubt, was the seamless blending of life and nature in the texts. All his life Mahler found inspiration in nature, going on long mountain walks to compose — so his doctor’s ban on exercise to protect his heart took an especially heavy toll on his creative life. He told a friend that it meant nothing less than ‘a change of my whole way of life’. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Mahler was drawn to these poems where the singer wanders ‘in the mountains’ to ‘seek peace for my lonely heart.’

By setting these poems, however, Mahler was not only turning inward but also outward. East Asian art and literature were incredibly fashionable in Vienna at the turn of the century, after the forced opening of the Japanese port of Yokohama in 1859 increased trade between East and West. Both real and imitation goods from China and Japan were shipped to Vienna, provoking a profound shift in the direction of Viennese art and culture. Gustav Klimt’s striking gold paintings with bold colours and clear lines, for example, were heavily influenced by Japanese wood cuts, lacquerware, textile designs, and ceramics. In *Das Lied von der Erde* Mahler was, therefore, engaging with artistic currents that were popular at the time, not retreating wholly into an isolated existence wracked by tragedy.

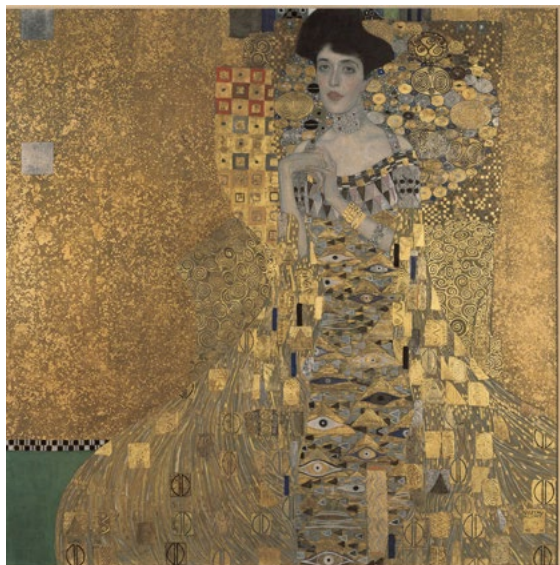
As an experienced opera conductor Mahler knew how to write expressively for the voice, and some of his most moving works involve singers. The first



Courtesan Hanamurasaki from the Tamaya brothel by Kikugawa Eizan (c. 1812)



Woman with Fan by Gustav Klimt (1917-18)



Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I by Gustav Klimt (1907)



Japanese lacquered writing box, early C20th

'Austrian artists like Gustav Klimt were influenced by East Asian art. His textile patterns and use of gold were inspired by Japanese work.'

song in *Das Lied*, 'Drinking Song of the World's Misery', is an intense physical challenge for the singer. Mahler makes them work right at the top of their range, making it difficult to project over the whole orchestra. There's a real desperation to this song, with its repetition of the phrase 'Life is dark, and so is death.' By comparison the second song, 'The lonely man in autumn', is relatively calm. Although the words are melancholy, the singer asking whether the sun of love 'will never shine again to gently dry away my bitter tears', Mahler gives this movement a sense of restfulness and peace.

'Of Youth' is certainly the happiest song of the set, and it is also the most Orientalist. It's not known how much Mahler knew about Chinese music — he had heard some cylinder recordings of Chinese music, and possibly read some books about it — but in this song he uses scales traditionally used in Chinese music to describe the image of friends sitting drinking inside a green and white pavilion. 'Of Beauty' is a reflection on love, an exchange between the women picking flowers and the young men riding by on their horses. When the horses enter Mahler depicts them quite explicitly — the music speeds up and he uses percussion to evoke the sound of horses

galloping and their reins creaking and jingling. He also incorporates a couple of horn calls, which Mahler's audience would have closely associated with hunting on horseback. In this context, the horn calls suggest love as a conquest — it's the young women who the men are chasing here. At the end of the song one woman stops to gaze back, but Mahler gives this music of longing entirely to the orchestra. Rather than have the singer describe the woman's feelings, Mahler lets the instruments convey her emotions in some of the most obviously romantic music of the piece. Perhaps there's something of the Mahler of *Blumine* creeping in here, harking back to his own days of young love.

The fifth song is another drinking song, 'The drunk man in Spring', and it has a similar kind of ambivalence to 'Drinking Song of the World's Misery'. The singer has a beautiful, tender exchange with a bird who announces the coming of spring, which Mahler gives to the solo violin, as though singer and violinist take on the parts of drinker and bird. Although the singer initially seems delighted by the return of spring, they then turn back to drinking. If the seasons will continue to change whether or not they are aware of it, they see no reason to care about the beauties of a new Spring.

The eternal persistence of nature is also a theme of the final movement, 'The Farewell', which is fundamentally about accepting death. The singer is transient, simply passing through in a world that will carry on without them, but the image Mahler ends with is stunningly beautiful. Both orchestra and singer lilt to a peaceful, quiet end. He doesn't close the movement conclusively but seems to leave it open-ended, the music lingering on in to the silence like the 'far horizons' that 'are radiant with blue for ever'. This farewell, perhaps, was a way for Mahler to come to terms with mortality — both his own and his daughter's — and to face what remained of his future without fear.

— Dr. Leah Broad





BIOGRAPHIES

John Findon, tenor

John studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) under Kathleen McKellar Ferguson and is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Guildhall) Opera Course taught by John Evans, where he was supported by Help Musicians UK and the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

The 2021/22 season commenced with John's debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall singing the role of Dancing Man in a concert performance of *Midsummer Marriage* under the baton of Ed Gardner. John then returned to Glyndebourne Touring Opera covering the role of Florestan in Beethoven's *Fidelio*. John has a close relationship with both Glyndebourne Touring and the Festival; previous roles include Borsa in *Rigoletto*, Melot in *Tristan und Isolde* and he should have performed the roles of First Armed Man and Second Priest in Mozart's *Magic Flute*, but this was unfortunately cancelled due to Covid19.

Also this season, John returned to English National Opera where he is an ENO Harewood Artist. Roles this season include cover Siegmund in Wagner's *Valkyrie*, Innkeeper and Cock in Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen* and Luke in Poul Ruders's *The*



Handmaid's Tale. As an ENO Harewood Artist, roles have included Remendado *Carmen*, cover Heurtebise *Orphee* and John should have sung the role of Gamekeeper *Rusalka*, which would have transferred to Luxembourg Opera, and the Young Guard in Tippett's *King Priam*, however these were all cancelled due to COVID19.

Later this season, John returns to Garsington Opera singing the role of Gamekeeper and covering the role of the Prince in *Rusalka*. Last season John made his debut at Garsington covering the role of Florestan in *Fidelio*.

In 2018/19, operatic performances included: Vaudemont *Iolanta* (Les Azuriales Opera), Second Jew *Salome* (Opera North); Monostatos *Magic Flute* (Opera North); Sergeant Johnny Strong and Writer (cover) *Jack the Ripper* (ENO) and The Witch *Hansel and Gretel* (ENO/Regents Park).

In the 2017 season John was a Jerwood Young artist at Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Opera (GFO/GTO).

Marcus Farnsworth, baritone

Marcus Farnsworth was awarded first prize in the 2009 Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition. He has appeared in recital in several major European concert halls including the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam and La Monnaie, Brussels. In the UK he has appeared many times at the Wigmore Hall with Malcolm Martineau, Julius Drake, Graham Johnson, the Myrthen Ensemble and Joseph Middleton.



This season has included a return to English National Opera for Bill Bobstay in Gilbert and Sullivan *HMS Pinafore*; a European tour of Purcell *King Arthur* and *The Fairy Queen* with Vox Luminis; a French baroque programme with the Academy of Ancient Music and Peter Whelan; an Oxford Lieder recital presenting Cheryl Frances-Hoad's new song cycle *Everything Grows Extravagantly*; *Winterreise* with Martin Roscoe for Manchester Chamber Concerts Society and a Dame Myra Hess concert at Wigmore Hall with the Nash Ensemble. Last season highlights included performances of Bach *St John Passion* with the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra; Guglielmo *Così fan tutte* at Longborough Opera, and Colin Matthews *The Great Journey* at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival.

Marcus has worked regularly with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, most notably in Turnage *The Silver Tassie*, the world premiere of Cheryl Hoad's *Last Man Standing* and Hubbard in John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* conducted by the composer. With the London Symphony Orchestra he appeared in concert performances of Bernstein *Candide*

conducted by Marin Alsop and for the 2017 BBC Proms, Marcus performed Maxwell Davies *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group conducted by Sian Edwards. Outside the UK he has performed in Cologne with the Aurora Orchestra and Nicholas Collon in HK Gruber's *Frankenstein!!* and made his debut at Teatro Real Madrid in Kurt Weill *Street Scene*.

Marcus is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Southwell Music Festival.

Dr Leah Broad, presenter

Leah is a music historian based at Christ Church, University of Oxford. She loves the hidden stories of music history, and her first book, a group biography of four women composers, will be published next year. She was a BBC/AHRC New Generation Thinker in 2016, so is regularly on the BBC talking about music, and won the Observer/Anthony Burgess Prize for Arts Journalism in 2015. She lives in Oxford with her husband and beloved dog, and you can follow her on Twitter @LeahBroad, or on Substack at leahbroad.substack.com.



Christopher Warren-Green, conductor

Working extensively in Europe and North America, British conductor Christopher Warren-Green is Music Director of both the London Chamber Orchestra and Charlotte Symphony in North Carolina.

2021/22 marks the final season as Warren-Green's tenure as the Music Director of Charlotte Symphony, when he will step down after 12 years at the helm becoming the Conductor Laureate whilst remaining as Artistic Advisor. This season he will conduct an all-English programme to celebrate the orchestra's 90th birthday, and conduct performances of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* with soloist Paul Huang, concluding with Beethoven Symphony No.9 as an appropriately spectacular finale.

This season Warren-Green leads the London Chamber Orchestra with programmes featuring Beethoven, Prokofiev, Strauss, Schönberg, Mahler, Humperdinck, as well as the world premiere of Sergey Akhunov's Concerto and a new commission by Cheryl



Frances-Hoad based on Holst's *The Planets*. Additional engagements of the season include conducting Beethoven Symphony No.9 at the Barbican Centre with Raymond Gubbay and two return engagements in Finland with both Oulu Symphony Orchestra and Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra.

Over the last 30 years he has worked with eminent orchestras around the world as guest conductor, including Orchestre National de Belgique, Zürcher Kammerorchester, RTÉ Symphony Orchestra and Iceland Symphony Orchestra in Europe, and NHK, Yomiuri Nippon, Singapore, Sapporo and KBS symphony orchestras in East Asia. In North America he has conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit, Houston, St Louis, Toronto, Milwaukee, Seattle and Vancouver symphony orchestras, and Washington's National Symphony Orchestra. In the UK, he has worked with the Philharmonia, London Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Royal Scottish National orchestras.

In addition to his international commitments, he has been invited to conduct at the wedding services of TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, in 2005, TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at Westminster Abbey in 2011 and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at St George's Chapel, Windsor, in 2018. He conducted the London Chamber Orchestra on the occasion of

HM The Queen's 80th birthday and the Philharmonia Orchestra for Her Majesty's 90th birthday concert at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, as well as HRH The Prince of Wales' 60th birthday concert in Buckingham Palace. A violinist by training, Warren-Green began his career at the age of 19 as concertmaster of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales,

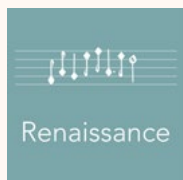


followed by the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, having been a Professor there for eight years, and has appeared numerous times on television and radio. He has recorded extensively for Sony, Philips, Virgin EMI, Chandos, Decca and Deutsche Grammophon, and records with the London Chamber Orchestra for Signum Classics.

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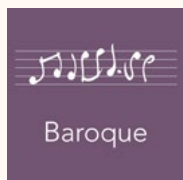
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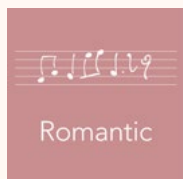
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To find out more please contact Lynne Farnell at lynne@lco.co.uk or go to www.lco.co.uk/lco-together/



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Original cover artwork: Pippa Smith
Graphic design: Denise Burt