



City of
Carlisle
Orchestra

Spring Concert

March 2019

Programme

Conductor: Leon Reimer
Leader: Robert Charlesworth
Soloist: Leah Nicholson

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Programme

Hansel and Gretel Overture ~Humperdinck

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op 37 ~Beethoven

~Interval~

Symphony No. 2 ~Borodin

About tonight's music

Hansel and Gretel Overture ~Humperdinck

Engelbert Humperdinck's enchanting fairy tale opera, *Hansel and Gretel*, is the kind of work which, like Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, seems to give equal pleasure to children as it does to adults. The opera was composed almost by accident. In 1890 Humperdinck's sister, Adelheid Wette, wrote some children's poems and asked her brother to set them to music. When performed at a family gathering, they so delighted everyone that Humperdinck and his sister decided to write a tiny opera. They chose *Hansel and Gretel*, one of Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, as the basis for their plot. Humperdinck felt so inspired that he and Adelheid decided to make it a full grown opera, sung all the way through and with full orchestral accompaniment. Humperdinck, who was professor at the prestigious Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt, had been associated with Richard Wagner at Bayreuth and had assisted him in the final preparation of the score of *Parsifal*. The miracle is that he was able to profit from the enormous Wagnerian symphonic technique but with such a light touch, such grace and genuine naturalness that the music gives the impression of complete simplicity.

The work was completed in 1892 and Humperdinck offered it to one of the smaller German opera houses at Gotha whose director solemnly rejected it as "unsuitable for the stage", but when *Hansel* was brought to the attention of Hermann Levi, the first conductor of *Parsifal*, he immediately planned to produce it in Munich. Meanwhile, Richard Strauss also had a look at the score, recognised it as a masterpiece and beat Levi to it by conducting it himself at Weimar on December 23rd, 1893. *Hansel* was a tremendous success.

The overture is a deftly symphonic collection of some of the opera's most attractive melodies. It opens with the sound of a quartet of horns chanting very softly the children's prayer *Abend will ich schlafen gehn* (usually translated as "When at night I got to sleep"). Gradually the other instruments of the orchestra join in a brief but poetic development of the prayer. This is interrupted by the sharp tone of a solo trumpet proclaiming the Witch's malevolent spell: "Hokus pokus, Hexenschuss!" The violins answer timidly as the children do in the opera, upon which the "Hokus pokus" theme is developed with all kinds of vividly scurrying chromatic figures in the orchestra. Finally "Hokus pokus" dies away and is replaced by a joyous flowing

melody first sung in the opera by the Dew Fairy and brought back for the final scene of rejoicing after the children have baked the wicked Witch into gingerbread. The rest of the Overture is made up of combinations of the children's prayer, the Dew Fairy's Song, and another dancing theme which occurs in the opera as the parents triumphantly find their children, safe and sound.

Piano concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37~Beethoven

In 1792 Ludwig van Beethoven moved from his native Bonn to Vienna in order to embark on a course of study with Joseph Haydn. Although these composition lessons would prove to be few and generally unfruitful, Beethoven respected the older master's works as symphonic models and adhered to generally Classical structures in his early symphonies and concertos. However, when it came to melodies, rhythmic gestures and phrasing, it seems to have been the recently departed Mozart whom he held most dear. A music lover listening to Beethoven's C-minor Piano Concerto may entertain more than fleeting thoughts about an earlier C-minor Piano concerto – the brooding, even despairing one that Mozart had composed in 1786. During Mozart's lifetime, that work would have been played from manuscript parts, since it was not published until 1800, the same year that Beethoven brought the first movement of his own C-minor Piano Concerto into reasonably finished form. He went on record as a great admirer of the Mozart work. Walking one day in the company of the fellow pianist and composer Johann Baptist Cramer, he came within earshot of an outdoor performance (or perhaps a rehearsal) of Mozart's C-minor Concerto. He is reputed to have stopped in his tracks, and exclaimed, with a mixture of admiration and despondency, "Cramer, Cramer! We shall never be able to do anything like that!"

By the turn of the nineteenth-century Beethoven had gained renown in Vienna as a pianist, and aristocrats sought him out to provide the piano lessons that were all but obligatory for their daughters. On April 2, 1800, at Vienna's Burgtheater, Beethoven undertook his first benefit concert (in those days, a benefit concert was understood to mean "for the benefit of the composer"). The programme included a Mozart symphony, excerpts of Haydn's newly unveiled oratorio, *The Creation*, piano improvisations, one of Beethoven's piano concertos, and two new pieces: Beethoven's Septet (No. 20) and Symphony No. 1 (Op. 21). Beethoven had planned to unveil his C-minor Piano Concerto on that high-profile occasion, but managed to complete only the first movement and a detailed sketch of the second. He basically stopped working on the new one until 1802, when an opportunity for another prominent concert arose and then fell through, and so again Beethoven devoted his time to more immediately profitable projects. As a result, the composition of this concerto would stretch over a good three and half years – not counting preliminary sketches, which date back to 1796, plus a further year, counting the time it took him to actually write out the piano part, and yet another five beyond that to write down the first-movement cadenza. Beethoven's C-minor Piano concerto was finally premiered in April 1803. Apart from the concerto, the performance included Beethoven's First and Second Symphonies (the latter a premier) and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (also a premiere).

At 5:00 am on the day of the concert, Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries was summoned to the master's apartment, where he found the composer in bed, writing out trombone parts. The programme had yet to be rehearsed for the first time, in spite of the amount of music to be played and despite the fact that much of it was new and complex. Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto displays a striking unity of vocabulary and tautness of structure. One might argue that this is the first of his five canonical piano concertos to sound like the fully mature Beethoven. While there is an obvious connection to Mozart's C-minor Concerto, we sense that Beethoven is throwing down the gauntlet here towards that work, to create something still more towering, rather than exploring the essentially Mozartean territory that had characterised his earlier Piano concertos in B-flat major and C major.

Symphony No. 2 ~Borodin

The old Slavic proverb "Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar" was never truer than in the case of Alexander Borodin. Borodin was, in fact, the illegitimate son of Georgian nobleman, Prince Ghedeanov, whose family traced its lineage from the ancient kings of Imeretia, in the Caucasus, "where the flora of the Orient flourished in the shade of eternal snows." Initially an army physician and then professor of chemistry at the St. Petersburg Academy of Medical Surgery, Borodin, the author of a standard scientific text titled "The Solidification of Aldehydes", would be honoured posthumously by the Russian (Soviet) government as a scientist rather than as a musician. A self-professed "Sunday composer", Borodin was mostly self-taught, essentially pursuing music as a hobby. Tchaikovsky once wrote, rather severely, that Borodin possessed "a very great talent which, however, has come to nothing for the want of teaching and because blind fate has led him into the science laboratory instead of a vital musical existence." Due to such constraints, it is understandable that Borodin's musical output was relatively small.

In 1862, Borodin was introduced to Balakirev, the leader of a group of Nationalist composers known as The Five (Balakirev, Mussorsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Cesar Cui). Borodin and Mussorsky, can be argued to have been the most gifted and original of The Five: *Prince Igor* and the Second Symphony are two of the lasting monuments of 19th century Russian Nationalism. Borodin's Symphony No. 2 is closely related to his opera *Prince Igor*. Constantly distracted, Borodin often despaired of ever finishing the latter (he had begun it in 1869), and in the end was unable to do so. Perhaps as a salvage operation, he took materials from *Prince Igor* and adapted them to symphonic forms. Not surprisingly, a kind of programme symphony resulted. Since Caucasian folk music had a great influence on *Prince Igor*, the new symphony was stylistically tinged with exoticism. Mussorsky referred to Borodin's Second Symphony as the "Heroic Slav Symphony", while Stasov, a close friend of Borodin's, dubbed it the "Bogatyr Symphony" (Bogatyr being an ancient Russian knight). Stasov implied that Borodin had often told him that in the Adagio he intended to recall the songs of the old Slavonic bayans (like the Troubadours, or Minnesingers): in the first movement, the assembling of the old Russian princes, and in the finale, the banquets of the heroes, to the tones of the gusla and bamboo flute, amid the enthusiasm of the people.

Written by Leon Reimer

Conductor: Leon Reimer



After graduating from the University of Glasgow with a degree in Music in 2013, Leon Reimer went on to study orchestral conducting under the guidance of Professors Alasdair Mitchell and Garry Walker at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. During his time at the Conservatoire Leon was able to benefit from frequent masterclasses lead by, amongst others, Sian Edwards, Martyn Brabbins, Christopher Seaman and Jean Claude Picard. Since graduating from the Royal Conservatoire in 2015,

Leon has engaged himself heavily within the youth and community music scene in Scotland. Professional engagements include working for the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Highland Regional Youth Orchestra, the National Youth Choir of Scotland, Cumbria Youth Orchestra and Scottish Opera Connect Company.

Having been brought up as a singer, Leon also enjoys frequent choral conducting opportunities, most notably as the Associate Conductor of the University of Glasgow Chapel Choir and Glasgow Chamber Choir. In 2017, Leon made his debut with the University of Glasgow Choral Society and invited back to lead a performance of Brahms's German Requiem in 2018. Leon has lead groups of singers at several major festivals, including the Edinburgh International Festival, the Celtic Connections Festival as well as Glasgow's West End Festival. Eager to embrace the challenges and rewards of working with groups of all backgrounds and experiences, Leon has been heavily involved in the community scene across Scotland and the UK. Notable engagements include the City of Carlisle Orchestra, the Saint James Orchestra, the Perth Community Orchestra, the Lomond and Clyde Community Orchestra, Edinburgh Grand Opera and the Lanark and Carlisle Choral Union.

Our next concert

Sat. 29th June, City of Carlisle Orchestra - St John's Church, London Road, Carlisle.

The programme will include Vaughan-Williams: Oboe Concerto (Soloist: Isabel Kent)

A pre-concert talk by our conductor, Leon Reimer, will be given at 7pm.

If you wish to come along to the last rehearsal before the next concert join us at 7pm in St John's Church, London Road, Carlisle on Tuesday 25th June.

Tonight's soloist: Leah Nicholson



Leah Nicholson (17) is from Lanercost, in her seventh year at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester studying with Dr Murray McLachlan, and she already holds a Fellow of the Royal Schools of Music in Solo Piano Performance Diploma (FRSM with Distinction), equivalent of a Masters Degree with Honours.

She has won top prizes at numerous competitions internationally and throughout the UK, including the International Chopin Festival in Mazovia, Poland, the Polyphonica International Competition in St Petersburg, Russia; the Scottish International Youth Piano Competition, the Loretto James Waterhouse Piano Competition, Chetham's Concerto Competition playing Rachmaninov's 2nd Piano Concerto, EPTA Piano Competition and Chetham's Bösendorfer Piano Competition. Leah is the youngest ever winner of the Keldwyth Cumbrian Young Musicians Award.

Leah has appeared at Steinway Hall in London, Sage Gateshead in Newcastle, Bridgewater Hall and Stoller Hall in Manchester, Petrikirche in St. Petersburg, Russia, Kadriorg Palace in Tallinn, Estonia, and other top venues.

Leah has worked with renowned artists such as Christopher Elton, Stephen Hough, Noriko Ogawa, Ory Shihor, Peter Frankl, Tessa Nicholson, Galina Sandovskaya, Eugen Injic, Pascal Nemirovsky, Leon McCawley, Martin Roscoe, Anthony Hewitt, Piers Lane and others in a masterclass environment.

Other classical concerts coming up soon

- Sun. 14th April, 7.30pm, Keswick Music Society, Theatre by the Lake. Carducci Quartet and Julian Bliss (Clarinet), Beethoven; Quartet in F Major Op 81 No.1, David Bruce: Gumboots for clarinet and string quartet, Brahms: Clarinet quintet.
- Sat. 4th May, The Wordsworth Singers. *See website for venues and programmes.*
- Sat. 11th May, 7:30pm, Keswick Choral Society, St. John's Church, Keswick. Mendelssohn: Elijah.
- Sat. 22nd June 7.00pm, Wigton Choral Society, St Mary's Church, Wigton. "Towards the Light", including Gjeilo, Sunrise Mass.
- Sat. 29th June, The Wordsworth Singers. *See website for venues and programmes.*

The players - City of Carlisle Orchestra

1st Violins

Robert Charlesworth
Rachael Cosslett
Joan Masters
Sarah Wilson
Linda Mages
Graham Barke

2nd Violins

Katharine Bowness
Isobel Fenton
Catherine Swarbrick
Ruben Burt
Lorna Strong
Hilary Lawrence

Cellos

Kenneth Wilson
Sol Ligertwood
Linda Forsyth
Rachel Owen
Mary Lawler
Steven Thompson
Roger Cooke

Violas

Peter Wood
Hannah Borlaise

Double Basses

Emma Gray
Charles Hattrell

Oboes

Glenys Braithwaite
Jennifer Slee

Clarinets

Jane Bell
Rebecca Le Breton

Flute/Piccolo

Lyn Young
Terry Mullett
Samantha Willis

Bassoons

Andrew Smith
Ann Bishop

Trombones

Graham Harris
Giles Wilson
Cliff Attwood
Ruth Wood

Horns

Pam Harris
Justin Borlaise
Julie Ratcliffe
Ian Williams

Percussion

David Birkett
Jamie Hoyle
Sue Roe

Trumpets

Gordon Kydd
Emma James
Ian Sharman

Tuba

Ian Hamilton

Timpani

Toby Cass

Thank You to Fletcher's Fund

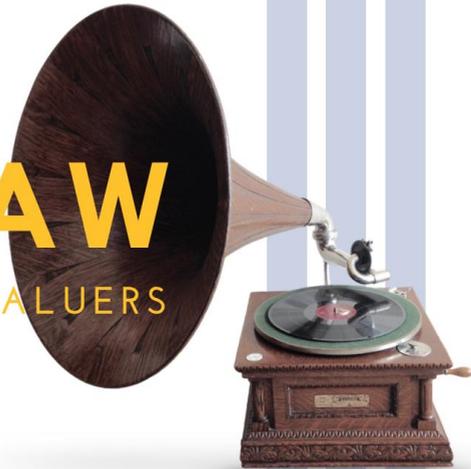


Tonight's refreshments are provided by Fletcher's Fund. Fletcher, was, in every way, a perfectly typical toddler. He also had cancer, a fight he fought bravely since he was 9 months old. Sadly, he passed away aged 22 months and 27 days, just one month and one day before his 2nd birthday.

Fletcher's Fund is a charity in his name, to provide grants to families affected by childhood cancer to enable them to buy play equipment or fund days out with their children. Our mission is to enable families to make memories together through play and having fun. Just what Fletcher liked! This is his legacy, and it is our hope that we can give to other families a little bit of the joy that Fletcher gave to us.

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