



# THAMES YOUTH ORCHESTRA

CONDUCTOR  
SIMON FERRIS

CONCERT

TUESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2006  
7.30PM

CADOGAN HALL

5 SLOANE TERRACE LONDON SW1X 9DQ

# PROGRAMME

Lugwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) – Coriolan Overture Op.62

Felix Mendelssohn Bartoldy (1809-1847) – Symphony No.5 in D major Op.107 “Reformation”

*interval (20 minutes)*

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) – Karelia Suite, Op.11

Alexander Borodin (1883-1887) – Symphony No.2 in B minor



## Lugwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) - Coriolan Overture, Op.62

Beethoven's overture *Coriolan* was written in early 1807 as a prologue to the play *Coriolan* by Heinrich Joseph von Collin (1771-1811), and not to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Both plays, of course, deal with the history of the Roman general Coriolanus which Shakespeare found in North's translations of Plutarch's lives (and which Collin found in Shakespeare, and then traced to other sources). Coriolanus, banished from Rome after refusing to pander to the people and their tribunes, joins with republican Rome's Volscian enemies, and his final revenge upon the city of his birth is forestalled only by the intervention of his mother and wife. In the Shakespeare play he then dies at the hands of his new allies; in Collin's version, the hero falls on his sword.

Whether Beethoven drew inspiration from one play more than the other is debateable. Wagner's analysis of the overture, for example, ignores Collin entirely and examines the dialectic, as he saw it, between Beethoven's music and the final climactic scene of the Shakespeare play – historically not inappropriate, given not only Beethoven's familiarity with Shakespeare through the prose translations of Eschenburg, but also the centrality of Shakespeare to German romanticism generally. It is worth remembering, however, that Vienna, if not Beethoven himself, was relatively untouched at this time by the North German romantic tradition; Collin's brief vogue owed much to his adherence to much-admired French neo-classical models.

In keeping with his approach to overture in the *Fidelio* of 1805/6, where what we now know as *Leonora III* was originally designed as an overture to the whole work, Beethoven's terse, elliptical sonata form structure finds its dramatic imperative in the protagonist's dilemma in the final act, torn between the demands of honour and revenge and defiant self-sufficiency on the one hand and filial duty on the other. And so, after the extraordinary opening harmonic gesture of instantly reprising the first C minor subject in the disconcertingly distant B flat minor, the febrile first subject group is contrasted with the the lyrical second subject; the second subject is not only the only part of the exposition to be repeated, it also provides the material subsequently to be anatomized in the development; the recapitulation, like the exposition, is truncated, fragments of the opening theme finally giving way to three last entropic pulses which mirror the terrifyingly decisive (yet harmonically ambiguous) tuttis of the overture's opening. Sonata form meets tone poem in a work of extraordinary dramatic concentration which, after perhaps only two performances, left Collin's play to oblivion as if, overture done, and the hero already dead, nothing remained to be said on the subject.



## Felix Mendelssohn Bartoldy (1809-1847) – Symphony No.5 in D major, Op.107 “Reformation”

1. Andante – Allegro con fuoco
2. Allegro vivace
3. Andante
4. Andante con moto – allegro vivace – maestoso

Mendelssohn's fifth symphony dates from the winter of 1829-30, between his travels in Scotland and Italy; and it falls before both the Scottish and Italian (the third and the fourth) symphonies in point of chronology, although after them in the catalogue.

It was intended for the celebrations of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Confession of Augsburg in 1830. The Confession, presented by the princes of Saxony to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 at the demand of the Emperor Charles V, is a justification and defence of the Lutheran reformation, and subsequently came to be one of the central confessional documents of the Lutheran faith.

In the event, the tercentenary celebrations in Berlin were cancelled owing to political unrest, and Mendelssohn had to wait until 1832 for the symphony's only performance during his lifetime. It was subsequently published posthumously as op. 107, hence its anomalously late number.

While the importance of Mendelssohn's faith is reflected in the details of his life (his marriage, for example, to the daughter of a protestant pastor) and writings, another event in the year 1829 points up the extent to which the Lutheran musical tradition informed his work. In April of that year Mendelssohn organised and directed the first performance of the Saint Matthew Passion since Bach's death; he had been familiar with the work in manuscript from the age of about ten – indeed no German musician at the

time could be unaware of the music of Bach, at least in a scholarly sense. But Mendelssohn's intervention heralded the beginning of an active performance tradition in Europe of the works of the great Lutheran composer – a tradition he consolidated during his tenure at the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in the late 1830s, when he programmed his famous historical concerts in which the music of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn and others was played alongside the music of his contemporaries in an overt celebration of an active musical tradition.

It should come as little surprise then that the chorale, the liturgical musical form central both to the Lutheran faith and the music of Bach, plays a key role in all Mendelssohn's music – instrumental as well as choral; and nowhere more so than in the fifth symphony, where well-known chorale tunes are explicitly used to form the backbone of the work. The slow D major introduction to the first movement culminates in the familiar Dresden Amen, which is reprised before the recapitulation. The body of the first movement itself is in D minor, and is marked *allegro con fuoco*. The second movement, in a much more relaxed B flat major, is, in both its scoring for lower strings and woodwind and its bucolic vigour, redolent of the town band, and has been seen by some as celebrating the new-found freedom of the people at the Reformation; a brief meditative *andante* in G minor then leads directly into the opening lines of "Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott" – one of three extant hymns now ascribed with some certainty to Martin Luther, which had come to be a symbol of the Lutheran church itself. The fourth movement, a set of variations, culminates in a fugue – naturally enough – over which the great affirmative Lutheran chorale tune returns.

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*interval (20mins)*

### Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) – Karelia Suite, Op.11

1. Intermezzo
2. Ballade
3. Alla Marcia

Few composers enjoy a centrality as great as Sibelius's to the cultural and political development of their nation. The country of his birth existed, until the revolution of 1917, merely as the Grand Duchy of Finland, and throughout the nineteenth century it remained heavily indebted to Sweden for its culture, history and even its language. Sibelius's involvement as a young man with the independence movement and its concerns with establishing a wholly Finnish cultural identity places him among the truly iconic figures in his nation's understanding of itself: for Finns, the essence, mythos and landscape of their country is etched, with striking clarity, into every bar of his music.

We might find ourselves attracted then to the poetic conceit that this music springs from and belongs to the forests and the lakes. We look for, and find in it, an ardent nationalism expressed with the fervent articulation of the political rally, but carrying at the same time all of the subtle, potent complexes of private meaning that music alone can conjure. The composer, we might be drawn to say, speaks here with the voice of a big-hearted, cultured nationalism: identity, nature, nation, personal dignity – all intertwined. Inevitably, for us, this brings echoes of later European histories – small nations emerging from the thrall of dominion, flowers strewn before tanks, Prague 1968, peaceful revolutions – and the imagination, played upon by those stirring tunes and so-evocative textures, is racing.

But there are alternative, perhaps more prosaic narratives to be explored here. Sibelius wrote the *Karelia* music in 1893 in response to a commission from the Vyborg Students Association to provide an accompaniment to a sequence of eight dramatic tableaux illustrating the history of the Karelia region in eastern Finland. The project was conceived as a philanthropic venture to raise money for educational purposes in the Vyborg Province. Sibelius accepted, not without reservations (he wrote of being "*brought down really low when...forced to compose for money*"), and secured a fee of 500 markkaa - six months' rent for him at the time.

The performance, according to a contemporary observer, Ernst Lampén, was chaotic:

*"The noise in the hall was like an ocean in a storm. I was at the opposite end...and could not distinguish a single note. The audience did not have the patience to listen and was hardly aware of the music."*

It was, however, repeated in concert that year and quickly became established in the national repertory. Sibelius eventually condensed the strongest materials into an overture and suite, which were published as Op.10 and 11 by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1905. The three movements of Op.11 derive from the following dramatic sequences in the tableau:

- |     |                                                                                                                                |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I   | <i>Intermezzo</i> – Duke Narymunt of Lithuania collecting taxes in the province of Kexholm (1333)                              |
| II  | <i>Ballade</i> – Karl Knutsson (King of Sweden) is entertained by a bard in the Castle of Vyborg (1446)                        |
| III | <i>Alla Marcia</i> – Pontus de la Gardie (a French nobleman, turned Swedish mercenary) at the siege of Käkisalme castle (1580) |

Medieval tax collectors? International mercenaries? Are these details relevant, and just what is this music anyway – nationalist, pictorial, illustrative, even programmatic? Of course we can read, perhaps lazily, an *ad hoc* exploration of Finland's early history as a 'call to arms' to beleaguered countrymen. But we could also be brave and, following Tovey, dismiss extrinsic considerations in the search for a *musical* aesthetic residing in, and intelligible just from the notes – perhaps the greatest, and most necessary, challenge in our approaches to nineteenth century music.



## Alexander Borodin (1833-1887) – Symphony No.2 in B minor

1. Allegro
2. Scherzo: Prestissimo – Trio: Allegretto
3. Andante
4. Finale: Allegro

Alexander Borodin was a part-time composer. Musical endeavours for him were squeezed into the interstices arising between commitments as Professor of Chemistry at the St. Petersburg Academy of Medicine, a divided life which circumscribed and slowed down his productivity as a musician. Nonetheless, his manifold gifts, and particularly his effortless melodic fluency, place him among the very greatest Russian figures of his era.

The compositional genesis of the *Second Symphony* (1869-1879) is closely tied to that of his grand opera, *Prince Igor*. Work progressed on both in parallel in the early 1870's, and material conceived for the one, a dramatic treatment of a twelfth century prince's skirmishes with invading Polovtsian tribes, found its way into the other, perhaps one of nineteenth century Russian music's most enduring symphonic masterpieces. These inter-connections did much to establish a notional programme for symphony. We are told that the composer related to the evangelizing nationalist critic, Vladimir Stasov, that the first movement depicts a mustering of knights for battle, the third a bard singing folksongs and the finale a scene of feasting and revelry. Many of the same threads, then, as in the Sibelius, with all of the same issues of interpretation to address.

As a purely musical narrative, however, there is much of considerable interest at work in the symphony. The opening gesture – that unforgettably dramatic, and structurally crucial unison motto in the strings - unfolds an octatonic subcollection (a fragment derived from an eight-note, non-Western scale), an instance of the orientalism that gripped Russian musicians throughout this era, and a reminder of the bivalent nature of the Russian musical psyche. Equally, in the first movement's folk-song derived second subject – a melody heard first in the 'cellos, all lyricism and grace – and its close relative, the mercurial second movement's trio, we get a clue as to Borodin's large scale process. There is much that is cyclic here – motivic interrelationships existing between the materials used throughout the work – resulting in a closely argued structure with a strikingly logical simplicity. And of course there are all those great tunes. Even his humblest secondary themes are shaped with masterful elegance and scored, with much expert advice from Rimsky-Korsakov, with a deft, colourful handling of large orchestral resources.

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### Simon Ferris, conductor

Simon Ferris, musical director of the Thames Youth Orchestra, read music and was organ scholar at King's College London. In addition, he pursued instrumental and musicianship studies with Bernard Oram at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and received private composition tuition from Geoffrey Bush. A skilled jazz musician, his professional career embraces a diverse range of styles and disciplines and finds at its core a mixture of performing, composing, arranging, conducting and teaching.

Simon is currently, and uniquely, on the staff both at Tiffin School and at Tiffin Girls' School in Kingston upon Thames

**The Thames Youth Orchestra** was formed in 2005 with funding from the Performing Arts College, Tiffin School. Now comprising musicians from ten South West London schools, TYO embarks upon its second year with a continuing commitment to providing for its young players an exciting and enriching experience of great orchestral music.

For further information, please contact Rebecca Lacey, chair of Friends of TYO: [rebecca.lacey@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:rebecca.lacey@blueyonder.co.uk)

# THAMES YOUTH ORCHESTRA

Rebecca Minio-Paluello, leader

## Section coaches

Joanna Korzinek, strings

Ian Stott, brass,

Gareth Twigg/Paul Price, woodwind

### First Violins

Rebecca Minio-Paluello  
So-Yeon Kim  
James Carter  
David Mogilner  
Lucy Pimm  
Jessica Eccleston  
Charlotte Brierley  
Clarissa Brierley  
Sam Lung

### Second Violins

Eun-Young Kim  
Max Liefkes  
Pradeep Kannan  
Jonathan Wong  
Nicholas Lung  
Rachel Bruce  
Olivia Marshall

### Violas

Ric Hollingberry  
Tillie Dilworth  
Eleanor Figueiredo  
Shiv Vohra

### Cellos

Toby Perkins  
Miriam Figueiredo  
Hassan Kadhom  
Jonathan Bruce  
Isabella Hatfield  
Miles Dilworth  
Philip Aslangul  
Ben Stevens

### Basses

Susy Barnato  
Emma Syrus

### Flutes

Nicky Chalk  
Neshma Shah  
Hani Kim  
Mayuko Tanno  
Sem Lee

### Oboes

Kabir Bhalla  
Sophie Robin  
Emma Price

### Clarinets

Natalie Rukuts  
Georgina Feary  
Ben Ingledeew

### Bassoons

Victor Jones  
Nick Fletcher  
Molly Nielsen Gibbs

### Horns

Freddie Bruce  
Clara Hardingham  
Catriona Igoe  
Thomas Pelham  
Zacchaeus Rodwell

### Trumpets

Max Fagandini  
Nick Goodman  
Matthew Parker

### Trombones

Hatty Martin  
Mathew Harrison  
Henry Affonso

### Tuba

Leo Whiteman

### Timpani

Will Lewis-Smith

### Percussion

Hugo Fagandini  
Sam Foster  
Rupert Price

### Harp

Danielle Megrarahan

*The Thames Youth Orchestra – a top-tier orchestral experience for talented young musicians*

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