



brunelsinfonia
building bridges through music

Conductor
Mark Gateshill

Leader
Tina Mehta

Mahler

Symphony No.9

Wagner

Ride of the Valkyries

Saint-Saëns

Danse Macabre

7:30pm Saturday 11th November 2023

Redland Hall, Redmaids' High School, Bristol BS9 3AW

Tickets: £15 adult

£12 concessions | £6 NUS/First Timer | £3 under 18s

Tickets available in advance from

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Programme

**Richard Wagner
Ride of the Valkyries**

**Danse Macabre
Camille Saint-Saëns**

~ Interval (20 mins) ~

**Gustav Mahler
Symphony No. 9**

Richard Wagner

Ride of the Valkyries

Richard Wagner wrote a group of four epic musical dramas called “Der Ring des Nibelungen”, known in English simply as “The Ring.” These are mammoth works and the second of these is “Die Walküre” or “The Valkyrie.” The first piece on this programme is “The Ride of The Valkeries.” It comes from the opening of the third Act of the opera. “The Ride” begins with the stage curtains closed but which open to reveal four of the sisters of Brünnhilde preparing to transport fallen heroes to Valhalla (The Hall of the Slain in Norse mythology).

As the familiar tune is played by the orchestra, the remaining four sisters join the group and against the insistent many layered music from the orchestra, they greet each other and sing their battle-cry.

The music begins with a series of trills passed around the orchestra, The horns sound out the first iteration of the famous melody. The brass take it up against insistent trills from wind, with strings playing arpeggio figures.

A less dense passage provides some relief until the melody returns. Plenty of devices like cymbals clashing, descending chromatic scales give contrast as the tension gradually builds before the melody returns with slightly less intensity. The music continues in this vein, continually increasing in tension with prominent percussion and timpani, until the whole orchestra joins in a rushing upward scale to finish dramatically on a final, loud chord.

Danse Macabre

Camile Saint-Saëns

A concert favourite, this tone poem is always enjoyed by the solo violinist as much as anyone else. The soloist’s violin has to be tuned unusually (scordatura), with the E string tuned down a semitone, to an E flat. It creates an interval between the A string and E flat known as a Tritone, or a diminished fifth. Since the late middle ages, this interval has been known as “The Devil’s Interval” or “The Devil in Music.” The effect is striking and the entry of the solo violin sets the mood of the whole piece. The Danse Macabre is an evocation of ancient legend where Death appears at midnight every year on Hallowe’en and calls for

the dead to rise and dance for him while he plays his fiddle. They must dance for him until dawn when they return to their graves until the next year.

Saint Saëns fills this piece with musical motifs and musical references to death or the dead in amazing detail and with great deftness. For instance, he quotes a Gregorian sung Dies Irae (day of wrath) from the Requiem (mass for the dead).

The piece opens with the harp plucking the twelve strikes of the bell at midnight, accompanied by soft chords in the strings. The solo flute plays the first theme with rapid quavers with occasional ornamentation (mordent). This is taken on by the strings leading to the solo violin coming in with the second theme beginning with a descending scale with chromatic alterations. More wind is added creating almost a dialogue, including a repetition on solo violin of the tritone pattern, perhaps symbolising the raising from their graves, of the dead, readied for their dancing. The first theme is shared between sections, the second theme added, the texture and volume increases and since the piece is in triple time we get the feeling of some gruesome waltz developing. The solo violin interjects, followed by a prominent xylophone entry signifying bones banging together as the awful sight grows in its gruesomeness! The solo violin gives another rendition of the tritone pattern and the orchestra begins a passage where the wind section plays a quote of the Gregorian Dies Irae (Day of wrath) from the Requiem (Mass for the dead). It quickly develops into a contrapuntal passage increasing the tension, released for a while with the “waltz” taking over. The solo violin again interjects, more lyrically. Taken up by the strings, the mood swiftly gains texture and tension with the increased orchestration. Playing with us, Saint Saëns calms the music down until goaded by the solo violin, the terror increases until the full orchestra joins in a loud combination of the second theme and a version of the first. The violins play an arpeggio pattern, whipping the orchestra into a frenzy until the oboe interjects, signifying a cockerel heralding the dawn. The bass drum and timpani combine to create the impression of darkness fleeing; of the dead returning to their graves. The solo violin plays a new melodic line as death retreats - until next year!

Tone poem: a piece of music where the music aims to describe closely a story, series of events or natural features. The second and third pieces in the programme are tone poems.

Motif: a series of notes shorter than a tune that can signify a character or feeling (for example).

Ornamentation: extra, quick notes added to the main notes of a melody for effect. A mordent is a quick playing of the written, the note above the written note back to the written note.

Gustav Mahler

Symphony No. 9

This is Mahler's final complete symphony and it is long, as much as 75 minutes or more. He wrote it after a series of deep emotional blows; his marriage was in trouble, he had lost his daughter Maria Anna to scarlet fever the year before and he had received a diagnosis of a serious heart condition which was incurable and killed him a year later. He never heard this piece performed. Most commentators have these things in mind when looking at interpretations and meaning within this work despite Mahler having had some success with the New York Philharmonic during this time and was looking forward to touring with the orchestra.

However, there is much about the work that resonates with deep emotion and references to life, leaving and sadness. There are many instructions to the players on how to play sections, showing how exactly he wished the piece to be played.

Alban Berg called the first movement "The most glorious he ever wrote" that it "Expresses an extraordinary love of the earth, for nature..... to the very heart of one's being, before death comes, as irresistibly it does."

Mvt 1 Andante Comodo

The movement begins with a hesitant, syncopated motif (which Leonard Bernstein suggested is a depiction of Mahler's irregular heartbeat) and is heard throughout the movement. It is the second violins that introduce the beautifully wistful first melody set against sparse orchestration. The first violins enter with the seconds providing a counter as the melody slowly develops. A warning note is heard on the clarinets added to by the second violins and the mood changes and a more anxious passage develops until a glorious version emerges after a timpani roll. The musical material is worked and reworked in the development with the trombones

and tuba announcing the “heartbeat” rhythm that leads into a solemn “funeral march” marked *Wie ein schwerer Kondukt*. It moves into a short reprise of the opening before adding complexity and varying moods, marked *Misterioso*, changing rapidly and calming down for a violin solo and then flute with horn. The music finally returns to the tranquil mood of the opening with everything quietening down to *ppp* introducing a violin solo/duet with oboe and ending with a harmonic pizzicato and bowed note in cello in strings.

Misterioso: mysterious

ppp: pianississimo: very, very quietly

Mvt 2 Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländlers

This movement is in 3/4 time (waltz time) and opens with a rustic ländler (a folk dance popular at the end of the 18th century featuring hopping and stamping). The movement opens with a theme in bassoon and viola, with clarinets adding a trilled “answer” phrase. After eight bars of this introduction, it is the second violins again, rather than the firsts who come in with a strong, clumping tune. It spreads across the whole orchestra as the mood is ironic perhaps, and decidedly unsophisticated. The movement works its way through some six different keys with many changes of mood, through a whole tone waltz with much chromaticism and frantic rhythms. In the middle of this, everything calms down and there is a brief return to the calm “sighing” motif from mvt 1. More frantic roughness returns for a while, interrupted once again with material from the first movement. The alternating of rough and calm continues until everything finally calms down, the orchestration thins and the wind with horns, bassoons being prominent, bring us to the pianissimo ending.

Mvt 3 Rondo Burlesque: Allegro assai. Sehr trotzig

The third movement is in the form of a Rondo* where Mahler uses contrapuntal techniques to good effect. It begins with a dissonant theme in the trumpet answered by the strings. It develops into a fugue-like passage that sets the mood for most of this movement. It is frantic, dissonant, gruff at times and challenging for the orchestra with its abrupt entries, changes of mood and keys. For a short while the key signature has all seven flats! This is difficult, especially for the strings and a very unusual experience. The word Burlesque means humorous. If that is the case this is a strange sense of humour! A brief moment of tranquillity appears almost out of nowhere before fragments of the previous musical ideas seem to be trying to break out, with the clarinet in particular. A

trumpet heralds a viola solo that tries to maintain the calm but the pace picks up and we find ourselves back in the contrapuntal chaos of before. The tempo continues to increase until the movement tumbles frantically to the tumultuous ending.

(*Rondo. A musical form with a central theme or idea which alternates with other contrasting ideas, appearing a number of times in the piece. It can also be like a round.)

Mvt 4 Adagio. Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend.

The final movement, unusually, is an Adagio (slow) and is marked “zurückhaltend” meaning held back. Mahler seems keen that this movement should not be too fast.

It opens with strings only and, after the opening two bars, the music is initially very similar to the hymn tune “Eventide,” usually the tune for “Abide with Me” as many commentators have recorded. It also matches the opening harmonies of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata number 26 “Les Adieux” or “farewell.” Both pieces predate the writing of this symphony by some margin so Mahler may well have known each of them. The movement contains other features like snippets from the third movement of this symphony, and there is a direct quote in first violins of his own work “Kindertotenlieder” - songs on the death of children. The first violin part here is marked “Mit inniger Emphindung” (with heartfelt emotion). Given the sombre events mentioned at the beginning of these notes, it really seems that Mahler is, in this movement in particular, reflecting musically on aspects of death, valued life experiences and perhaps a reconciliation and farewell to it all.

The richness of the string writing, which sometimes has seven different parts, the use of mutes, long slides up to and down from notes, which are very much meant to be heard, all go to wringing out emotion in the listener.

Wind is added slowly and a viola solo, followed by a first violin solo, lead into more wind being added, a change of key and a prominent horn solo. An emotionally charged section moves to a big string theme in which full wind and brass heighten the emotion then suddenly falls away. A lengthy, quite thinly scored section moves us into a segment featuring the wind. The strings return fortissimo and the whole orchestra takes the music to

a dramatic climactic segment. More dramatic moments come one after the other, with obvious key changes and exaggerated slides in strings.

It all quietens down and a sustained, slow moving string section gradually takes us to a very quiet ending with only celli, violas and second violins holding a D flat major chord, a semi-tone below the notional key in which the symphony began.

Programme notes by Paul Packwood.

Mark Gateshill

Mark is a highly dedicated and motivated musician, with a passion for sharing and developing music within the community.

Having grown up in South London where he began studying the violin with Douglas and Helen Paterson - he went on to read music at the University of Exeter, it was whilst here that he was first given the opportunity to start conducting on a regular basis. After graduating, he studied conducting with Jonathan James from 2005 and from 2009 with Peter Stark (RCM). In 2014 he was given the opportunity to observe and assist Parvo Jaarvi and the Orchestre de Paris rehearsing Sibelius' Symphonies 6 and 7 for performance and recording.

His current conducting portfolio consists of Musical Director of Frome Symphony since 2009, conductor of the Brunel Sinfonia since 2011 and in 2014 he started working with Keynsham Orchestra. He has also had professional freelance experience with the Bath Philharmonia and the Bristol Ensemble.

Mark has toured extensively around Europe conducting concerts in France, Belgium, Germany, Poland and Estonia. He feels very privileged to work with the great, exciting musicians he collaborates with on a regular basis – but also the opportunities to work with prestigious soloists such as the pianist, Stephen Hough.

Working with young musicians is a core element to Mark's professional life. He is currently Head of Strings at Bristol Cathedral Choir School where he teaches violin and viola, coaches a variety of chamber ensembles as well as conducting the String Orchestra.

Mark is currently based in Bristol with his wife and daughter. He is a keen cyclist; coached by and racing for PDQ Cycle Coaching. Outside of Music, Mark is an avid collector of vintage typewriters. He's known to type away on them for inspiration, and his typewriter collection even includes a rare 1920s model that's said to be haunted!

For more information, please visit www.markgateshillmusic.com

Tina Mehta

Tina has been playing the violin since the age of six, and studied with Judith Young. She played with the Southampton Youth Orchestra and Musical Score. At university Tina played with the University of Bristol Orchestra, and led the University of Bristol Chamber Orchestra.

Tina has been playing with Brunel Sinfonia since the year of it's launch in 2004; she has been leading since 2009, and is a trustee, and chair of the orchestra. She led the Bristol Classical Players from their launch in 2008. Tina enjoys performing with many other local orchestras, and has led Bristol Concert Series since 2020. Alongside three Brunel friends, Tina enjoys performing with The Cotswold Quartet www.cotswoldquartet.com, and enjoys writing string quartet arrangements for weddings and other events.

Outside of music, Tina works as a Gastroenterology Consultant in the South West and is a Royal College of Physicians Tutor. She enjoys being a Mum, cooking, eating out, gardening, horse riding, and socialising with her family and friends. She is a world-class competitive yo-yoer. She can perform jaw-dropping tricks and has even been featured in yo-yo competitions across the globe. Her signature move? The 'Yo-Symphony'.

Our next concerts

Sunday 10th December 2023 at 6.00PM

At Trinity Henleaze URC Church

A family focused Christmas concert with mulled wine and minced pies.

Saturday 16th March 2023 at 7.30PM

at Redmaids' School

Film music concert including:

- Robin Hood Prince of Thieves
- Dances with Wolves
- Back to the Future
- Casino Royale
- And many more

If you would like to know more about the Brunel Sinfonia, please visit our new website at **www.brunelsinfonia.org.uk**

We have a facebook page which can be found at **facebook.com/brunelsinfonia** and you can follow us on twitter at **twitter.com/brunelsinfonia**.

Please feel free to tweet during the concert, our twitter hashtag is **#brunelsinfonia**, but please remember to keep your phone on silent!

Having a Wedding or Event?

Members of the Brunel Sinfonia also play in various string ensembles. For more information, please contact:

The Cotswold Quartet (www.cotswoldquartet.com)

Violin 1

Tina Mehta
 Tom Budden
 George Chapman
 Sarah Jennings
 Patrick Lane
 Roger Levett
 Hannah May
 Alasdair Price
 Richard Reader
 Stephanie Von Hinke
 Isabel Wiltshire
 Rachel Woolmer

Violin II

Paul Packwood
 Sian Beesley
 Ellie Bennun
 Tina Biggs
 Lucy Galloway
 Chloe Gamlin
 Frances Gammie
 Frances Hopkins
 Laura Humphreys
 Reshma Mistry
 Catherine Streater
 Katie Warner
 Anna Wilson

Viola

Izzie Balmer
 Greg Banks
 Andrew Beadle
 Michael Collis
 Jenn Crossthwaite
 Helen Lambourne
 Anne Kay
 Jo Maismaris
 Cami Shotton

Cello

Jo Hughes
 Sophie Collett
 Rachel Everington
 Vanessa Hill
 Kate Leckie
 Sam May
 Judith McMullen
 Thomas Mitchell
 Alex Murrell
 Billy Quain

Double Bass

Ioannis Tsagurnis
 Rob Lillis
 Shay Baldwin
 Alex Pearson

Flute

Michelle Krawiec
 Laura Jeffery
 Seraphim Leng

Piccolo

Jolanta Modelska
 Lee Radja

Clarinet

Catherine Zollman
 Andrew Bond
 David Ings
 Matthew Tanner

Bass Clarinet

David Dodd

Oboe

Hilary Oliver
 Caroline Coleman
 Sarah Ridgeon

Cor Anglais

Philippa Cooper

Bassoon

Louise Tricklebank
 Katherine King

Contra Bassoon

Peter Cleves

Horns

Edward Kay
 Martyn Ford
 Caleb Kernaghan
 Maddie Shields
 Rhodri Spearing
 Harry Stone

Trumpet

Richard Matthews
 Matt Hildrew
 Phil Thomas

Trombone

Matt Davies
 Nathan Williams
 Vince Ford

Tuba

Daniel Pile

Harp

Julia Hammersley

Timpani

Charlie Giddings

Percussion

Paul Berrow
 Paul Hemmings
 Ceileigh Tiso
 Ian Tiso