SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

DIGITAL SEASON

THE LARK ASCENDING

15 Nov – 15 Dec 2021

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PROGRAMME

Season 2021/22

THE LARK ASCENDING

15 November – 15 December 2021
Perth Concert Hall

Vaughan Williams The Lark Ascending
Clyne Stride (Scottish Premiere)
Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne.
Butterworth (arr. Roderick Williams) A Shropshire Lad
Haydn Symphony No 99

Ryan Wigglesworth Conductor
Benjamin Marquise Gilmore Violin
Benjamin Appl Baritone

Introduced by **Siún Milne, Ryan Wigglesworth** and **Anna Clyne**

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

4 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5AB
+44 (0)131 557 6800 | info@sco.org.uk | sco.org.uk

Our Musicians

YOUR ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLIN
Benjamin Marquise Gilmore
Ruth Crouch
Kana Kawashima
Aisling O'Dea
Siún Milne
Fiona Alexander
Amira Bedrush-McDonald

SECOND VIOLIN
Marcus Barcham Stevens
Laura Comini
Rachel Spencer
Rachel Smith
Niamh Lyons
Stewart Webster

VIOLA
Nicholas Bootiman
Felix Tanner
Brian Schiele
Steve King

CELLO
Philip Higham
Su-a Lee
Donald Gillan
Niamh Molloy

BASS
Nikita Naumov
Adrian Bornet

FLUTE
Brontë Hudnott
Emma Roche

OBOE
Robin Williams
Fraser Kelman

CLARINET
Maximiliano Martín
William Stafford

BASSOON
Charlotte Cox
Alison Green

HORN
Huw Evans
Jamie Shield

TRUMPET
Peter Franks
Shaun Harrold

TIMPANI
Louise Goodwin

HARP
Eleanor Hudson

Benjamin Marquise Gilmore
Director / Violin

WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

The Lark Ascending (1914, rev. 1920)

Clyne (b.1980)

Stride (2020) Scottish Premiere

Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne. Scottish Premiere

I. Grave – Allegro di molto e con brio
II. Adagio cantabile
III. Rondo: Allegro

Butterworth (1885-1916)

A Shropshire Lad arr. Roderick Williams (1911)

Loveliest of trees
When I was one and twenty
Look not in my eyes
Think no more, lad
The lads in their hundreds
Is my team ploughing?

Haydn (1732-1809)

Symphony No 99 (1793)

Adagio – Vivace assai
Adagio
Minuet: Allegretto
Finale: Vivace

You could hardly call them themes as such, but Beethoven and the First World War are the two rather contrasting ideas that hover behind the four pieces in this wide-ranging programme. Both are somewhat ghostly presences, however – just like one of the ploughboys in Butterworth's final song, in fact – and they connect the works mostly by implication rather than overt reference.

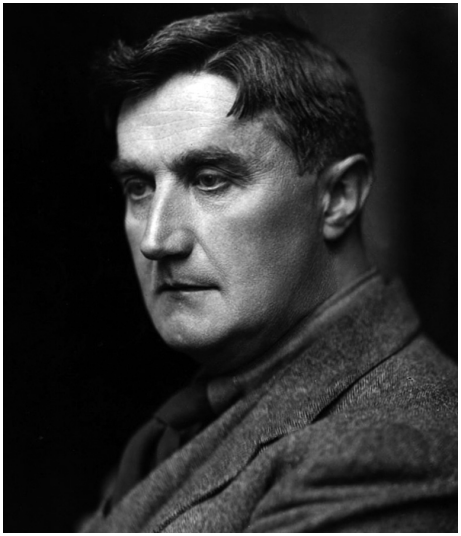
Indeed, despite its serene, meditative atmosphere, Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* is a wartime piece. Its composition was interrupted by the conflict: the composer completed the work in a version for violin and piano in 1914, then set it aside for the duration of the war, during which time he served as an ambulance driver in France and Greece. Upon his return to Britain, he finished the work's orchestration, and *The Lark* was premiered by its dedicatee Marie Hall in June 1921.

Vaughan Williams had been inspired by the 1881 poem by George Meredith of the same name, and included these lines from it in his score:

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup
And he the wine which overflows
to lift us with him as he goes.

Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.



Ralph Vaughan Williams

We can only wonder at the ways in which the bloody destruction of the battlefield that the composer witnessed might have set his nostalgic rural idyll into stark relief – or, indeed, served to re-emphasise its values in the composer's mind.

Meredith's imagery, and the natural wonders of England that he evokes, are a world away from the brutal reality of conflict into which Vaughan Williams found himself thrown. We can only wonder at the ways in which the bloody destruction of the battlefield that the composer witnessed might have set his nostalgic rural idyll into stark relief – or, indeed, served to re-emphasise its values in the composer's mind.

It's just that sense of nostalgic rural idyll, of course, that makes the work so enduringly popular. So much so, in fact, that it regularly tops polls as the public's best-loved piece of classical music. In many ways, however, it's a strange work to achieve such fame and popularity. It's generally quiet and introspective, and there's no 'big tune' to stir the spirits. What Vaughan Williams offers us instead is space for reflection. There's a gentle spirituality, too, even a feeling of mysticism, and an underlying sense of sadness – perhaps for the rural world that even in 1914 Vaughan Williams saw disappearing, but certainly one that makes *The Lark* a fitting, thoughtful tribute to those lost in the Great War.

The first of today's two Beethoven-connected pieces is by the SCO's Associate Composer Anna Clyne, who writes:

"*Stride* draws inspiration from Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 8 in C minor, Op 13, commonly known as Sonata *Pathétique*, which is in three movements:

I. Grave – Allegro di molto e con brio
II. Adagio cantabile
III. Rondo: Allegro

"I chose a few melodic, rhythmic and harmonic fragments from each

Anna Clyne

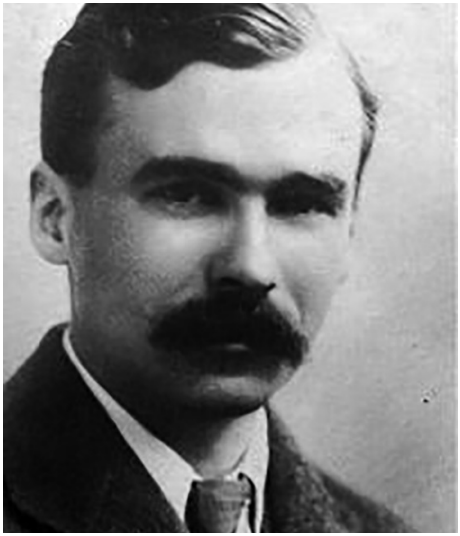
"The title is derived from the octave leaps that stride in the left hand in first movement of Sonata Pathétique. I was immediately drawn to the driving energy of this bass movement and have used it as a tool to propel Stride."

movement (exhibited as an appendix to the score) and developed these in the three corresponding sections of *Stride*. The title is derived from the octave leaps that stride in the left hand in first movement of Sonata *Pathétique*. I was immediately drawn to the driving energy of this bass movement and have used it as a tool to propel *Stride*."

We return to the First World War, again obliquely, in Butterworth's Six Songs from *A Shropshire Lad*, composed in 1911 for voice and piano, and performed here in an arrangement for string orchestra and harp by eminent baritone and composer Roderick Williams. There's an indelible connection between this music and the Great War, but it's one that has only emerged retrospectively.

In all, Butterworth set 11 poems from AE Housman's 1896 collection *A Shropshire Lad* (the six you hear here, plus five more as *Bredon Hill and Other Songs*). But the deaths of the lads that Housman's poignant verse returns to again and again occurred more than two decades before the Great War, and were instead in the service of Queen Victoria and her Empire.

Butterworth himself, however, provides an almost archetypical example of the decimation that the War wrought on the young of the 1910s. On graduating from Oxford, he had launched a successful career as a writer, teacher and composer – indeed, he was a friend of Vaughan Williams, and equally passionate about English folk music. But that career was interrupted by the conflict: he joined the British Army, destroying many of his early compositions in the process, unsure whether he'd live to revise and finalise them once the war was over. He



George Butterworth

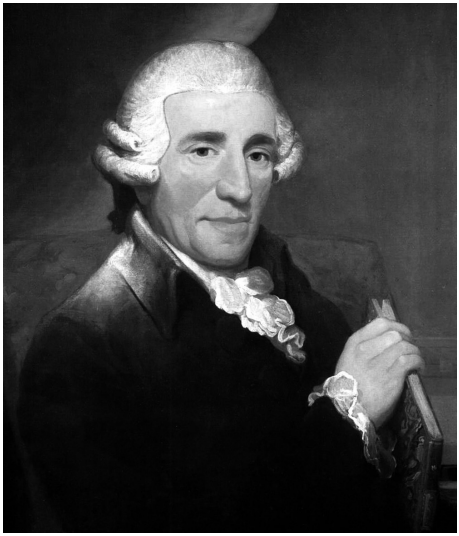
Despite being written before the War, and setting poetry referring to the casualties of earlier conflicts, it's hard to imagine Butterworth's six Housman songs as referring to anything other than the Great War

was killed in action at the Battle of the Somme, during the night of 4-5 August 1916, aged 31, leaving just a handful of exquisite, deeply moving works behind.

Despite being written before the War, and setting poetry referring to the casualties of earlier conflicts, it's hard to imagine Butterworth's six Housman songs as referring to anything other than the Great War, and to see the ubiquitous 'lads' of Housman's verse – sturdy and vigorous, yet as vulnerable as children – as representing the thousands killed in the conflict that would come just a few years later.

Themes of passing time, mortality and lost love haunt these six exquisite songs. 'Loveliest of Trees' recounts the turning of the seasons, while the passing of time continues as a theme in 'When I Was One-and-Twenty', which employs a traditional English tune in its tale of lost love and lost innocence. 'Look Not In My Eyes' tells the story of Narcissus in an unusual, five-in-a-bar time, with caressing, shifting harmonies, while the message of the brisk 'Think No More, Lad' couldn't be clearer: live life to the fullest, for tomorrow we die.

Butterworth's final two songs are his most poignant. 'The Lads In Their Hundreds' unashamedly admires the sturdy physicality of the young men letting their hair down at Ludlow fair, but is shot through with quiet tragedy that these are the very boys who 'will never be old': as an anthem for doomed youth, it's hard to see it as anything but prophetic. The final 'Is My Team Ploughing?' is a ghostly dialogue between two of those lads, one of whom has survived the war, the other of whom 'now lies under the land he used



Franz Joseph Haydn

The Symphony is a rare example of a work by Haydn being influenced by Mozart (rather than vice versa) – in this case, in its use of clarinets. They here make their first appearance in a Haydn symphony after being promoted and popularised by Mozart

to plough', his lines accompanied by delicate, distant harmonies.

For the final piece in today's programme, we return to Beethoven – or at least to Haydn at his most Beethovenian. No 99 is the seventh of the 12 symphonies that Haydn wrote for the two trips he made to London in 1791-2 and 1794-5. Significantly, it's the first of the second set of six, written for his return trip, by which time he knew just what his demanding London listeners liked, and gave it to them plentifully. He wrote the Symphony in Vienna in 1793, in preparation for his London trip, and it received its premiere on 10 February 1791, just six days after his arrival, at the Hanover Square Rooms, with the composer directing from the fortepiano. It clearly went down a storm. London gazette *The Morning Chronicle* wrote:

'The incomparable Haydn produced a new Overture (Symphony), of which it is impossible to speak in common terms. It is one of the grandest efforts of the art that we have ever witnessed. It abounds with ideas, as new in music as they are grand and impressive; it rouses and affects every emotion of the soul. It was received with rapturous applause.'

It still takes something of a mental double-take to remember that Haydn lived later than Mozart, who had died two years before the elder composer began work on today's Symphony. Indeed, the Symphony is a rare example of a work by Haydn being influenced by Mozart (rather than vice versa) – in this case, in its use of clarinets. They here make their first appearance in a Haydn symphony after being promoted and popularised by Mozart, enriching the sonorousness of its slow opening,

Haydn dared to be bolder and louder than previously in his new symphonies for London, thereby paving the way for Beethoven's even more intense innovations that were still to come.

for example, or contributing to the woodwind interplay in its second and fourth movements.

But if Mozart exerts an influence, it's surely Beethoven who's more directly evoked in the Symphony's richness and drama. Haydn dared to be bolder and louder than previously in his new symphonies for London, thereby paving the way for Beethoven's even more intense innovations that were still to come.

Indeed, there's an almost Beethovenian grandeur to the first movement's declamatory slow introduction, and to its unexpected harmonic detours. Haydn leaves himself so far away from his 'home' key at the end of the introduction that he has no choice but simply jump back, without so much as attempting a smooth transition. The movement's main faster section displays his customary playfulness to a tee: its second main theme, for example, might appear too banal to warrant inclusion, but Haydn captures our interest by stretching it to an unusual five bars rather than the customary four.

Haydn's expanded woodwind section comes into its own in the slow, hymn-like second movement, where it dovetails beautifully with the strings. The third movement minuet sounds closer to a Beethovenian scherzo than to an elegant courtly dance, and Haydn almost seems to prefigure Webern in fragmenting his melody across different instruments in the scampering, good-humoured finale – don't get caught out, though, by something of a surprise towards the end.

LIBRETTO

Butterworth (1885-1916)
A Shropshire Lad arr. Roderick Williams (1911)

1. Loveliest of Trees

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now of my three-score years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

2. When I was one-and-twenty

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true
'Tis true.

3. Look not in my eyes

Look not in my eyes, for fear
They mirror true the sight I see,
And there you find your face too clear
And love it and be lost like me.

One the long nights through must lie
Spent in star defeated sighs,
But why should you as well as I Perish?
Gaze not in my eyes.

A Grecian lad, as I hear tell,
One that many loved in vain,
Looked into a forest well
And never looked away again.

There, when the turf in springtime flowers,
With downward eye and gazes sad,
Stands amid the glancing showers
A jonquil, not a Grecian lad.

4. Think no more, lad

Think no more, lad: laugh, be jolly:
Why should men make haste to die?
Empty heads and tongues a-talking
Make the rough road easy walking,
And the feather pate of folly
Bears the falling sky.

Oh 'tis jesting, dancing, drinking
Spins the heavy world around.
If young hearts were not so clever,
Oh, they would be young for ever:
Think no more; 'tis only thinking
Lays lads underground.

Think no more, lad: laugh, be jolly:
Why should men make haste to die?
Empty heads and tongues a-talking
Make the rough road easy walking,
And the feather pate of folly
Bears the falling sky.

5. The lads in their hundreds

The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair,
There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold,
The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor are there,
And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old.

There's chaps from the town and the field and the till and the cart,
And many to count are the stalwart and many the brave,
And many the handsome of face and the handsome of heart,
And few that will carry their looks or their truth to the grave.

I wish one could know them, I wish there were tokens to tell
The fortunate fellows that now you can never discern;
And then one could talk with them friendly and wish them farewell
And watch them depart on the way that they will not return.

But now you may stare as you like and there's nothing to scan;
And brushing your elbow unguessed at and not to be told
They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of man,
The lads that will die in their glory and never be old.

6. Is my team ploughing?

"Is my team ploughing,
That I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle
When I was man alive?"

Ay, the horses trample,
The harness jingles now:
No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.

"Is football playing
Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?"

Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up,
The keeper stands up to keep the goal.

"Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?"

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

"Is my friend hearty,
Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?"

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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