



**bournemouth
symphony orchestra**

Kirill Karabits Chief Conductor

**Concert Programme
Winter/Spring 2022**



Back to the Future

Lighthouse, Poole
Wednesday 30 March

In memory of
Barbara Weeks

Guildhall, Portsmouth
Thursday 31 March

JS Bach arr. Webern
Ricercar à 6
8'

R Strauss
Metamorphosen
26'

Interval

Beethoven
Symphony No.3 'Eroica'
47'

Karl-Heinz Steffens
Conductor

Amy Merchant
Leader

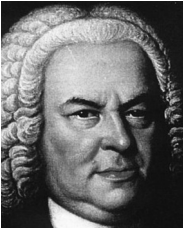
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Ricercar à 6

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: 31 March 1685 Eisenach

Died: 28 July 1750 Leipzig



Arranged by:

Anton Webern

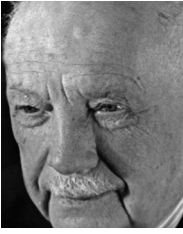
Born: 3 December 1883 Vienna

Died: 15 September 1945 Mittersill

Bach's *Ricercar* is a six-part fugue, the most substantial work within his 1747 *Musical Offering*, a collection of contrapuntal works for harpsichord, all derived from a theme given to the composer by Frederick the Great of Prussia, to whom Bach dedicated the work. Over the winter of 1934-5, the *Ricercar* was arranged for a small orchestra by Anton Webern, who together with his fellow pupil Alban Berg, and their teacher, Arnold Schoenberg, comprised what became known as the Second Viennese School; together they propounded cutting edge developments in compositional techniques. Webern scored the *Ricercar* for flute, oboe, cor anglais, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet and trombone, timpani, harp and strings, and it was first performed in a broadcast from London, by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Webern, on 25 April 1935. Webern dedicated the arrangement to his friend and advocate, the English conductor and BBC producer, Edward Clark.

What is so clever about Webern's reimagining of the *Ricercar*, is that although Bach's music is not changed in any way, it sounds completely reinvented in the later man's hands. This is particularly achieved by Webern's use of *klangfarben-melodie*, a technique invented by Schoenberg, where melodic lines are passed between instruments every few notes to bring out their characteristics through instrumental colours. As Webern commented, "The theme throughout must not appear disintegrated. My orchestration tries (here I am speaking of the whole work) merely to reveal the motivic coherence." Overall, Webern brings a diamantine clarity to the Baroque master's original.

Andrew Burn



Metamorphosen

Richard Strauss

Born: 11 June 1864 Munich

Died: 8 September 1949 Garmisch-Partenkirchen

For sixty years Strauss had lived and worked at the heart of German musical life, and as the Second World War brought decay and eventually devastation, his sense of tradition became acute. In March 1945 he wrote: "Goethe's house, the world's holiest place destroyed! My lovely Dresden, Weimar, Munich, all gone!" And just ten days later his beloved Vienna State Opera House suffered the same fate. The world Strauss had known all his long life lay in ruins.

The eighty-year-old composer sought consolation in creativity. During the period from 13 March to 12 April 1945 he composed *Metamorphosen*, described as a 'study for twenty-three solo strings': he deliberately chose as his title a term Goethe had been fond of using in old age, and thereby succeeded in capturing the perfect imagery. For this elegy surely ranks as one of Strauss' finest compositions as well as one of the supreme examples of the triumph of the sensitive human spirit in time of adversity.

The scoring – ten violins, five violas, five cellos, three basses – is unusual and was possibly determined by the forces of the Zürich Collegium Musicum, whose conductor, Paul Sacher, commissioned the work, giving its premiere with his ensemble on 25 January 1946. But the precise number of players demanded by Strauss is a reflection of the work's musical language, of how the subtleties and ensemble determine its expressive intensity. The music is in the form of an extended *Adagio* which unfolds in a rich and often complex polyphony, with the ebb and flow of more agitated contrasting statements enhancing the nostalgic search for consolation.

The prevailing mood is beyond all interpretative doubt, yet the Classical rigour of the development ensures that there is no hint of self-pity. There are references to Wagner, to *Tristan* in particular, and to Rossini's *William Tell*, but the clearest allusion is to the funeral march second movement of from Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. This eventually receives a direct quotation in the lower strings, at which point in the score Strauss wrote the words 'In Memoriam'.



Symphony No.3 'Eroica'

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: 17 December 1770 Bonn

Died: 26 March 1827 Vienna

1. Allegro con brio
2. Marcia funebre: Adagio assai
3. Scherzo: Allegro vivace
4. Finale: Allegro molto

Although in his Second Symphony Beethoven had begun to move beyond the traditional concept of the Classical period symphony, his Third Symphony in the key of E flat major, op.55, the *Eroica*, remains a staggering achievement, taking the genre into hitherto uncharted regions. Here, in 1803, we have a symphony which in performance lasts nearly a full hour, a symphony whose first movement alone is as long as many symphonies in their entirety. Yet nothing about the *Eroica* is inflated or grandiose. On the contrary, the work is a model of economy and precision.

Beethoven enlarged his previous symphonic orchestration only by the addition of an extra horn. It is therefore the size and scale of the symphonic concept which are expanded, but in purely musical terms. The logical and emotional power of the music carries the listener along, and to achieve his aim Beethoven employs numerous characteristic devices. There are often off-beat accents to reinforce dissonant harmonies and to produce, in the first movement especially, the most tremendous symphonic tension. It is from this great sense of emotional strength that the sheer scale of the composition derives.

Such a composition could only have been created by a truly great figure, and the struggle confronting Beethoven with his increasing deafness had already been made apparent in the moving *Heiligenstadt Testament*, which he had written in 1802. He had realised that only through creating his music could he sustain the will to live. And it is the strength of his will that we encounter in the first two movements of this remarkable symphony. It is hardly surprising that contemporary opinion did not much care for the music when it was first heard, though thanks to the committed advocacy of a few enlightened patrons, such as Prince Lobkowitz, recognition came eventually. Originally the title page bore the name 'Napoleon Bonaparte' as dedication, but Beethoven literally scratched it out when Napoleon had himself proclaimed Emperor, saying, "Is he then, too, nothing more than an ordinary human being?"

The first movement is constructed on a huge scale, with a coda long enough to count as a second development section. Two abrupt fortissimo chords provide the shortest of introductions, and the mobile principal theme is heard immediately. Its treatment is wide ranging indeed, yet the flow of inspiration is taut and continuous. The linking of the development to the recapitulation is a moment worthy of special comment: the violins are still preparing the way for when the horn enters with the first subject theme, with the result that two different keys are heard simultaneously. So daring was Beethoven's ploy that many of his contemporaries were convinced that rather than a dramatic gesture, this was simply a mistake.

The succeeding *Marcia funebre* slow movement is equally demanding in its concentration. The outer sections are intense and funereal in mood, but the central part, the 'maggiore', (major key) is more mobile and brings the virtues of balance and contrast. Throughout this movement the instrumental colours emphasise the music's solemnity. For the vast and slow-moving principal theme is wholly serious, a characteristic which is confirmed by its treatment in development.

The *Scherzo* occupies a different world from that of the eighteenth-century minuet. The tempo is an unequivocal *Allegro vivace*, and the movement opens with quiet staccato rhythmic activity in the strings, who are soon joined by the woodwinds. The full orchestra bursts in to insist upon a lively conclusion, whereas the central *Trio*, while maintaining the same tempo, is especially notable for the imaginative writing for the horns.

The joyful *Finale* is derived from a theme which Beethoven had used in several previous compositions, the best known of them the score for the ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus*. A fragmented outline eventually leads to a full presentation, followed by a free-ranging series of variations in which imaginative textures play a full part. *Fugato*, imitation and counterpoint all feature prominently, until an extensive coda moves the symphony through to a blazing conclusion.

Terry Barfoot



Karl-Heinz Steffens

Conductor

Principal Conductor and Artistic Adviser at the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of Prague State Opera, German conductor Karl-Heinz Steffens is recognised as a conductor of great distinction in both the symphonic and operatic worlds.

Last season he embarked upon his relationship with the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra, having been introduced to the ensemble in the context of a Brahms symphony cycle. Elsewhere in great demand as a guest conductor, recent seasons have seen him work with ensembles such as the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic, Münich Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Lyon, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Toronto Symphony and Zurich Tonhalle orchestras. He is also a frequent visitor to the UK, making multiple appearances with the Philharmonia, with whom he conducted a Brahms cycle, as well as many other orchestras.

In 2019 he took up his appointment at Prague State Opera, his first production there being *Fidelio* in the newly refurbished house; preparations for Szymanowski's *King Roger* were under way when Covid-19 led to its cancellation. During the present season he conducts productions of *Der fliegende Holländer* and Schreker's *Der ferne Klang*, amongst others, as well as continuing the four-year *Musica non Grata* series he initiated, dedicated to "unwelcome music" written by composers who fell victim to the despotism of the 20th-century totalitarian regimes.

Prior to his conducting career, Steffens was a highly respected solo clarinettist who also held several orchestral positions culminating in the successive posts of Principal Clarinet with the Bavarian Radio and the Berlin Philharmonic orchestras. Steffens has recently been awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz in Germany for his services to music.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

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One of the UK's best-loved orchestras, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is a professional ensemble known for championing the role of culture in people's lives. With residencies in Bournemouth, Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth and Poole, it is the largest cultural provider in the South West of England, serving one of the biggest and most diverse regions.

The BSO, under its Chief Conductor Kirill Karabits, is known for pushing artistic boundaries, and its ongoing series of music from former Soviet states, *Voices from the East*, continues to gain praise. Boasting an enviable list of principal conductors, since its founder, Sir Dan Godfrey, including Constantin Silvestri, Sir Charles Groves and Marin Alsop, the BSO has given memorable performances worldwide and is broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM.

The Orchestra's inaugural livestreamed series, which featured Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Benjamin Grosvenor and Alina Ibragimova, was widely praised by audiences and critics alike, with the BSO making history as one of the first British orchestras to return to the stage in 2020. In 2021, Horn player Felix Klieser made a memorable UK concerto debut as the BSO's Artist-in-Residence, and the Orchestra resumed its symphonic touring of the South West.

Committed to new music, the BSO celebrates a triptych of contemporary works written by women in 2021/22, with performances of new works by Carmen Ho, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh and Elizabeth Ogonek. During the pandemic, the BSO also gave premieres by composers Shirley J. Thompson and Magnus Lindberg.

The BSO was recognised with the Royal Philharmonic Society's Impact Award in 2019 for its work in improving opportunities for disabled musicians, and BSO Resound – the world's first professional disabled-led ensemble at the core of a major orchestra – continues to receive international attention for igniting change. Challenging access to high-quality music for all, the BSO leads hundreds of events each year, from award-winning work in health and care settings to partnerships with schools and music education hubs.

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