



# Solihull Symphony Orchestra



Summer Concert  
Shirley Methodist Church, Solihull  
19:30, Saturday 8 July, 2023

Programme £1

# Jon Malaxetxebarria



Born in Gernika in the Basque Country of Spain, Jon Malaxetxebarria conducts regularly in both Spain and the United Kingdom. In Spain he has conducted many ensembles such as the Orquesta Radio Televisión Española, the Basque Country Symphony Orchestra, Bilbao Symphony Orchestra, Navarra Symphony Orchestra, Oviedo Filarmonía, Orquesta Sinfónica de Extremadura, the Orfeón Pamplonés and the Malaga Philharmonic. Recently, Jon has been the assistant conductor of the two main opera houses in Spain: Teatro Real (Madrid) and Liceu (Barcelona). He has been Music Director of the Basque Youth Orchestra since 2016. In the UK he has conducted Manchester

Camerata, Hallam Sinfonia, Liverpool Mozart Orchestra, Crosby Symphony Orchestra, Sheffield Philharmonic Orchestra, North Staffordshire Symphony Orchestra and the Derbyshire City and County Youth Orchestra amongst others. Sadly, this is Jon's last concert after ten years with the orchestra - we wish him well for the future!

# Charlotte Beresford



Charlotte studied violin at Birmingham Conservatoire and has worked with orchestras such as the BBC Philharmonic and the English Symphony Orchestra. She has played in touring West End shows such as *Les Miserables* and *Miss Saigon*, for artists such as Michael Ball, Gloria Estefan and Barry Manilow and in ITV's 2022 Concert for Ukraine. She is a member of the Enigma String Quartet, and teaches violin both privately and in local schools.

Programme notes - Vivienne Brown and David Evans  
Cover - Francisco de Goya y Lucientes - *Witches Sabbath, 1798*, Madrid, Museo Lázaro Galdiano

# Programme

Mendelssohn - *The Hebrides Overture* 10'

Coleridge-Taylor - *Violin Concerto in G Minor* 30'

*INTERVAL*

Berlioz - *Symphonie Fantastique* 55'

## **Conductor**

Jon Malaxetxebarria

## **Solo Violin**

Boglárka György

## **Leader**

Charlotte Beresford



Please make sure that all telephones, watch alarms and other electronic devices that make noises are switched OFF or to silent. Audio and video recordings may only be made with prior permission. Photographs may only be taken during applause

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

## The Hebrides Overture

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The story of how the 20-year old Mendelssohn, taking a Scottish walking holiday after a summer spent performing and conducting in English musical circles as part of his Grand Tour was inspired by the dramatic landscape of the Hebrides to compose this evocative concert overture is well known. In a letter home to his family he set out almost exactly the final form of the opening few bars, complete with orchestration and dynamics. His pencil sketch of the landscape 'Ein Blick auf die Hebriden und Morven' has also survived, and anyone who has taken the boat trip out to the island of Staffa watched the sea crashing into the mysterious depths of Fingal's Cave will understand the deep impression the sea, sky and lonely islands must have made. It is rare that the inspiration for a musical composition can be so precisely placed and dated, but it seems that the very overwhelming nature of the experience meant that Mendelssohn, for all his technical brilliance and artistry, found it difficult to express it in music alone. He finds stratagems to work around formal conventions such as the ban on parallel fifths and octaves, and multiple revisions of the overture exist. It is an early example of the

new genre of 'concert overture' that was not intended as a prelude to a larger work such as an opera. In a letter to his sister Fanny in early 1832 Mendelssohn expresses his frustration - 'but the Hebrides I can't release here, because I still do not regard it as finished... The middle part ... tastes more of counterpoint than of train oil, seagulls and salted cod – it should be the other way round'. The title changed several times too, from *Die Einsame Insel* (the lonely island) back to *Fingalshöhle* for the final published version in 1835 (three years after the first performance in London in May 1832), reflecting Mendelssohn's later awareness of the epic legendary poetry associated with the area.



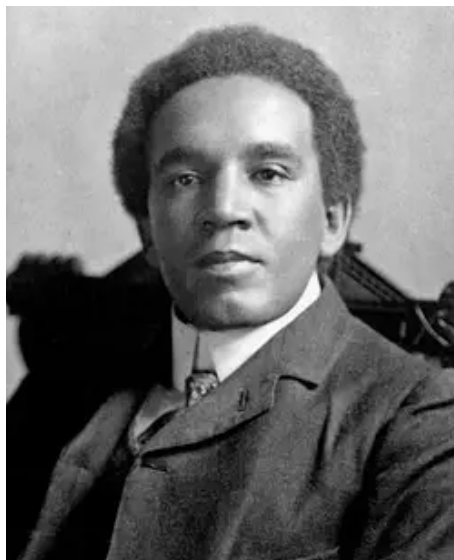
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

## Violin Concerto in G Min Op 80

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When Maud Powell, the finest American violinist of her generation and a strong advocate for music by women and black composers commissioned Coleridge-Taylor to write a concerto for her in 1910, they originally planned a work based on African American spirituals. But he had second thoughts. According to Powell, he told her to burn the first draft, saying that he had written ‘an entirely new and original work, all the melodies being his own, and that it was a hundred times better than the first composition.’ This is the version we know today. Tragically, the composer was unable to attend Powell’s performance, dying just three months later of pneumonia. And the premiere almost didn’t take place – the orchestral parts were lost en route across the Atlantic (although not, as one story has it, on the Titanic) and had to be hastily reconstructed.

Coleridge-Taylor was the son of an English woman and a Creole man from Sierra Leone, his paternal ancestors being African-American slaves freed by the British at the end of the Revolutionary War. He entered the Royal College of Music



in 1890 as a violinist, emerging seven years later as a composer and conductor with the support of Charles Villiers Stanford, who strongly supported and protected him against racist abuse from fellow students.

The Violin Concerto serves as a powerful assertion of his cultural heritage. By simply incorporating a few echoes of Africa into a traditionally European art form, Coleridge-Taylor challenges the prevailing notion that Western classical music is exclusive to a particular racial or cultural group.

The first movement bursts immediately into life involving nearly every instrument in the orchestra. It starts with a solemn march which gives way to a joyful dance. The solo violin’s entry is

more intimate but still playful and rhapsodic, soon jumping unexpectedly from G Minor to D Major.

The energy of the first movement is relieved by the gentle sweetness of the second. A nocturnal song is passed from muted strings to the solo violin in a seemingly endless phrase and for almost two minutes, this theme alone justifies the work's place among the great concerti. Thereafter, the nocturne takes flight with a highly decorative theme in the solo violin. As in the first movement, contrasting characters make for a captivating narrative.

The third movement is a rhapsodic dance evoking the scherzos of Beethoven's and Dvořák's ninth symphonies. Like the first and second movement, it creates drama through contrast. In this case it is the sheer rhythmic complexity of a syncopated dance – and the solo violin's virtuosic embellishment – contrasted with the lyricism of the melody that follows. As in the first movement, the lyrical theme is first presented by the full forces of the orchestra and then more intimately by the solo violin. The climax of the concerto is coda in two parts. First is a transfiguration of the dance with which the third movement began. The quick, complex rhythms of that theme have been stretched out and simplified, transforming a

boisterous dance into a triumphant march. Yet victory is not the endpoint. Instead, triumphant G major gives way to the solemnity of G minor and the soulful march with which the first movement began.

In a way, this concerto is eminently classical. Themes of contrasting key and character are the core rhetoric of 18th and 19th-century symphonism. Yet Coleridge-Taylor's highly original themes, clothed in ubiquitous rubato, chromaticism and harmonies evocative of American jazz and French impressionism, deliberately defy any singular heritage.

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

## **Symphonie Fantastique Op 14**

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Born in provincial south-east France to a comfortable middle-class doctor's family, the young Louis-Hector Berlioz arrived in Paris in the 1820s as a reluctant medical student with a largely self-taught interest in music and composition. He took full advantage of Parisian cultural life and began to study composition privately: having graduated from medical school he refused to practice as a doctor and enrolled instead in the Conservatoire despite his parents' disapproval. During this period he encountered the main passions

in his life which would influence many future compositions – the symphonies of Beethoven (who died in 1827), the works of Goethe and Shakespeare, and in particular the English actress Harriet Smithson who was the leading lady in the touring Shakespeare productions which came to Paris in September 1827. The experience of unrequited love for Harriet – who refused even to meet him – eventually found a musical outlet. Berlioz wrote to his friend Humbert Ferrand in early February 1830 that he was ‘sur le point de commencer mon grande symphonie (Episode de la vie d’un artiste)’ – a grand symphony which he had been pondering for some months, aiming to impress Harriet by his genius. By the middle of April he wrote again to Ferrand declaring he was now ‘entirely satisfied’ with

its completion, and including the first version of the programme describing the story behind the music which was to be distributed to the audience. In essence Berlioz had completed an opera without words, thinly disguising himself as the hero.

Several versions of the programme exist, from the original 1830 version described in his letter, a longer version in the first published score of 1845 (with the second and third movements switched to the positions in which they are now usually performed) and a later 1855 version, by which time a sequel, *Lelio*, was available to complete the drama as a wordless opera with the orchestra hidden behind a curtain. However by this time Berlioz also conceded that ‘If the symphony is performed on its own as a concert



piece this arrangement is no longer necessary: one may even dispense with distributing the programme and keep only the title of the five movements. The author hopes that the symphony provides on

its own sufficient musical interest independently of any dramatic intention.’

The first attempt at a performance in May 1830 was not successful. The recently built Théâtre des Nouveautés in the Rue Vivienne was keen to stage this dramatic new work as a contrast to their normal comic opera: Berlioz wanted a performance on a grand scale and invited an additional 80 musicians to join the already large in-house 50-strong orchestra at the theatre. Inevitably there was chaos trying to accommodate such a large ensemble, and although a couple of movements were rehearsed, the idea of an immediate performance was abandoned. With more preparation the premiere finally took place in December 1830, but it wasn't until 1832 than Harriet finally heard a performance of the symphony she had unwittingly inspired, and, worn down by the extravagance of this and other dramatic gestures from Berlioz (he threatened to take poison himself), and perhaps by the financial implications of the fading of her own career, agreed to marry him. Their marriage was initially happy enough, leading to one son, but Berlioz later took a mistress although he continued to support Harriet until her death in 1854.

The symphony is notable not only for the size of the orchestra and imaginative orchestration (using many novel wind instruments which are not always easily available today), but for the use of the *idée fixe* – a melody representing ‘the beloved’ which appears in every movement as the hero meets or thinks of her (an innovation taken up decades later by composers such as Wagner and prominent in the film music of John Williams). There is clear homage to Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* in the use of five movements including the central countryside scene. It remains Berlioz's most popular composition, even if modern audiences find it difficult to appreciate how revolutionary it was at the time.

### **Programme of the symphony – 1855 version**

A young musician of morbid sensitivity and ardent imagination poisons himself with opium in a moment of despair caused by frustrated love. The dose of narcotic, while too weak to cause his death, plunges him into a heavy sleep accompanied by the strangest of visions, in which his experiences, feelings and memories are translated in his feverish brain into musical thoughts and images. His beloved becomes for him a melody



and an *idée fixe* which he meets and hears everywhere.

### **Part one: Daydreams, passions**

He remembers first the uneasiness of spirit, the indefinable passion, the melancholy, the aimless joys he felt even before seeing his beloved; then the explosive love she suddenly inspired in him, his delirious anguish, his fits of jealous fury, his returns of tenderness, his religious consolations.

### **Part two: A ball**

He meets again his beloved in a ball during a glittering fête.

### **Part three: Scene in the countryside**

One summer evening in the countryside he hears two shepherds dialoguing with their 'Ranz des vaches'; this pastoral duet, the setting, the gentle rustling of the trees in the light wind, some causes for hope that he has recently conceived, all conspire to restore to his heart an unaccustomed feeling of calm and to give to his thoughts a happier colouring; but she reappears, he feels a pang of anguish, and painful thoughts disturb him: what if she betrayed him... One of the shepherds resumes his simple melody, the other one no longer answers. The sun sets... distant sound of thunder... solitude... silence...

### **Part four: March to the scaffold**

He dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned to death and led to execution. The procession advances to the sound of a march that is sometimes sombre and wild, and sometimes brilliant and solemn, in which a dull sound of heavy footsteps follows without transition the loudest outbursts. At the end, the *idée fixe* reappears for a moment like a final thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.

### **Part five: Dream of a witches' sabbath**

He sees himself at a witches' sabbath, in the midst of a hideous gathering of shades, sorcerers and monsters of every kind who have come together for his funeral. Strange sounds, groans, outbursts of laughter; distant shouts which seem to be answered by more shouts. The beloved melody appears once more, but has now lost its noble and shy character; it is now no more than a vulgar dance-tune, trivial and grotesque: it is she who is coming to the sabbath... Roars of delight at her arrival... She joins the diabolical orgy... The funeral knell tolls, in a burlesque parody of the *Dies Irae*. The dance of the witches. Finally, the dance of the witches combined with the *Dies Irae*.

# Boglárka Gyorgy

A spark of passion for music ignited by Bizet's *Carmen* led Boglárka György to pursue a career as an artist. Originally from Hungary, she is a graduate of the Liszt Academy of Music and music making has subsequently taken her to many countries. She is currently based in Birmingham although she has also lived in Israel. Her name means 'buttercup' in Hungarian!

In 2017 she gave her orchestral debut playing Bartok's *Violin Concerto No 2* with the Savaria Symphony Orchestra under conductor Gergely Madaras. She also had the privilege of working with conductors such as Zubin Mehta, Elim Chan, Santtu-Matias Rouvali and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla. She performs regularly with the Philharmonia, CBSO, BBC Philharmonic, Manchester Camerata and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

As a recitalist, Boglárka has performed extensively throughout Europe and Asia, and at festivals such as Keshet Eilon, ISA Semmering and the Lichfield Festival. She often performs with pianist Amy Butler.

Boglárka plays a Cuypers 1797 violin, kindly on loan to her from the Harrison-Frank Family Foundation.



## Our Mailing List

If you've enjoyed this concert, why not sign up to our Newsletter to make sure you don't miss out on future events? You'll receive advance notice of the full season's programme, and reminders about all our concerts a few weeks in advance.

[solihullsymphony.org.uk/mailling-list](https://solihullsymphony.org.uk/mailling-list)



# Solihull Symphony Orchestra

Patron: The Mayor of Solihull



## First Violins

Charlotte Beresford

*leader*

Marina Battey

Peter Halldron

Jo Oswald

Sarah Sasse

## Second Violins

David Roper

John Bayley

Vivienne Brown

Rachel Johnson

John Maxwell

## Violas

Kelvin Farge

Joanna Clarke

Mark Emms

Julia Lawley

Isabella Smith

## Harps

Natasha Gale

Nia Evans

## Cellos

Helen Atherton

Sheila Armstrong

Jeremy Dale

Alison Hart

David Kanyandekwe

Anne Kemp

Louise Robertson

Nicola Walters

## Double Basses

David Evans

Jamie Wall

## Flutes

Su Newton-Ede

Chris Kelland

## Oboes

Sarah Vaughan

Owen Gregory

+ *cor anglais*

## Clarinets

Victoria Rex

Jane Emms

## Bassoons

Harry Jones

Simon Gates

Sarah Smith

Philip Davies

## Trumpets

Lynne Hodgson

Paul Dyson

## Cornets

David Hirst

Tammy Evans

## Horns

Stephen Mayes

Jane Geddes

Tim Overton

Jonathan Evans

## Trombones

Stephen Rhodes

Tony Miller

Bernard Moses

## Tuba

Paul Arthur

Gareth Lewis

## Timpani

David Pett

## Percussion

Sabrina Gledhill

Ken McDougall

Stephen Plummer

Sarah Vivian



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## About the Orchestra

Solihull Symphony Orchestra is an inclusive and friendly group that enjoys taking on the challenge of a varied repertoire with professional leadership and inspiring soloists.

We are always open to new members, especially violin, viola and bass players. Commitment to attend rehearsals regularly, and a willingness to learn are more important to us than exam qualifications. We like to perform in different venues around the Borough, and will always consider invitations to play at special events.

Rehearsals are held every Tuesday evening from 19:30 until 21:45 during school term time, with at least three concert performances each year.



## Our Next Concert

Saturday 25 November 2023, 15:30

Shirley Methodist Church

**Arakelyan** – Penelope Suite  
*(special commission)*

**Reinecke** – Flute Concerto

**Frank** – Symphony in D minor

Conductor  
*Sabrina Ko*

Flute  
*Su Newton-Ede*

## Group Bookings

For groups of ten or more people from churches, music societies, reading circles, clubs, U3A or other bodies booked and paid for in advance we can offer reductions of up to 20% on normal ticket prices - for further details, contact [concerts@solihullsymphony.org.uk](mailto:concerts@solihullsymphony.org.uk)