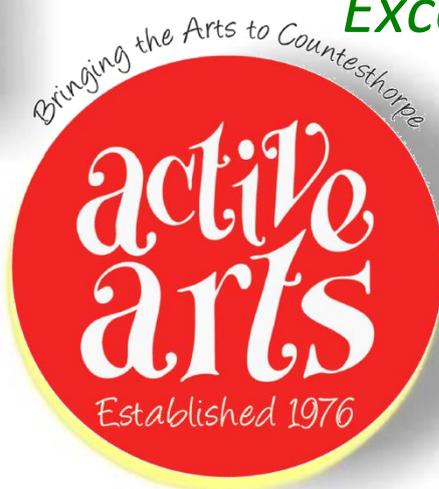


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Musical Director:
Mark Heron

Soprano : Caroline Taylor

St Andrew's Church
Countesthorpe
Saturday 10th February 2018

Britten: Les Illuminations

Mahler: Symphony no 4 (chamber version)

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Mark Heron is a Scottish conductor noted for dynamic and well-rehearsed performances of an unusually wide repertoire.

He has appeared with orchestras including the BBC Philharmonic, BBC Scottish, Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, Manchester Camerata, Psappha, Meininger Hofkapelle, Orquesta Sinfónica de Murcia and Pori Sinfonietta. He is the music director of the Nottingham Philharmonic, and as a member of the conducting staff at the RNCM works regularly with all the College's orchestras and ensembles.

Mark has a keen interest in contemporary music. He has collaborated with leading composers such as Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Heiner Goebbels, Magnus Lindberg, Sir James MacMillan, Colin Matthews, Mark Anthony Turnage, Giya Kancheli, Unsuk Chin, Kalevi Aho, Detlev Glanert, Christopher Rouse, Bernard Rands and Howard Skempton. He has recorded more than 20 CDs with the RNCM Wind Orchestra of contemporary repertoire on labels such as Chandos, Naxos, NMC, ASC and Polyphonic.

Alongside his conducting engagements, Mark has a burgeoning international reputation as a conducting teacher on the RNCM's renowned conducting programmes, at the University of Manchester, as a visiting professor to the Royal Air Force, and as a guest at conducting courses and masterclasses all over the world



Caroline Taylor is a postgraduate soprano studying at the Royal Northern College of Music under Louise Winter. She holds an MA (Hons) in French, Italian and Spanish from the University of St Andrew's, where she graduated as the recipient of the Cedric Thorpe Davie memorial prize.

On the concert platform, Caroline has performed as a soloist in Vivaldi's *Gloria* (Anstruther Philharmonic Society), Bach *Mass in B Minor* (Kellie Consort) and *St John Passion* (RNCM), Handel *Jephtha* (St Andrew's Chorus) and Vaughan Williams *Sinfonia Antarctica* (Dundee Symphony Orchestra).

A member of the RNCM songsters, Caroline was a finalist in the 2017 Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award for Singing of Strauss and won last year's Brodsky Cross-School Prize with her chamber ensemble, the Lucretia Trio. She has performed opera scenes as Blanche de la Force in Poulenc *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Suzel in Mascagni *L'Amico Fritz* and Tina in Dove *Flight*. Last December she took the title role in Massenet *Cendrillon* with RNCM Opera.

Upcoming engagements include soprano soloist in Handel *Messiah* with Chesterfield Philharmonic and Montéclair *La Morte de Didon* with the Baroque Soloists in the RNCM's Chamber Music Festival. Caroline acknowledges the generous support of the Richard Newitt fund and Help Musicians UK with whom she is a Postgraduate Award holder.

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Les Illuminations: Op 18 (arr Klaus Simon)

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Les Illuminations is a song cycle set to the collection of poetry of the same name by French poet Arthur Rimbaud. Rimbaud, born in 1854, ran away to Paris during the 1870 Franco-Prussian war and, finally free of scholastic rigours and an overbearing mother, threw himself into the Bohemian society of the *enfant terrible*. In 1871 he began a tumultuous relationship with eminent symbolist poet Paul Verlaine.

It is not known exactly when Rimbaud began writing what would become *Les Illuminations*. There is evidence that they were written in many locations, but most scholars agree that the majority of the work was composed during his time with Verlaine.

After abandoning his wife and son, Verlaine travelled with Rimbaud to London where they lived the life of struggling artists in poverty, fuelled by absinth and hashish.

Inspired by the emotional intensity of the poetry, Benjamin Britten was inspired to write a musical response to Rimbaud's work, choosing to characterise the cycle using one sentence from the work: '*J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage*' (I alone have the key

to this savage parade). The declaration appears three times during the song cycle (Fanfare, Interlude and Parade) and marks the sense of protest often attributed to analysis of Rimbaud's work. Each recitation of this sentence echoes a chant like feel often used in liturgical verse.

Throughout the compositional process, Britten wrote extensively to Sophie Wyss to whom the work is dedicated. On *Villes* regarding the chaos of big cities, Britten wrote: 'the poem, I believe, was written in London and certainly is a very good impression of the chaotic modern city life... I want it sung in a metallic and relentless fashion with the exclamation: "Ce sont des villes" somewhat sarcastically sung. The end is simply a prayer for peace.'

Phrase and *Antique* combine to make one movement; *Phrase*, being just one full sentence, gives the singer the challenge of singing both extremely high and extremely quietly. *Antique*, almost dance like in character is a dialogue between the singer and solo violin.

Royate: in Britten's own words: '... pompous and satirical. The idea is that, given the right circumstances, it is in the power of anyone, however humble, to imagine himself King or God, whichever you prefer.'

Seascape: the waves and swells of the ocean are illustrated by agitated string playing and a scalic vocal line creating a storm beating against the shoreline.

Interlude: against a backdrop of contrapuntal strings spiralling downwards. *J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage*' is recited against solo lines from the violin, viola and cello.

The prose for *Being Beauteous* appears in English in Rimbaud's collection. During his travels he often jotted down words he liked, to use in his poetry, so we can assume this poem was composed whilst living with Verlaine in London. Britten dedicated this movement to Peter Pears who he met two years earlier and who would be Britten's lifelong partner. Written in an operatic style, the strings pulsating movement creates a flowing, dreamlike character, interrupted by agitated images of demonic spectres against a 'beautiful being'.

Parade: is another evocation of the city, as Britten writes: 'Parade you will enjoy, because it is a picture of the underworld. It should be made to sound creepy, evil, dirty (apologies!) and really desperate. I think it is the most terrific poem and I feel the music has got something of the poem!!' This movement is the final recitation of '*J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage*'.

Depart: echoes the pulsating chords of *Being Beauteous* but in a much more mournful tone. The vocal line talks of new afflictions and new noise '*Départ dans l'affections et le bruit neufs!*' which unexpectedly completes the cycle; *Assez vu, Assez eu*: you have seen and had enough.

Matt Barks

Mahler's Symphony No. 4 is often singled out as the odd one out of Mahler's symphonic repertoire. A performance of this symphony usually takes just under an hour in direct contrast to the mammoth 3rd symphony. It also calls for much more modest orchestral forces than other works, with no trombones or tuba, and trumpets and timpani used much more sparingly than you would expect.

In essence, a chamber work for large ensemble, it comes as no surprise that, in 1921, Erwin Stein thought it possible to arrange a convincing performance of this work for only twelve players and a soprano voice. Stein, originally arranged the work for Arnold Schönberg's *Society for Private Musical Performances* of which Stein was a founding organiser. The Society was established after World War I to give Viennese subscribers the chance to hear good performances of modern orchestral works in a chamber setting, regardless of the size of the original intended orchestra. Although that arrangement is still available, the conductor Klaus Simon "re-arranged the arrangement" in 2007 to solve some of the orchestration problems inherent in the original. His version is for fourteen players, plus soprano soloist. Simon envisaged the five individual string parts to be played by a small string section, as in tonight's performance. Such has been the success of this version, Simon made similar arrangements of symphonies 1, 5, 9 and many of Mahler's songs. Generally regarded as the most intimate of Mahler's symphonic output, however, the 4th perhaps remains the most suitable for this chamber treatment.

Mahler's Symphony No. 4, as in so much of Mahler's work, draws inspiration from Germanic folk law, the fourth movement inspired by, and set to the text of, *Das Himmlische Leben* from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. A deceptively simple opening phrase to the first movement, complete with sleigh bells, evokes scenes of simplicity and nursery rhymes and has all the airs and graces of much earlier classical works. Images of childhood, innocence and threats to that innocence are present throughout the symphony. Later we hear the woodwinds (originally four flutes) imitating the simple tunes of playground chants. The simplicity in the melody makes better sense when we look at the text of the 4th movement. In the original score, Mahler tells the soprano soloists to sing with childlike expression and completely without parody; the childlike joy in innocent things is genuine.

All live in greatest peace.
We lead angelic lives,
yet have a merry time of it besides.
We dance and we spring,
We skip and we sing.
Saint Peter in heaven looks on.

Lebt alles in sanftester Ruh'.
Wir führen ein englisches Leben,
Sind dennoch ganz lustig daneben;
Wir tanzen und springen,
Wir hüpfen und singen,
Sankt Peter im Himmel sieht zu.

Shortly after composing this symphony Mahler would write his *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children). As a man who knew infant mortality first hand it adds an acute darkness to this otherwise utopian childhood innocence.

The second movement hints at approaching darkness and threat to innocence; the solo violin is asked to tune a tone higher than usual giving it a more piercing, glassy texture. This sound represents Freund Hein playing the fiddle, another figure of Germanic folklore, the personification of death. Indeed, in the original score Mahler titles this movement '*Freund Hein Spielt Auf*' (Death Plays On). The strings play the characteristically sweet melodies in this symphony, of childhood, however, the horns' sombre interjections provide an uncountable foreboding of approaching death. One writer describes this movement as 'shadows cast by a bursary candle'. Shadows are ever present throughout the symphony, the trumpet fanfare towards the end of the first movement almost identical to the fanfare to the funeral march in Mahler's symphony No. 5.

The first two chords at beginning of the third movement intentionally echo the quartet in Beethoven's only opera *Fidelio*. Mahler conducted this opera more than any other during his conducting career and this moment particularly resonates with the themes of this symphony. In the quartet, Marzeline, the daughter of a prison guard is in love with his new assistant Fidelio (Leonore in disguise and the wife to Florestan who is imprisoned) and sings of the wonders of the world much like the soprano solo in the fourth movement.

The fourth movement is perhaps one of the simplest of any in the romantic repertoire. So much emphasis is put on composers to round up, in the final movement, completely everything they wanted to express in a symphony, Mahler's choice to include this song as the culmination of his creative expression says volumes on the importance of this song to him. Having not included it in his third symphony, Mahler creates an entire symphony around this seemingly simple and innocent song that is expressed in an elysian character but with verses that speak of darker images of violence and slaughter.

Matt Barks

The Helix Ensemble is an experienced group of musicians based in the East Midlands who enjoy performing chamber or small orchestral music. The group aims to introduce a variety of contemporary works, to be performed alongside more familiar pieces, and has given the first performances of more than 20 new compositions since its foundation in 1992.

Helix always enjoys returning to Countesthlope and thank Active Arts for their ongoing support.

Find out more about the Helix Ensemble, and future concerts, on our website www.helixensemble.co.uk and join our mailing list by leaving your details with any of the members of the Helix Ensemble.

TONIGHT'S PERFORMERS

Violin	Jill Barker Jane Benson Andrew Chadwick Sarah Cresswell Karen Eveson George Fletcher Nicholas Heath George Sutcliffe Rachel Whalley	Flute	Jo Conquest
		Oboe	Anne Allcock
		Clarinet	Andy Piper
		Bassoon	Sarah Brookman
		Horn	Roger Swann
Viola	Jenni Goldsworthy Merri Knight Rein Ove Sikveland	Piano	Tim Capes
		Harmonium	Matt Byrne
'Cello	Margaret Chadwick Steven Halls Esther Turner	Percussion	Rosie Adsley Gareth Hand
Bass	Matt Barks Naomi Turner		

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Nottingham, St. Barnabas Cathedral, Saturday 10th March 2018

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Burton Town Hall, Sunday 22nd April 2018

The Big Sunrise

Works to include Ola Gjeilo's *The Sunrise Mass*

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St. Mary's and All Saints, Bingham, 16th June 2018

Musical Director, Dan Watson

Works are expected to include Gaze Cooper's *Little Suite* and Mozart's piano concerto No.20 in D Minor, K466.

