

Saturday 4 November 2017  
West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

# Rachmaninov

*The Isle of the Dead*

# Britten

*Violin Concerto*

# Dvořák

*Symphony No. 7*

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**Cambridge Philharmonic presents**

**Rachmaninov: *The Isle of the Dead***

**Britten: *Violin Concerto***

Interval

**Dvořák: *Symphony No 7***

**Cambridge Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Conductor: Timothy Redmond**

**Leader: Steve Bingham**

**Violin soloist: Matthew Trusler**

# *The Isle of the Dead*

Sergei Rachmaninov  
(1873-1943)

The early years of the twentieth century had proved difficult for Rachmaninov. The spectacular failure of his second symphony in 1897 had thrown him into a period of depression, and caused him to doubt whether he had a future as a composer. It took four months of treatment from the hypnotist and amateur musician Nikolaus Dahl in 1900 before he felt able to write again. Then, soon after, he achieved considerable success with his second piano concerto (1901). By 1905, however, Russia was in political turmoil and Rachmaninov began to wonder whether his family would benefit from a more stable environment. The following year they left their homeland and settled in Dresden, where Rachmaninov was able to begin composing again. It was there that he wrote his *Isle of the Dead* in 1909.

This symphonic poem is alone among Rachmaninov's mature works in making an explicit reference to an extramusical source. The piece was based on a painting of the same name from the 1880s by the Swiss artist, Arnold Böcklin. Rachmaninov saw a black and white print of the work during a visit to Paris in 1907 and was immediately inspired by the mysterious and haunting image. He later travelled to Leipzig in order to view one of Böcklin's original versions of the painting, but was disappointed claiming: 'If I had seen first the original, I, probably, would have not written my *Isle of the Dead*. I like it in black and white'.

The painting itself was based on the mythological figure of Charon, the boatman who was said to ferry the souls of the departed across the River Styx to the underworld, and depicts a solitary, coffin-carrying vessel on its way to an imposing island. Rachmaninov captures the lapping water and the rhythmic beating of the oars in the opening bars of the piece with a rocking 5/8 metre. Soon, he introduces a short rising motif in the cellos, which becomes a pervasive presence in the work. Also important as a unifying feature is the quotation of the *Dies Irae* plainchant (a melody Rachmaninov had used in the slow movement of his second symphony, also written during his Dresden years). While the melody is never heard in its complete form, fragments of it recur, weaving their way through the texture.

The elements all combine to drive the music to a powerful climax, before Rachmaninov changes the mood dramatically by introducing a beautiful, soaring melody. This, he later claimed, was a 'supplement' to Böcklin's painting, and represented a vision of life in the midst of death, as the dying souls reflected upon their lives during their final voyage across the Styx. Eventually, however, the soaring theme dies away, and the sounds of oars and lapping water returns, as the departed soul is resigned to its fate.

**Charlotte Bentley**

# Violin Concerto Op 15

Benjamin Britten

(1913-1976)

*'My entire attention is being occupied by my violin concerto. So far it is without question my best piece. It is rather serious, I'm afraid...'* - Britten, writing to his publisher, Ralph Hawkes, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 16 June 1939.

*Moderato con moto – Agitato – Tempo primo*

*Vivace – Animando – Largamente – Cadenza*

*Passacaglia: Andante lento (un poco meno mosso)*

## Background

Britten's Violin Concerto is a deeply personal work, a lament for the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, reinforced by increasing worries about the threat of war in Europe. Britten's feelings had also been influenced by his friendship with the virtuoso Spanish violinist Antonio Brosa, whom he had met in his student days. Britten had already written two works for Brosa, including the *Suite for violin and piano, Op 6*, and it is perhaps significant that he and Brosa had performed the *Suite* at a music festival in Barcelona in April 1936, only a few months before the outbreak of hostilities in Spain.

Britten started work on the concerto in November 1938, but it was still only in sketch form when he and Peter Pears left England for the USA in April 1939. In emigrating they were following in the footsteps of others, like Christopher Isherwood and WH Auden, who had felt stifled by what they saw as the small-minded atmosphere of pre-war England and by the seeming inevitability of war. As things turned out, Britten and Pears would return home to England in 1942, but at that stage it seemed likely that they, too, would stay permanently in the US.

Britten and Pears had travelled first to Canada so as to circumvent US immigration laws, and Britten continued working on the concerto in Canada in the following months, finishing most of it in the resort of Saint Jovite in Quebec. However Britten's letters suggest that the concerto was actually completed in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he and Pears had travelled in June 1939 to stay with the organist Dr C Harold Einecke and his wife, friends of Pears from an earlier visit. The time at Grand Rapids was also significant for Britten and Pears for other reasons, as it was here that they made the commitment to each other in what would become a life-long partnership.

## First performances

The première of the concerto was held on 28 March 1940 at Carnegie Hall, New York, with Brosa as soloist and John Barbirolli conducting. The reviews were mixed – 'pretty violent, either pro or con', according to Britten – and even the positive comments seemed to fall short of genuine enthusiasm, with the American composer Elliott Carter writing somewhat equivocally that 'nobody

could fail to be impressed by the remarkable gifts of the composer'. The concerto was also performed in London in 1941, but the dislike of what was seen as Britten's abandonment of country at its time of need seems to have overridden any possibility of a positive reaction. Thereafter the concerto remained largely neglected for the best part of thirty years, something that seems quite extraordinary now that it has become better known.

### **Structure of the concerto**

The concerto follows the classical three-movement structure, but unlike the traditional fast-slow-fast form, there is a slow opening movement, followed by a *scherzo* and a final *passacaglia*. The *passacaglia* originated in 17th century Spain as a dance, but later became a series of variations often used, as in this case, as a way of concluding and unifying the sense of the music. In the concerto there is however no final resolution, reflecting perhaps the fact that no one could see when, or how, the war would end.

### **The three movements**

The first movement of the concerto opens with a repeated five-note, rhythmic figure played on the timpani, a motif that recurs throughout the movement and later in the concerto. The orchestra enters, with the motif being taken up by the bassoons, after which the soloist plays the lyrical first theme. This is later taken forward by woodwind and brass, with the strings playing the motif underneath. The violin then re-enters with a repeated note figure as an introduction to the urgent second theme. This is further developed until, after a long slide down the scale, the orchestra takes over, playing a militaristic version of the theme. There is then a long, impassioned section with the violin again taking up the motif, until finally the movement comes to a sad, thoughtful close.

The *scherzo* is all fierce energy, a whirlwind of notes with an unmistakably Spanish flavour, driven forward by the soloist. Eventually the music slows for a trio-like section, with the violin introducing a more reflective theme while the orchestra persists with interjections of the *scherzo* material underneath, the music becoming steadily more militaristic and threatening. The violin continues with an increasing sense of anguish, until a final orchestral tutti leads the soloist into a long cadenza.

The *passacaglia* of the last movement follows without a break. There are echoes of Mahler, a composer Britten was especially fond of, as the theme is played by the orchestra. The violin enters, and the variations of the *passacaglia* follow, the music gradually becoming more intense. For the final variation the pace slows, with the score being marked *Lento e solenne* and, as the movement draws to a close, the music seems gradually to melt away, ending with the violin playing a quiet, unresolved trill between major and minor thirds.

**Chris Fisher**

**Interval**

# *Symphony No 7 in D major Op 70* Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

*Allegro maestoso*

*Poco Adagio*

*Scherzo: Vivace*

*Finale: Allegro*

Antonin Leopold Dvořák was the second Czech composer, alongside Bedrich Smetana, to obtain worldwide recognition. He was born in Nelahozeves, in the Czech Republic, in 1841 and was educated at the Pipe Organ School in Prague. Dvořák played many instruments including violin, organ and piano and during his schooling he also learned basic composition. In 1873 he married Anna, with whom he had five children. In 1904 Dvořák became ill with a stroke, which ultimately led to his death in the same year in the city of Prague.

## **Background**

Dvořák was noted for turning folk material into the language of 19th century romantic music and this culminated in his most well known work, Symphony No 9 '*From the New World*'. His seventh symphony is written in the key of D major and conveys a rather gloomy atmosphere, in direct contrast to his sixth and eighth symphonies. The seventh symphony is characterised by its dramatic expression and sombre mood of grave uncertainty and obstinate defiance. Perhaps what sets this symphony apart from most of Dvořák's works is that it is not inspired by any of the Slavic melodies with which his compositional style is usually associated. The idea of abandoning Slav folklore themes during the composition of the seventh symphony resulted from a decision by Dvořák to create a major work on the scale of Beethoven or Brahms which would triumph on the international music scene.

The symphony is quite an intimate work in which the composer examines the meanderings of his soul and the answers to elemental issues of human existence. Whilst popular in its own right, it is unable to compete in popularity with his ninth '*From the New World*'. However, it is seen as a supreme example of symphonic writing and is even believed by some experts to rank above the symphonies of Brahms, therefore achieving Dvořák's objective.

The symphony was completed on 17 March 1885 and, on 22 April of that year, during Dvořák's third visit to England, it was premiered at London's St James's Hall. The symphony is believed to have been an unmitigated success and to be seen as one of Dvořák's masterpieces, flawless in both form and content.

## Form and content

The piece initially develops from an atmosphere of agonising doubt, but ultimately culminates in an expression of firm resolution. Dvořák's endeavour to create both a musical and personal testimony is suggested by his choice of key: Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms all used the key of D in their major works.

The character of the first movement, which is in sonata form, is determined above all by the disposition of its main theme. The sombre introduction, with its sustained note of D, is confined within the range of a fourth interval. It is 'the calm before the storm'. In the second part of this theme everything rises up suddenly, and surprisingly ends in a diminished seventh chord. The second subject is more conciliatory and, as this evolves, a certain duskiness begins to take hold. The development in the first movement is one of the most dramatic of Dvořák's entire oeuvre. The movement ends with one of the composer's most imaginative resolutions. With the drama of the coda the intensity of the music increases even further. Once it has reached a climax the music ebbs away, taking us back to the beginning of the movement – still leaving the dilemma unresolved and not fully addressed.

In the second movement, *Poco adagio*, there is a sense of calm and the music at this point is seen as a prayer for the peace of the soul. After the première of the symphony, Dvorak shortened the movement and is said to have stated that 'there is now not a single superfluous note in the work'.

The third movement, *Scherzo*, in keeping with the overall mood of the symphony, contains a number of sombre accents. The theme is dance-like in character and highly rhythmical, which is set against a contrasting counter-melody. It displays a cheerful spirit, which is only countered by the key in which it is written, D minor.

The fourth movement, *Finale: Allegro*, returns to sonata form. The opening, ascending octave leap, which appears in the main theme, evokes a heroic surge of will. The movement is considered to be an example of masterful thematic treatment and unflinching invention. It culminates in an impressively structured coda which, with its resolute, liberated expression, brings the work to a satisfactory close.

**Nicholas Sayer**



## Matthew Trusler (violin)

Photo Sheila Rock



On graduating from Philadelphia's Curtis Institute in 1998, the Times declared of Matthew Trusler: 'We might just have an authentic, though British, virtuoso.'

'Matthew Trusler has been attracting the kind of praise normally reserved for a young Oistrakh.'  
The Independent

Since then Trusler has developed a reputation as one of Britain's leading violinists, performing with many of the world's great orchestras, and receiving huge critical acclaim for his diverse recordings. He has also founded the record label Orchid Classics on which some of the

most important artists of today are recording, and the Lenny Trusler Children's Foundation, which raises money for desperately ill babies. Trusler was instrumental in forming the Malmo International String Festival, and was in 2012 appointed a director of Delange Artists Management, based in Amsterdam.

Performing with a bow once owned by Heifetz, given to him by Herbert Axelrod (who himself received it from Heifetz), Trusler has received particular acclaim for his performances of works from the 20th century, including concertos by Walton, Berg, Britten and Lindberg. His recording of concertos by Korngold and Rozsa with the Dusseldorf Symphony received 5 stars in BBC Music Magazine, and the headline 'Hotter than Heifetz?'.

Trusler has been invited to perform as a recitalist and concerto soloist throughout Europe, Australia, the USA, Japan and South Africa. In the UK he has performed with major orchestras including the BBC Symphony, BBC Scottish and BBC Welsh orchestras, the Philharmonia, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, City of Birmingham, Halle and Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Further afield, he has appeared with the Minnesota Orchestra, NDR Hannover, Helsinki Philharmonic, Deutsche Symphony Berlin, Malaysian Philharmonic, Dusseldorf Tonhalle, Flanders Symphony Orchestra and Johannesburg Philharmonic. Some of his personal highlights include his debut at the BBC Proms where he performed the Mathias Violin Concerto with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, tours with the Australian orchestras (including appearances in Perth, Queensland and Tasmania), a tour of Germany with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields and Sir Neville Marriner, and a tour of Mexico with Martyn Brabbins and the Philharmonia.

Alongside his concerto work Matthew Trusler is an accomplished recitalist and an avid chamber musician who has performed recitals in leading venues around the world including Wigmore Hall, London, Auditorium du Louvre, Paris and Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels. Trusler has performed frequently with Wayne Marshall,

and their disc – *Blues* – presents a collection of short pieces by composers directly influenced by jazz. The CD was released to huge critical acclaim, including CD of the week in the Telegraph, and on Classic FM, and Recital CD of the month in Strad Magazine.

Trusler regularly performs in duo partnership with pianist Ashley Wass and also collaborates with other eminent musicians including Piotr Anderszewski, Martin Roscoe, Peter Donohoe, Imogen Cooper, Leonidas Kavakos, Lynn Harrell, and Joseph Silverstein. Trusler's latest chamber collaboration is Trio Apaches with pianist, Ashley Wass and cellist, Thomas Carroll. The Trio has been warmly welcomed onto the international chamber music scene and the ensemble released their first disc on the Orchid Classics label.

Trusler founded Orchid Classics in 2005, and the label now has major distribution internationally. In addition, the company launched a foundation to help especially talented young British musicians to make and promote recordings. Past and future artists to appear on Orchid in both spoken word and music recordings include Gabriela Montero and Boris Giltburg, Danny DeVito, Clive Owen, Ralph Fiennes, James Gilchrist, the Brodsky Quartet and Ex Cathedra.

In addition to the Rosza/Korngold, *Blues* and *Pity of War* discs Trusler's recording activities saw the release of a newly orchestrated version of Heifetz's *Porgy and Bess* arrangement, with the BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Carl Davis, as well as a disc for children entitled *Fairy Tales* on the Orchid Classics label created to raise money for the Lenny Trusler Children's Foundation. His recordings of the Britten *Violin Concerto* with the Flanders Symphony Orchestra, and Prokofiev *Violin Concertos I & II* with BBC National Orchestra of Wales have also been released on Orchid Classics. Another release in 2016 was *Wonderland*, an ambitious project involving 13 composers, 13 animated filmmakers, an illustrator and a best-selling author – produced together with Ashley Wass to celebrate the 150th anniversary of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Trusler also has a passion for film, and has acted as a consultant on the adaptation of Norman Lebrecht's novel *The Song of Names* for film, the screenplay being written by Jeffrey Caine (Oscar Nominee for *The Constant Gardener*). Recently Trusler recorded the violin solos for the soundtrack of a new French film by director Frédéric Mermoud, *Complices*

[www.matthewtrusler.com](http://www.matthewtrusler.com)

## Timothy Redmond (Conductor)



Timothy Redmond conducts and presents concerts throughout Europe. He is Principal Conductor of the Cambridge Philharmonic, Professor of Conducting at the Guildhall School and a regular guest conductor with the London Symphony and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras. He has given concerts in the UK with the Philharmonia, Royal Northern Sinfonia and London Philharmonic Orchestra, with the BBC Concert, Philharmonic and Symphony Orchestras, with the City of Birmingham Symphony, Hallé, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Ulster Orchestras, and has a long-standing association with the Manchester Camerata. He has conducted

widely throughout Europe and the US with orchestras including the St Louis Symphony, Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini, Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana and the Rotterdam Philharmonic.

Timothy Redmond is well-known as a conductor of contemporary music and has a particular association with the music of Thomas Adès. Since working closely with the composer for the premiere of *The Tempest* at Covent Garden, he has conducted critically-acclaimed productions of *Powder Her Face* for English National Opera, the Royal Opera House and St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre. He recently gave the Hungarian premiere of *Totentanz*, the Irish premiere of *Living Toys* and assisted the composer for the New York premiere of *The Tempest* at the Metropolitan Opera. In the opera house he has conducted productions for Opera Theatre of St Louis, English National Opera, Opera North, English Touring Opera and Almeida Opera, for the Aldeburgh, Bregenz, Buxton, Los Angeles, Tenerife and Wexford festivals and for New York's American Lyric Theatre. As a member of music staff, he has also conducted for De Vlaamse Opera, Strasbourg, Garsington and Glyndebourne.

Recent highlights have included a new disc with Alison Balsom and Guy Barker for Warner Classics, premieres of works by Edward Rushton and Peter Maxwell Davies with the LSO, his debut in China with the RPO and the 2014 LSO BMW Open Air Classics concert, at which he conducted for 10,000 people in Trafalgar Square.

This season he conducts *Powder Her Face* on tour in Ireland, Menotti's *The Consul* at the Guildhall School and *My Great Orchestral Adventure* for the Royal Albert Hall. He also appears with the LSO, Britten Sinfonia, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Manchester Camerata and with orchestras in Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

Timothy Redmond studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester University and the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena.

## Steve Bingham (Leader)



Steve Bingham studied violin with Emmanuel Hurwitz, Sidney Griller and the Amadeus Quartet at the Royal Academy of Music where he won prizes for orchestral leading and string quartet playing. In 1985 he formed the Bingham String Quartet, an ensemble which has become one of the foremost in the UK, with an enviable reputation for both classical and contemporary repertoire.

Steve has appeared as guest leader with many orchestras including the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, English National Ballet and English Sinfonia. He has given solo recitals both in the UK and America and his concerto performances include works by Bach, Vivaldi, Bruch, Prokofiev, Mendelssohn and Sibelius, given in venues as prestigious as St John's Smith Square and the Royal Albert Hall.

Steve is internationally renowned for his solo violin recitals, where he mixes acoustic pieces with live-looped electric violin arrangements in his own unique way. Steve has released four solo albums, *Duplicity*, *Ascension*, *Third* and *The Persistence of Vision*, alongside many single tracks.

As a conductor Steve is known for his work with amateur orchestras. He is currently conductor of Ely Sinfonia, the City of Peterborough Symphony Orchestra and Ad Hoc Sinfonia.

With his business partner Philip Aird, Steve is a joint director of PartPlay, an online music resource which launched in June 2016 and gives musicians a unique interface with which to interact with professional players.

You can find out more about Steve's activities and about PartPlay at:

[www.stevebingham.co.uk](http://www.stevebingham.co.uk) and [www.partplay.co.uk](http://www.partplay.co.uk)

# Cambridge Philharmonic Orchestra

## **Violin 1**

Steve Bingham (leader)  
Kate Clow (co leader)  
Hilary Crooks  
Gerry Wimpenny  
Carol Lo  
Margaret Scourse  
Alice Ruffle  
Viktoria Titmus  
John Richards  
Sean Rock  
Paul Anderson  
Maydo Kay  
Jo Cumberbatch

## **Violin 2**

Naomi Hilton  
Emma Lawrence  
Anne McAleer  
Imogen Poole  
Debbie Saunders  
Tiago Sebastião  
Roz Chalmers  
Katy Shorttle  
Sarah Ridley  
Zoe Austin  
Fiona Cunningham  
Joanna Baxter  
Jenny Barna  
Leila Coupe

## **Viola**

Ruth Donnelly  
Sophie Channon  
Agata Wygnanska  
Mari O'Neill  
Dominic de Cogan  
Emma McCaughan  
Robyn Sorenson  
Viola Hay  
Anne-Cecile Dingwall  
Edna Murphy  
Jo Holland

## **Cello**

Joshua Lynch  
Jessica Hiscock  
Angela Bennett  
Lucy O'Brien  
Hartmut Kuhlmann  
Helen Hills  
Isabel Groves  
Clare Gilmour  
Helen Davies

## **Double Bass**

Sarah Sharrock  
Tony Scholl  
Susan Sparrow  
Stephen Beaumont  
John Richens

## **Flute**

Cynthia Lalli  
Alison Townend  
Samantha Martin

## **Piccolo**

Samantha Martin

## **Oboe**

Rachael Dunlop  
Rachel Becker

## **Cor Anglais**

Rachel Becker

## **Clarinet**

Graham Dolby  
David Hayton

## **Bass Clarinet**

Sue Pettitt

## **Bassoon**

Neil Greenham  
Jenny Warburton  
Phil Evans

## **Contra Bassoon**

Phil Evans

## **Horn**

Carole Lewis  
Chris Wykes  
Tony Hawkins  
George Thackray  
Helen Black  
Esther Osorio Whewell

## **Trumpet**

Andrew Powlson  
Naomi Wrycroft  
Lauren Hodge

## **Trombone**

Denise Hayles  
Nick Byers

## **Bass Trombone**

Gary Davison

## **Tuba**

Stuart Beard

## **Timpani**

Dave Ellis

## **Percussion**

Derek Scurl  
James Shires

## **Harp**

Ruby Aspinall



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<i>Lensky</i>	<b>Thomas Atkins</b>
<i>Olga</i>	<b>Bethan Langford</b>
<i>Larina</i>	<b>Yvonne Howard</b>
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- Saturday 16 December 2017**     *West Road Concert Hall*  
Tchaikovsky: Eugene Onegin
- Saturday 13 January 2018**     *West Road Concert Hall*  
Family Concert  
*Tim and Tom's Symphonic Adventures*
- Saturday 17 March 2018**     *West Road Concert Hall*  
Stravinsky: Symphony of Psalms  
Poulenc: Concerto for two Pianos  
Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé Suite No 2  
Poulenc: Stabat Mater
- Sunday 20 May 2018**     *West Road Concert Hall*  
Bernstein: On the Waterfront: 'Symphonic Suite'  
Walton: Viola Concerto  
Elgar: Enigma Variations  
*Viola soloist Timothy Ridout*
- Saturday 7 July 2018**     *Ely Cathedral*  
Mahler: Symphony No 8

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