



Thames Youth Orchestra

conductor
Simon Ferris

Concert

Saturday July 12th 2008
7.30pm

All Saints Kingston



Programme

William Walton – Capriccio Burlesco

Paul Mitchell – Three Etudes for Orchestra

Interval (20 minutes)

Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) – España

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) – Pines of Rome

William Walton (1903-1983) – Capriccio Burlesco (1968)

Walton's reputation, from *Façade* onward, was built on his gifts for sharp pastiche and ironic detachment; but the insouciance of his manner concealed a painstaking, occasionally tortured approach to the business of composition, and a need to be taken seriously as a composer. His post war years, spent in luxurious semi-seclusion on the island of Ischia in the bay of Naples where he moved after his marriage in 1947, were dominated by the difficult composition, relative failure, and repeated revisions of his grand opera, *Troilus and Cressida* (1947-54, rev. 1963, 1972-6).

The *Capriccio Burlesco*, written in response to a commission from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra which was celebrating its 125th birthday, emerged from the interstices of that interminable project. In it, Walton turned his gift for pastiche against himself – on one level he is doing himself doing Bernstein doing Rossini (attention was drawn by some early reviewers to the affinity of the opening to Tony's *Something's coming...something great* from *West Side Story*, its C major chord tinged with an F sharp appoggiatura, moving thereafter to the chord with the flattened seventh); and on another level, especially apparent in the transition to the 'big tune', it is him doing his *Crown Imperial*, *Orb and Sceptre*, bandmaster, to charming perfection.

But he is never, perhaps contrary to appearances, just going through the motions. He had asserted himself, in terms of his musical voice, very early, and at a time when he could slide easily between the highly referential, knowing neo-Classicism of Stravinsky and Ravel, and the quick coolness of the Mitfords and their literary circle; and so in the *Capriccio Burlesco*, as in other works, we have a revisitation of that youthful, public Walton, but it has the hard-edged bite now not just of wit but austerity, and something of the chill melancholy of the *Improvisations on a theme of Benjamin Britten* of the following year – itself an ambiguous tribute to the composer who had repeatedly and brutally trumped his own operatic endeavours.

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Paul Mitchell (b.1959) – Three Etudes for Orchestra

These three *Etudes*, written for the Thames Youth Orchestra are “studies” in that each of them tries to solve a particular compositional problem. The first is an exercise in the

unraveling and elaboration of a single continuous melodic line, the second is a Fugue using traditional techniques familiar to anyone who has studied the art of counterpoint while the last uses the textural and formal devices of a Chorale Prelude. These pieces therefore use the traditional gestures of the Western Classical tradition newly interpreted, I hope, in a fresh and interesting way.

The first Etude is the most complex and is concerned with the unraveling of a continuous melodic line against the background of a constantly shifting harmonic and textural palette. The opening oboe melody emerges from the soft undulating string figuration and provides the motivic material for the continuous melody which is then passed to the first clarinet and then the first violins. The middle section with a change to a faster tempo and a mysterious tremolo texture sees the melodic material elaborated by flute and clarinets before it returns to the violins for the climactic section. Tonally the music begins in a modal A, the listener will, hopefully, be aware of the gradual introduction of the remaining chromatic notes into the harmonic field. It moves to the dominant key (e minor) at the midpoint, and passes through the remote tonal area of Bb major/minor before the conclusion in A major. Actually much of the chords and melodic material are derived from a 12 note set using the interval of the third in a prominent manner, any listener who knows the Berg violin concerto will be aware of the Neo-Bergian harmonic references while much of the arabesque like melodic writing has reminiscences of Walton.

The second movement is a concise Fugue with a subject, three countersubjects, much use of stretto, augmentation (very clearly heard on the Brass) various episodes (which are all derived from the subject) and as many other contrapuntal devices as I could fit in to the space of 78 bars.

The last movement is a Choral Prelude. There are two elements in the music to listen out for; the four part chorale texture itself, at first on the strings and then on the Brass and also the complex fluid elaboration surrounding this, at first in the woodwind and later in the strings. The descending four note scale which is played as part of the chorale at the beginning is elongated, its apotheosis being at the climax where it is transformed into a descending scale covering three octaves. The listener may recognise the reappearance of the undulating music of the first etude in the last and the music ends its journey on the dominant seventh of A.

Paul Mitchell is director of Music at the Tiffin Girls' School, a post he has held since 1998. He has studied composition with Raymond Warren at Bristol University where he completed a PhD in composition as well as with Peter Dickinson and Edward Gregson at Goldsmiths College London. His 1st String Quartet "*Caim*" was chosen by Peter Maxwell-Davies to be performed alongside his own 4th quartet at its premier in 2005. He is currently working on a new piece for the Bridge Quartet for the 2009-10 season.

Interval (20 minutes)

Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) – España, Rhapsody for Orchestra (1883)

Given his late start as a full-time composer (he trained as a lawyer and worked for nineteen years as a civil servant in the Ministry of the Interior), his relatively premature death at the age of 54, and his consequently slim body of work, Chabrier's influence on French music

through the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth was disproportionately great. Debussy, for example, claimed he could not have written passages of *La damoiselle élue* without the model of Chabrier before him, and a clutch of composers from Ravel (“all of French contemporary music is derived from [Chabrier’s] work”), and Milhaud to Poulenc and Les Six claimed him as inspiration in one way or another.

Known in his lifetime for his traits (both musical and personal) of broad humour and accurate pastiche, Chabrier established a link between the urbane, skilled but frequently lightweight salon music of the Third Empire, and the referential wit of much early twentieth century French music by means of the slick juncture he was able to make between Auvergnat folk idiom with conservatory manners (“I shape my musical rhythms,” as he put it, “with my Auvergnat clogs”)

In spite of career commitments, Chabrier was popular in artistic salons of the 1860s and 70s, both for his pianistic virtuosity (comparable, it was said, to Liszt and Anton Rubenstein, except in nobility of address – he was a small round man, amusedly aware of the comic grotesqueness of his short arms and flailing technique) and for the sharpness of his wit and the agreeableness of his company, and he nurtured a growing reputation as a composer at the centre of Parisian Wagnerian circles. But his most memorable and often-played work, *España*, dates from his moment of escape.

In 1882, financially secure but feeling the onset of the nervous, possibly syphilitic condition which would kill him fourteen years later, he took a holiday to Spain with his wife, where, to judge from his letters and journals, he was particularly struck by the women, but also, incidentally, by melodies and rhythms which he jotted down and subsequently worked up into an exuberant pastiche for piano and then quickly orchestrated.

It is constructed in sonata form, contrasting two themes – the opening lively jota (with its jostling triple and duple time) and the more lyrical malagueña – both of them folk melodies. It is in fact notable predominantly for its rhythmic panache: the development in particular is alive with suggestions of the constantly shifting patterns over a steady 3/4 which he had encountered in Spanish dance. A new theme, Chabrier’s own, is introduced on the trombones, and returns, after a studiously conventional recapitulation, in the coda. And it is here, perhaps, that he reveals his true skill in pastiche – not in aping something barely understood (there is little, for example, of the pain and protest of flamenco here), as in striking, by means of a conventionally appointed orchestra working in conventional forms, a justly calculated balance between colour, rhythmic point and intellectual control, and to translate the raw energy of the material into something fresh, memorable, and under control – just as the well-crafted anecdotes in his letters from Spain shape and distil the immediate and heady experience of freedom and distance.

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) – Pines of Rome (1923-4)

Respighi was a somewhat reluctant Roman. He was born and grew up in Bologna, studied there at the Liceo Musicale, and apart from two brief spells working in Russia as an orchestral viola player (1900-01 and 1902-3) made his early musical reputation and (somewhat precarious) living in the town of his birth, doing what work he could find as a string player and piano accompanist. He was unable to secure more than intermittent work as a teacher at the Liceo, however, and since he recognised that this was to be his bread and butter, started to search further afield. Thus it was that he arrived in Rome in 1913 to take up a post at the Liceo Musicale di Santa Cecilia. Over the next twenty years he was to develop an international reputation as one of the city’s most able musical illustrators.

Rome, at the time, was the centre of Italy's orchestral concert life (its opera house, a little strangely, has never had a particularly strong reputation), and this dovetailed neatly with Respighi's own natural compositional bent – his teacher of composition in his final year at the Liceo in Bologna had been Giuseppe Martucci (1856-1909), the leading Italian composer of orchestral music at the turn of the century, and in Saint Petersburg he had taken a handful of, by his own admission, very influential lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov. He now started to produce the steady stream of orchestral works with which he made his name.

The Roman trilogy (*Fontane di Roma* (1915-16), *Pini di Roma* (1923-24), and *Feste Romane* (1928)) was central to that process. Each follows the same pattern – four through-composed movements, each movement a tableau vivant associated with a place or a memory of past Romes – imperial, medieval, renaissance; each scored for distended orchestra, and each imbued with a robust musical conservatism tinged with a flavour of the rapidity of modern times – the age of the aeroplane and the motor car, the telephone and the cinema, Futurism and Fascism.

Respighi's music, and in particular the *Pines of Rome*, was popular with Mussolini (both ideologically and personally), but his unworldly personality was drawing on Rome's past in a rather more elusive way – he himself talked of the dreamlike quality of his tableaux, the ghostly presence of Rome's past, the silent witness of living trees, for example, to a transitory glory.

He was careful to provide brief treatments for each of the movements. Those for the *Pines of Rome* are as follows:

The Pines of the Villa Borghese. Children are at play in the pine groves of Villa Borghese. They dance round in circles; they play at soldiers, marching and fighting; they are wrought up by their own cries like swallows at evening; they rush about. Suddenly the scene changes.

Pines near a Catacomb. We see the shades of pine trees fringing the entrance to a catacomb. From the depth rises the sound of mournful psalms, floating through the air like a solemn hymn, and gradually and mysteriously dispersing.

The Pines of the Janiculum. A shudder runs through the air: the pine trees of the Janiculum stand distinctly outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale sings.

The Pines of the Appian Way. Misty dawn on the Appian Way: solitary pine trees guarding the magic landscape; the muffled, ceaseless rhythm of unending footsteps. The poet has a fantastic vision of bygone glories: trumpets sound, and, in the brilliance of the newly risen sun, a consular army bursts forth towards the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph to the Capitol.

The work is scored for a large and highly specified orchestra with extensive percussion (including bells, celeste, piano, organ), and it calls, notably, for six buccinae, antique Roman trumpets, in the final movement (although he granted permission for modern trumpets to be substituted), and for a specific gramophone recording of a nightingale in the third movement – as though in overt exemplification of his dictum that “*a logical connection*

must bind the past with the future, and the romanticism of yesterday must become the romanticism of tomorrow.”

The driving impulse, of course, is not ideological, but sharply pragmatic – how to stretch an orchestral palate of colour to lush and particularised extremes. It is hard not to talk of the movements in terms of tableaux, illustrations, of their pictorial quality; but perhaps the guiding analogy should be the cinema – it was at precisely this time, 1923, that Eisenstein was developing his theory of montage, with its accelerations and compressions of narrative through swift juxtapositions, and in the *Pines of Rome* the brilliance of kaleidoscopic surface movement against strong tonal centres has more in common with the early epics of Italian cinema or D.W Griffiths in Hollywood than the neurotic Futurism of Manetti or the romantic *vedute* of 19th Roman painting.

programme notes © John Ferris, 2008

Simon Ferris, conductor

Simon Ferris read music and was organ scholar at King's College London. As an undergraduate he pursued additional instrumental and musicianship studies with Bernard Oram at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and, after graduation, received composition tuition and encouragement from Geoffrey Bush.

A skilled and experienced jazz musician, Simon's wide-ranging professional career now embraces an array of genres and disciplines, encompassing performing, composing, arranging, writing, conducting and teaching.

Simon is currently Composer in Residence at Tiffin School, and Musician in Residence at The Tiffin Girls' School.

Thames Youth Orchestra was formed in 2005 with funding from the Performing Arts College, Tiffin School. Now comprising musicians from fifteen South West London schools, TYO looks ahead to an exciting future fully committed to providing for its young players an exhilarating and enriching first-hand experience of great orchestral music.

Music Director, TYO – Simon Ferris

Executive Director, TYO – Rebecca Lacey

Lower Strings Coach – Pippa Hyde

Brass Coach – Ian Stott

Wind Coach – Andrew Watson

Percussion Coach – Ben Porter

Librarian – Mayuko Tanno

Administrator – James Andrewes

For further information, please visit the orchestra website:
www.thamesyouthorchestra.co.uk

or contact Rebecca Lacey, Executive Director of TYO:
rebecca.lacey@blueyonder.co.uk

TYO is indebted to Lords Estate Agents for its continuing support.

FRIENDS OF TYO

The purpose of the Friends' Association is to provide financial support to the orchestra to help offset the significant expenses of running a full-scale symphonic ensemble. These costs include music, venue and instrument hire, staffing, performing rights, publicity, transport, maintaining a web presence, catering – the list goes on.

The cost of membership of the friends' scheme is £40 per annum and the benefits are as follows:

- Reduced ticket prices for concerts and events
- Members' names listed in concert programmes
- Receipt of an regular email newsletter

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For further details, or to apply for membership, please contact the Executive Director
Rebecca Lacey: rebecca.lacey@blueyonder.co.uk

Forthcoming Concerts

September 10th Cadogan Hall – Prokofiev *Lieutenant Kijé*, Stravinsky *Firebird Suite*, Rimsky-Korsakov *Scheherazade*

THAMES YOUTH ORCHESTRA

So Yeon Kim, leader

First Violins

So Yeon Kim*
Max Liefkes
David Mogilner
Sam Berrow
Anna Selig
James Walsh

Second Violins

Eunyoung Kim*
Pradeep Kannan
Cheryl Pilbeam
Olivia Johnson
Imogen Dodds
Sian Davies
Sun-Kyo Lee

Violas

Tillie Dilworth*
Eleanor Figueiredo
Matt Appleyard
Alexi Ayliff-Vellianitis
Josh Donaldson-Colls

Cellos

Toby Perkins*
Miriam Figueiredo
Jonathan Bruce
Eunyoung Lee
Miles Dilworth
Tom Davis
Hannah Evans

Bass

Marianne Schofield*
James Andrewes
Daniel D'Souza

Flutes

Mayuko Tanno*
Sem Lee
Lydia Dance
Lawrence Thain (piccolo)

Oboes

Catherine Hancock*
Olivia Kenyon*
Emma Price

Clarinets

Georgina Feary*
Ben Ingledeu
Tom Nichols
Charles Kimber

Bassoons

Nicholas Fletcher*
Isabel White
Alison White
Leah Mirsky

Horns

Catie Igoe*
Hugh Sisley
Ben Davies
Emma Walker
Chris Born
David Liu

Trumpets

Max Fagandini*
Imogen Hancock
Bryony Watson
Matt Parker
Henrietta Wake
Emily Walport
Damian Moran

Trombones

Hatty Martin*
Edmund Jillings
Julius Whiteman
Peter DeBurke
Fiona Walport

Tuba

Olivia Archibald

Timpani

Will Lewis-Smith

Percussion

Piers Thompson
Rupert Price
Millie Davies
Enoque Adolfo
Hugo Fagandini

Harp

Satu Salo

Piano

Amy Hur

Organ/Celeste

Simon Toyne

*principal