**Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Programme Notes Online**

Thursday 13 & Friday 14 November 2014 7.30pm, Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

**Season Opening**

The concert on 14 November has been rescheduled from 12 November due to unavoidable delays in the major refurbishment of Liverpool Philharmonic Hall.

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)**

**Ibéria** from Images

*Par les rues et par les chemins In the streets and lanes*

*Les parfums de la nuit – The perfumes of the night –*

*Le matin d’un jour de fête The morning of a feast day*

If Debussy’s *Images* can be compared with pictures of any kind they are not paintings or still photographs but moving pictures – with the vital difference that the visual element can be seen only in the mind’s eye and only when the imagination is stimulated by the magical suggestions of time, place, colour, character and movement in the music. Even the composer could be surprised by its evocative potential: after listening to a rehearsal of the third movement of *Ibéria* he delightedly told a friend of his perception of “people and things waking up. There’s a man selling watermelons and urchins whistling, I see them quite clearly.” Certainly, there is more for the eye in *Ibéria* than in the other two *Images* for orchestra but, like many impressionist paintings, both *Gigues* and *Rondes de printemps* (*Spring Rounds*) are vibrant with atmosphere even where the imagery is elusive.

In spite of the rival claims of earlier works like *Nocturnes* and *La Mer* and the later *Jeux*, not to mention his *Images* and *Préludes* for piano, the *Images* for orchestra is surely the greatest achievement of Debussy’s impressionism (a term he hated, incidentally). It took him seven years to do it – beginning with *Ibéria* in 1905 and ending with *Gigues* in 1912 – but what he finally produced, in a series of poetic tributes to the three countries that meant most to him, was a work unsurpassed in its breadth and variety by any composer of his time.

“I hear the sounds of the roads of Catalonia and at the same time the street music of Granada,” said Debussy of the first movement of *Ibéria* – which was uncommonly perceptive of him since, apart from attending a bullfight just across the border at San Sebastian, he had never been to Spain. Perhaps he felt, like Bizet, that actually knowing Spain would only “get in the way.” As well as being part of a long tradition (next in line after Ravel) of French composers fascinated by the music of Spain, which he studied eagerly, he had a sense of atmosphere so authentic in both perception and communication that Manuel de Falla was moved to describe it “as nothing less than miraculous.”

**First movement**

*Ibéria* is more than just a Spanish rhapsody, however. Linked by an intricate network of thematic cross-references, its three movements are as finely wrought in construction as they are abundant in picturesque detail. Debussy begins by gathering some of the main themes together in a preliminary survey of “the streets and lanes” of Andalusia. While there is no actual folk material in ‘Par les rues et par les chemins’, the setting is unmistakable from the opening bars onwards in the rhythms rattled by castanets or plucked by strings and in the cheerful *sevillana* dance tune introduced by clarinets. While the observations might seem accidental, every tiny motif is carefully chosen for both its immediate effect and its long-term value. And while the route might seem haphazard, it actually follows a ternary course by way of a central slower section coloured at first by delicate string harmonics, characterised by a soulful melody for oboe and solo viola in unison and interrupted by the entry of a brass band with vigorous horns, brilliant trumpets and grumbling trombones and tuba. Some of the material from the middle section is worked into the reprise of the opening section when the initial tempo is resumed.

**Second movement**

One of the principal attractions of southern Spain for visitors from France was the comparatively liberated sexuality of the night life. In ‘Les parfums de la nuit’ Debussy could indeed, as the title suggests, be luxuriating in the heady floral scents of the night, but there are surely more senses than one involved in this extraordinarily voluptuous music. The seductive rhythms derive largely from that of the *habanera*, which makes its first clear entry in a rich texture of lower strings after an introduction which is not only fragrant with celesta arabesques, violin glissandos and chromatic sighs on woodwind but also reverberant with allusions to material from the previous movement. The expressive line poised by the oboe on the *habanera* rhythm in the strings is an echo of the soulful melody introduced by the same instrument in ‘Par les rues et par les chemins’, which is also the source of the melancholy horn tune heard a little later. Much of this seems to happen somewhere in the distance. But with the entry of a short but passionate exclamation high on first violins the action gets nearer and more heated until, after a recall of the *sevillana*, it moves away again.

**Third movement**

“You can’t imagine how naturally the transition works between ‘Parfums de la nuit’ and ‘Le matin d’un jour de fête’,” said Debussy after hearing a successful rehearsal of *Ibéria*. “It sounds as though it’s improvised.” As a flute and solo violin linger over the night-time scents, day-time life stirs in quietly throbbing march rhythms on the lower strings. Morning bells ring out and activity increases with lively echoes of sounds from the day and the night before on trumpet and on a raucous combination of oboe and piccolos; holiday celebrations are clearly about to begin. Debussy is too subtle a composer, however, to indulge himself in a sustained high-profile march. There are two short march-time passages, both of them plucked by strings as though on a giant guitar and accompanied by military drum. But two other fiesta episodes come between them: one mingles shrill street-wise clarinets with more expressive woodwind and trumpets; the other features a fiddler whose somewhat laboured dance music accelerates into the second march passage and then returns to stimulate a recall of the brass-band music on woodwind and to precipitate the joyous coda.

about the composer **James Horner (b.1953)**

James Horner is among the world’s most prolific and celebrated film composers. He earned two Academy Awards and two Golden Globe Awards for his music from James Cameron’s *Titanic*, and has won six Grammy awards, including Song of the Year in both 1987 (for ‘Somewhere Out There’) and 1998 (for ‘My Heart Will Go On’). In 1998 his *Titanic* soundtrack album completed a run of 16 weeks at number 1 on the Billboard Top 200 Album Chart, setting a new record for the most consecutive weeks at number 1 for a score album. It remains the largest selling instrumental score album in history, having sold nearly 10 million copies in the US and more than 27 million copies worldwide.

Other film credits include *The Amazing Spider-Man, Karate Kid, Avatar*, *The Legend of Zorro, A Beautiful Mind, The Perfect Storm, The Mask Of Zorro, Deep Impact, Braveheart, Apollo 13, Casper, Patriot Games, Field of Dreams, Honey I Shrunk the Kids, The Name Of The Rose,* and *Star Treks II* and *III.* His most recent film projects are *Wolf Totem* and *The 33.*

Born in Los Angeles in 1953, Horner spent his formative years in London, attending the Royal College of Music, then continuing his studies at the University of Southern California and UCLA, where he earned his Doctorate in Music Composition and Theory. In 1980 he was asked to score a short film by the American Film Institute, after which he began working for New World Pictures, developing his craft. He has collaborated with many of Hollywood’s leading filmmakers, including James Cameron, Ron Howard, Steven Spielberg, Mel Gibson, Oliver Stone and Francis Ford Coppola.

Equally comfortable with orchestral scoring and electronic techniques, Horner has likened his approach to composing to that of a painter, where the film serves as the canvas and where musical colour is used to describe and support the film’s emotional dynamics. He is also noted for his use of unusual instruments. An accomplished conductor, he prefers to conduct his orchestral film scores directly to picture and without the use of mechanical timing devices.

He has also composed several concert works, including *Spectral Shimmers* (performed by the Indianapolis Symphony) and *A Forest Passage* (commissioned by the Cleveland Orchestra). He is composing a concerto for four horns and orchestra for the London Philharmonic to perform in 2015.

**JAMES HORNER**

**Pas de Deux**

Double Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra

world premiere – commission kindly supported by Tom Wilhelmsen Foundation

In 2011, I was very gratified to be approached by two renowned instrumentalists, violinist Mari Samuelsen and cellist Håkon Samuelsen, with a request to commission a new double concerto for violin, cello and orchestra. As a composer principally of film music, my availability is normally dictated by the frequently changing schedules of movie productions, and the needs of producers and directors. And I was delighted when a rare window of availability emerged, during which I could focus on writing a new long-form work for the concert stage, free of the metric and dramatic restrictions of a film.

The result is *Pas de Deux*, a concerto in one movement, conceived as the musical equivalent of a dance for the two solo instruments, supported and enlivened by a richly textured orchestral accompaniment. Each section of the piece flows into the next without pause, so as not to interrupt the rhythmic dialogue of the soloists, which is at times intimate and emotional, and at other times reflects the kind of physicality and graceful agility of a prima ballerina and her partner.

The compositional process was very collaborative, including frequent meetings with both Mari and Håkon, during which I was able to preview thematic ideas for them, and with their invaluable feedback, to find the most effective musical vocabulary to suit their unique artistry. Over a period of many months, I revised and refined the concerto, which ultimately resulted in a work that I hope compliments both soloists’ expressive powers as well as their remarkable technical virtuosity.

I’m also particularly grateful to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Maestro Vasily Petrenko for agreeing to give the world premiere performances of this new concerto.

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**PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)**

**Symphony No.5 in E minor, Op.64**

*Andante – allegro con anima*

*Walking pace – fast, with spirit*

*Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza*

*Walking pace, in a singing style, with some freedom*

*Valse: allegro moderato*

*Waltz: moderately fast*

*Andante maestoso – allegro vivace*

*Walking pace, majestic – fast and lively*

In 1884 Tchaikovsky’s life took a turn for the better. The traumatic episode of his marriage was now firmly behind him and he was able to begin re-emerging into society. His rehabilitation was underlined by the Tsar’s decision to award him the Order of St Vladimir for his opera *Mazeppa*. The undimmed status he held in the Russian musical establishment was demonstrated by his election as head of the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society. In his ‘Manfred’ Symphony, the Fourth, he had experimented with using a programme to knit the work together and provide narrative drive. In the Fifth Symphony, composed ten years later in 1888, he went a step further, employing the cyclic technique, involving the appearance of a single motif in various different forms throughout the work.

The Fifth is not entirely without programmatic intentions. Tchaikovsky did indeed sketch the beginnings of a programme: *Introduction. Complete resignation before Fate, or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Allegro (I): Murmurs, doubts, lamentations, reproaches against XXX. (II): Shall I throw myself into the embraces of Faith???* We can only speculate who ‘XXX’ is. Very significantly, the recurring motto theme, heard at the opening in the lowest register of the clarinets, is derived from a passage in Glinka’s opera *A Life for the Tsar*. The words to which Glinka sets the motto, ‘turn not into sorrow’, perhaps allow Tchaikovsky to mix a little optimism with the unalterable course of Fate to which he seems so resigned.

“I have decided to write a symphony,” he wrote to his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, soon after starting work on it. “It was rather sticky at first, but now inspiration seems to have descended upon me. We shall see.” As was frequently the case with Tchaikovsky, he grew to hate his latest creation after its premiere. His initial reservations were shared by the critics, though audiences themselves were enthusiastic from the outset. Before long he revised his opinion favourably. “The best thing is that I no longer find the symphony horrible, and have started liking it again,” he wrote to his brother early in 1889 with his usual modesty.

Though the overall tone of the symphony is melancholic, a recurring mood in Tchaikovsky’s music, it is certainly not monochrome or limited in emotional appeal. Certain features more familiar to an operatic audience enrich the surface texture: the orchestration is varied and full of marked contrast and subtle nuance, there is masterly use of dynamic variation, and the presentation of new ideas is invariably vivid and distinctive. At a deeper level the symphony is rich in typically operatic dramatic contrasts.

**First movement**

In the first movement, marked *Andante – allegro con anima*, the Fate theme is presented. It is accompanied at the opening by a characteristically Russian sequence of chords, redolent of the harmony of the ‘Song of the Volga Boatmen’ (Yo-Heave-Ho). A distinctly threatening march contributes to the unsettled atmosphere that permeates the rest of the movement.

**Second movement**

The slow movement, *Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza* (At walking pace in a singing style, with some freedom), did not appeal to Taneyev because it reminded him of ballet music, and indeed certain passages are reminiscent of *Swan Lake*. Tchaikovsky defended himself by asserting that dance tunes have a place in the symphonic literature. The oboe melody at the heart of this movement is one of Tchaikovsky’s finest creations.

**Third movement**

Glinka is again invoked in the *Valse*: the scherzo-like passage for pizzicato strings with which the movement opens is descended from the mock-balalaika choruses in Glinka’s operas. In substituting a waltz for the more usual scherzo, Tchaikovsky is following the example of Berlioz in his *Symphonie fantastique*. In relation to the central episode for wind instruments, Tchaikovsky describes how one may “suddenly call to mind a scene of some peasants on a carousel, and a street song. Then, somewhere a long way off, a military procession passes by”.

**Fourth movement**

In the finale, marked *Andante maestoso – allegro vivace*, Tchaikovsky brings back the Fate theme, but this time it is in the optimistic major key rather than the original and melancholy minor. This movement has been criticised for the way in which Tchaikovsky works the theme into the surrounding musical material, but it must be remembered that Tchaikovsky was something of a pioneer in applying cyclic form to a full-scale symphony. His experiment is a resounding success.

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