

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES

Monday 13 March 2023 Great Hall, University of Leeds

University of Leeds & Leeds Conservatoire Orchestra

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Programme

Richard Wagner – Prelude to "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg"

Florence Price – Ethiopia's Shadow in America

- I. Introduction and Allegretto: The Arrival of the Negro in America when first brought here as a slave
- II. Andante: His Resignation and Faith
- III. Allegro: His Adaptation, a fusion of his native and acquired impulses

INTERVAL

Dmitri Shostakovich – Symphony no 5 in D minor, op 47

- I. Moderato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Largo
- IV. Allegro non troppo

Programme Notes

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) – Prelude to "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg"

Wagner's only comic opera (1862-7) was written and completed between '*Tristan and Isolde*' (1857-9) and his final opera, '*Parsifal*' (1877-82), although originally planned in 1845. The libretto is in rhyme... 'a libretto full of ingenious situation, delicate characterization, parody, polemic, philosophy'.¹

The '*Prelude*' leads immediately into the beginning of the opera, although Wagner wrote a three chord ending for concert purposes. On the 26th November, 1879, many years after the opera's completion, Wagner, conversing with Cosima, his second wife, surprisingly said '*No one has yet talked, for example, about the new form of this Prelude; it is really a march with a trio, the theme of the trio appearing first in a whispered, fragmentary way before emerging as a broadly flowing melody*'.²

The opera was very successful and popular, and in three Acts related to the mid 16th century, regarded as a happy period in German history, and at the time of the rising German nationalism of Wagner's era.

The opera was a 'social drama',³ whereby forces of musical conservatism (Beckmesser, the Town Clerk) were pitted against the creative thought of the cobbler/poet and his friends (Hans Sachs, a true figure). Drinking contests, vigorous choruses, and medieval guilds featured in this.

Wagner received great acclaim for the opera and from royalty⁴. Liszt described it as 'a masterpiece of humour, wit, and lively grace', and Von Bulow, the conductor, wrote⁴ it was 'the culmination of his genius; it is incredibly vigorous... richer than Tristan in musical detail'.

And on 1st July, 1867, in a letter to a friend, Malwida von Meysenbug, Wagner wrote: '*The Meistersinger is to appear at the beginning of next winter. You are to come to the performance, do you hear? It is my masterpiece, nothing else comes up to it...*'.⁵

The Prelude is very popular in the UK. Whilst the old guilds and their attitudes were represented by J S Bach's contrapuntal style, the music is firmly diatonic

and melodious. It combines many different, often majestic, themes in counterpoint against one another, often in two parts, a characteristic of Mahler later. Near the end of the Prelude, there are, in fact, three important melodies in counterpoint with each other, leading one noted Wagner scholar to comment 'The ingenuity of it makes one leap for joy'! ¹

Florence Price (1887-1953) – Ethiopia's Shadow in America

This three movement orchestral tone poem was composed between 1929-32 and is thought to be Price's first orchestral piece. It was first performed in Arkansas in 2015. The three movements are linked⁶.

'Her work reflects her training...dominated by white American men steeped in European musical traditions, but it also reflects her southern roots... she made considerable use of characteristic black rhythms and melodies in her works.' ⁷

<u>Orchestration:</u> Double woodwind (and piccolo), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 4 percussion (suspended cymbal, woodblock, snare drum, bass drum, glockenspiel, xylophone, crash cymbals), celeste and strings.⁸

You will notice:

I a) slow moving; sombre; woodwind; clarinet prominent; brass forceful; main theme on full orchestra; busy strings; woodwind; brass; tremolo strings; then solo trumpet to end quietly.

Transition: flute & woodwind calmer and melodic; quieter; chordal and melodic statements; woodwind with the theme; 2nd theme passed around;

b) wood blocks; syncopation; strings with the theme and lower strings pizzicato; repetition; sequences; woodwind then triangle, then xylophone.

II quieter tuneful movement; solo violin; solo cello; simple chordal; reference to Negro spirituals *(eg 'Swing Low...'*); repetition on strings; woodwind, then horns to end gently.

Transition: solos on woodwind briefly.

III jaunty woodwind; theme and fragments passed around; wood blocks; strings rush upwards; brass strong statements; trumpet prominent; syncopation; strong statement of opening theme; full orchestra to the end with the brass prominent.

Florence Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas to a white mother (a piano teacher) and a black father (a dentist), and into a comfortable family life (her parents later divorced).

At 4 years old she was noted as a pianist, at 11 wrote her first composition⁹, and aged 16 was admitted to the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston (briefly explaining she was Mexican¹⁰, because of discrimination). She graduated at 19 with a degree in organ performance and piano pedagogy.

She returned to Little Rock to give piano lessons and teach at the Cotton Plant Arkadelphia Academy, and Shorter College, and later became Head of Music at Clark Atlanta University⁹.

Very committed to music education, Florence Price was involved in many professional organisations¹¹. It was said *'she was a highly intelligent, introspective woman whose love of music went far beyond her own creations'*¹⁰, *'a formidable teacher'...* and *'a beacon of light for all her students*^{'12}.

Price married in 1912, and had three children (a boy died in infancy), but later divorced and re-married in 1931. Racial trouble in Little Rock motivated the family to go to Chicago in 1927⁹ where there was 'a Black Renaissance' (from the 1930s-1950s). Chicago for her was 'a musical wonderland', with jazz and blues clubs and here she wrote popular music (under the name '*VeeJay*'¹²) and accompanied silent films on the organ to help with finances¹³. She found artistic freedom, here, too,¹³ continuing composition studies at the Chicago Musical College¹⁰. In Chicago, she also met Marion Anderson for whom she arranged or wrote 50 songs¹⁰.

In 1932, her first Symphony in E minor and her Piano Sonata won the Rodman Wanamaker Music Contest¹⁰. Frederick Stock, conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (all white men), encouraged her and conducted the first performance in 1933 of the Symphony. Two letters from Price to another conductor, Koussevitzky, of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, however, were unanswered. A 1943 one began... *'My dear Dr Koussevitzky, To begin with I have two handicaps – those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins...* ^{'14}.

Price benefitted from payments Roosevelt initiated to help artists and workers, so funding playing of a string quartet and her Symphony No 3 in 1940. Eleanor Roosevelt attended a rehearsal and was encouraging, mentioning Price in her newspaper column¹³. This was also a time (1940s) when she studied briefly with Roy Harris.

She composed in a wide variety of forms from large scale orchestral pieces to small 'ethnic piano miniatures'¹⁵, leaving over 300 compositions. Unfortunately, her works were not copyrighted and, despite some hardship, no income came from these.¹² Price's style '... is best defined as neoromantic, which was rather conservative for her time'¹⁶. 'Her career was incredibly successful and her music contributed greatly to African American musical and social progress during her lifetime'.¹²

In 1951, Sir John Barbirolli, conductor of the Halle Orchestra, was said to have contacted Florence Price to commission an orchestral piece from her, possibly a *'Suite for Strings'*. Sadly, the Halle Orchestra has no evidence of this¹⁷, or of any concert occurring. Having been hospitalised after a stroke, Price, unfortunately, had to miss a trip to France and England with her daughter, which may help to explain this omission. She passed away in 1953.

In 2009¹⁴, an abandoned cottage in a small village near Chicago was bought, formerly Florence Price's summer home. Inside were 30 boxes containing 200 manuscripts¹⁸, mostly in very good condition and some thought lost.

The University of Arkansas already held Florence Price memorabilia, and now, the University Special Collections' Department is the official 'archival repository' of all her material¹¹.

Schirmer, the US publisher, had earlier acquired many of Price's compositions and had been preparing them for publication¹⁸. Since 2018, through a subsidiary (New Wise Classical), their list is now 113 items. A noted UK classical music online supplier has 89 CDs etc listed, wholly or in part of Florence Price, including one of the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Yannick Nézet Séquin and recorded in 2021 (Symphonies 1 & 3).

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) – Symphony no 5 in D minor, op 47

Shostakovich's 5th Symphony (of 15) was first performed in Leningrad on the 21st November, 1937 by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Yevgeny Mravinsky. It was composed in 3 months in 1937, four months after the withdrawal of his 4th Symphony.

It is worth mentioning this 4th Symphony. In 1936, Shostakovich came under political scrutiny, attack and ostracism, and so withdrew this Symphony at the tenth rehearsal²⁰. This score was then thought lost, though Shostakovich had a two piano arrangement of it²¹. Just before he died, however, he did acknowledge considerable weaknesses in the symphony¹⁹.

For the 5th Symphony, a *sub-title*²² appeared for the later Moscow premiere in January 1938 ('A Soviet Artist's Creative Reply to Just Criticism'), created by a journalist, but thought by many to be by Shostakovich. It is likely, however, that he found it useful to keep it as it '...could be interpreted as an admission of his errors and gesture of repentance' ²³. No subtitles appear on published scores, and Shostakovich 'neither affixed nor endorsed' any²².

This so-called 'sub-title' was regarded by the authorities as 'an act of contrition'²⁴. It has been suggested²⁰ that 'by 'supplying' (sic) such a submissive title he could allow the state to think that they were the critics he heeded. In Russia there is a saying for what he did: "kiss but spit"'.

The dreadful '*coercive* circumstances'²² in Russia during composition have been made very clear...

'It was composed at the very height of the 'Yezhovshchina' (named after Yezhov – Commissar of Internal Affairs 1936-8), perhaps the bloodiest political terror the world has ever seen', ²⁴ and 'Leningrad at that time was paralysed by fear of torture chambers and executions' ²⁵.

One of Shostakovich's close circle, Lyubuv Shaporina²⁶, privately kept a diary and wrote about the premiere and events close to the time:

'21 November. Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony was performed at the Philharmonic Hall. The audience was beside itself and gave him a frenzied ovation in recognition of all the persecution to which poor Miya [DS] has been subjected. Everyone kept on repeating the same phrase: he has answered and answered well. DD [DS] came out (to take a bow), biting his lip and terribly pale. I think he was on the verge of bursting into tears.

6 January, 1938. Yesterday they arrested Vera Dmiriyevna...21 March. They have taken E M Tager...19 February, 1939. AL Rybakov has died in prison. Mandelstam has died in exile. People are dying all around us, and are permanently ill'.²⁶

The **1st movement.** '*Moderato*'. In sonata form, this is '*extremely complex and detailed*'²⁷.

The 1st subject with a distinctive leap of a minor 6th is in canon between first violins and cellos/double basses. First violins soon have a smoother descending two bars followed by three short phrases over dotted accompaniment. The 2nd subject, with sustained semi-breve and minim notes, has the harp accompanying and a simple gentle rhythmic strings' accompaniment.

The development takes this 2nd subject and pits it against short quaver patterns and piano. Trumpets have busy three note chords set against woodwind chords. A final section has the tam tam rhythmically against chordal or jerky rhythmic patterns whilst timpani alternates between C and F.

The recapitulation has noisy brass and horns in sustained lines against very rhythmic strings and woodwind. Final appearances of both subjects together lead to a dying close.

The **2nd movement.** 'Allegretto'. This is short and in ternary form (ABA). Shostakovich called this his 'Scherzo' and, so it can be regarded as a Scherzo and Trio, with a repeat of the Scherzo.

However, it is more complex than usual classical movements because of subthemes and fragments, which transfer between different orchestral groups.

The movement is '...a witty, biting satire of barely four minutes' duration, and (it) gives intellectual relief from the concentration of the first movement,'²⁰ containing Ländler elements (the rhythm and character of a slow waltz).

The middle section (Trio) starts with a solo violin, accompanied gently by harp, pizzicato cellos and upward glissandi. Eventually, horns and trumpets mention the *Ländler* theme before a solo oboe recalls the solo violin to end.

This Scherzo had a life independently of the symphony. Shostakovich was in the Soviet delegation to New York in 1949 for the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, and he played this on the piano at the end of the Congress's Final Session. He is reported as saying²⁸:

'Thirty thousand people were jammed into Madison Square Garden when I played the Scherzo from my Fifth Symphony on the piano and I thought, this is the last time I'll ever play before an audience of this size. Even now I ask myself how did I manage to stay in one piece?

The **3rd Movement**. '*Largo*'. In F# minor, this was composed in three days. It is scored for woodwind, timpani, two harps, celesta, xylophone, piano and strings. Strings are often divided – violins and violas into three, and cellos into two. No brass or horns occur.

Taruskin, a foremost Shostakovich authority strongly suggested²⁴ that this movement is a memorial (*'a mourning piece'*) to Marshal Tukhachevsky, Shostakovich's protector, who was executed during the symphony's composition.

Varied woodwind occur with secondary themes against light strings and there are links to movements of Mahler involving loneliness and farewell²⁴. An oscillating *fortissimo* figure (*'a liturgical tremolo'*) on clarinets accompanies the *'farewell melody'* on the cellos. This leads to an anguished *fortissimo* before the movement quietly fades, closing *'pianissimo'* and *'morendo'* (*'dying away'*) in F# major.

The **4th Movement.** *'Allegro non troppo'*. The movement is *'a large rondo with dramatic development and a concluding apotheosis'*, but modified in Shostakovich's way²⁷.

The finale begins dramatically: a mostly *forte* D minor chord increasing to *fortississimo* (triple forte) and held by horns, and brass, whilst timpani and

woodwind have trills. The important 5 bar rising brass theme (*fortissimo*) occurs with the opening leap of a fourth repeated and developed throughout.

The movement's centre becomes calmer and develops themes and fragments, augmentation and canon, and uses horn, trumpet, flute and finally harp, as solo instruments. The augmented opening theme on horns, and later piano, signals the close is near.

The ending is dramatic: horns give way to trumpets, trombones, and tuba all dominating together, against high and continuous repeated notes on woodwind, piano and strings. Timpani dominate with continuous, forceful cadence notes against all other instruments playing high notes fortissimo²⁰. Ending in an extended, emphatic, and bright D major, this leads some to think that the symphony ends simply, positively and resolutely.

Others may think differently²⁵. 'Many people now know that there is also a double meaning in the musical semantics of the finale' ... and 'Not everyone believed the optimism of the Finale to be genuine'.... Dark and specific musical references are made by Shostakovich to works of Mozart, Berlioz, Mahler, and Richard Strauss.

Shostakovich, himself, is reported as commenting... '...I never thought about any exultant finales, for what exultation could there be? I think that it is clear to everyone what happens in the Fifth. The rejoicing is forced, created under a threat, as in Boris Godunov...²⁸.

He also remarked²²: 'I finished the symphony 'fortissimo' and in the major. Everyone is saying that it's an optimistic and life-affirming symphony. I wonder what would they be saying if I had finished it 'pianissimo' and in the minor'.

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[This book has been much criticised by some scholars, perhaps because of its unorthodox manner of reporting and writing. Those closely associated with Shostakovich (egs Rostropovich, Barshai, and Sanderling) state that the contents are, in fact, true. The book is endorsed as true by Maxim and Galina Shostakovich, the composer's children. Volkov was privy to conversations in Shostakovich's group]

Garry Walker

Scottish-born Garry Walker is the Music Director of Opera North. He held the position of Chief Conductor of the Rheinische Philharmonie Koblenz from 17/18 until the 21/22 season. Previously he has held positions as Permanent Guest Conductor of Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Principal Conductor of Paragon Ensemble, and Artistic Director of Conducting at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

In the UK **Garry Walker** has worked with all the BBC orchestras, Hallé, London Philharmonic, London Sinfonietta, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Philharmonia, City of Birmingham Symphony and National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. Chamber orchestras have included the Britten Sinfonia, Manchester Camerata. Royal Northern Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra and Academy of St Martin in the Fields. His regular appearances at the Edinburgh International Festival have included notable performances of Mahler's Second Symphony, Kurtag's Stele, and MacMillan's The Quickening, all with the RSNO.

Further afield Garry has worked with orchestras including the Aalborg Symfoniorkester, Gothenburg Symphony, Dortmund Philharmoniker, Orchestra dell'Opera Roma, Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, Musikkollegium Winterthur, Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin, and Orchestra della Toscana. He has often conducted the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony, Tasmanian Symphony and Auckland Philharmonia, and engagements in the US have included those with the Utah Symphony and Asheville Symphony Orchestras.

During his tenure as Chief Conductor his many wide-ranging performances with the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie have encompassed programmes of Ades, Beethoven, Bartók, Britten, Berio, Brahms, Dvorak, Haydn, John Williams, Kodály, Mahler, Mozart, Prokofiev, and many more. Together Garry and the orchestra made their Amsterdam Concertgebouw debut in 2018, resulting in an immediate reinvitation, and a closing concert in 2022 to commemorate the end of his tenure. An experienced opera conductor Garry Walker has conducted David McVicar's acclaimed new production of Britten *The Turn of the Screw* and Raskatov *A Dog's Heart* for English National Opera, Cimarosa *The Secret Marriage* for Scottish Opera, Janacek *The Cunning Little Vixen* and the critically acclaimed world premiere of Sawer *The Skating Rink* for Garsington Opera, the world première of Stuart MacRae's opera *The Assassin Tree* and Britten's *Curlew River* for the Edinburgh International Festival. At the recently opened Linbury Studio (Royal Opera House) he has revisited the McRae and conducted Poulenc *La Voix Humaine*. For Opera North he has conducted *Billy Budd, Gianni Schicchi/The Rite of Spring* double-bill, Martinů *The Greek Passion, Carmen* and *Rigoletto*. On the continent he has conducted *The Curlew River* for Lyon Opera, and a new production by Calixto Bieito of Hosokawa *Hanjo* at the Ruhr Triennale.

In the 22/23 season, Garry will conduct *Tosca* and a double bill of Mozart's Requiem/a new commission for Opera North. Alongside his opera work, Garry will return to the Aalborg Symfoniorkester, as well as conducting concerts for the Orchestra of the Opera North, opening the season with an all-American programme and future concerts to include Elgar Violin Concerto and Nielsen's Second Symphony.

Amongst the many international soloists with whom Garry Walker has collaborated are Maxim Vengerov, Sarah Chang, Jonas Kaufmann, Truls Mørk, Mischa Maisky, James Ehnes, David Geringas and Branford Marsalis.

His discography includes works by Havergal Brian and Matthew Taylor on Toccata Classics, Edward Harper on Delphian and Dvorak on Sony.

Conductor: Garry Walker

Rehearsal conductors: Steve Muir, Frank Zielhorst

Sectional tutors: Andrew Mason, Blair Sinclair, Tom Greed, Dan Bull

Orchestra Management: Tristan Watson, Gemma Stanford, Michael Spencer, James Hobbis

Librarian: Mark Cadwallader

University of Leeds School of Music Technical Team: Dan Merrick, Colin Bradburne, Jack Cradock, Dave Barraclough, Paul Fawcett

University of Leeds & Leeds Conservatoire Orchestra

Flute	Abigail Turner Sarah Furnell	Violin 1	Tom Greed (guest leader) Lucy Reynolds
Piccolo	Helena Lopes		Rose Bullen
Oboe	Georgia Fernando		Anne Byrne
0000	Owen Smith		Ellen Weaver
Clarinet	Will Rhodes		Flora Stinson
Clarinet			Heloisa Ribero
E flat alariaat	Imogen Moses		
E flat clarinet	Melissa Moore		Adam Riding
Bassoon	Tegan Drane		Beatriz Carbonel
	Laurence Mason		Liz Lister
Contra-bassoon	Howard Dann	Violin 2	Freya Martinez
			Naomi Simms
French Horn	Elizabeth Dixon		Oluwa Okusanya
	George Hall		Jude Griffiths
	Jack Bloomer		Lottie Price
	Fiona Bassett		Jordan Earnshaw
	Matthew Jackson		Eleanor Shute
Trumpet	Archie Russell-Weeks		Lydia Palmer
	Ethan Hardman		Cleo Annandale
	Lucca Fairhurst	Viola	Sasha Grimes
	Sam Waddington		Beth Salisbury
Trombone	Briony Arnold		Greg Bush
	, Kwan Lam		Lourenço Macedo Sampaio
Bass trombone	Wiktor Plaza		Henry Rankin
Tuba	James Hobbis		, Matt Jones
		Cello	Theo Ceney
Piano / celeste	Wei Tian		Erin Elizabeth Bennett
Harp	Glain Dafydd		Abbie Wheeler
narp			Nicola Kemp
Percussion	Sam Milton		Ellen Baxter
	Ezra Palmer		George Dickinson
	Finn Oates		Sebastian Lee
	Adam Scott	Bass	
		Dass	Megan Burridge
	Hugh Hawthorne		Benjamin Frampton
			Angus Milne
			Jo Bradley