

Ealing Symphony Orchestra

MAHLER Symphony No. 3 in D minor

Ealing Symphony Orchestra

John Gibbons Musical Director

Harriet Williams Mezzo-soprano

With the participation of members from

**Gifford Primary School, Little Ealing Primary School,
London Youth Choirs West, Twyford CoE High School, and
St Albans Chamber Choir**

Saturday, 24 February 2024 · 6pm

St Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane, W5 1QG

Concert Programme



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The Ealing Symphony Orchestra is grateful for the generous support of the Ealing Music and Film Festival for this performance.

Please keep your mobile phone switched off and do not take photographs, videos, or recordings during the performance. Recordings of our performances are available to Friends. More information on how to become one is available on page 14.



John Gibbons is a multi-faceted musician: conductor, composer, arranger, pianist, and organist, who works across musical genres including opera, cathedral music, and recording neglected British orchestral music.

John has conducted most of the major British orchestras including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and, most recently, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

He has recorded orchestral works by Nikos Skalkottas with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the string concertos of Arthur Benjamin with the RSN0 on the Dutton Epoch label, four Mozart Piano Concertos with Idil Biret — two with the London

Mozart Players and two with the Worthing Symphony Orchestra, Bruckner's Ninth Symphony (with a completion of the finale by Nors Josephson) with the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra on the Danacord label, and William Wordsworth's Orchestral Works (Vol. 1) on the Toccata label.

Renowned for his adventurous programming, John has given many world and UK premieres of both new pieces (most recently the Triple Concerto by Errollyn Wallen with Kosmos Ensemble and WSO in Chichester Cathedral) and neglected works including the Third Orchestral Set by Charles Ives, the Violin Concerto by Robert Still, and both the Second Piano Concerto and Violin Concerto by William Alwyn. His performance of George Lloyd's Fourth Symphony with the Ealing Symphony Orchestra drew an ecstatic review from Simon Heffer in the Daily Telegraph.

John recorded Laura Rossi's film score *The Battle of the Ancre* (Pinewood Studios) and conducted the BBC Concert Orchestra in her score to *The Battle of the Somme* at the live screening in the Royal Festival Hall to commemorate the centenary of the ending of this battle.

Overseas work includes Walton's First Symphony with the George Enescu Philharmonic as well as concerts with the Macedonian Philharmonic, the Çukurova Symphony (Turkey), the Portuguese Symphony Orchestra, and performances of Malcolm Arnold's Fourth Symphony in Latvia and Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* in Worms, Germany.

John Gibbons studied music at Queens' College, Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Royal College of Music, winning numerous awards as conductor, pianist, and accompanist. He assisted John Eliot Gardiner on the 'Leonore' project and the recording of music by Percy Grainger, and was Leonard Slatkin's second conductor for a performance of Charles Ives's Fourth Symphony with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam.

He has conducted numerous opera productions at Opera Holland Park with particular emphasis on Verdi, Puccini, and the verismo composers, including Mascagni's *Iris* and Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur*. He conducted *La Bohème* for the Spier Festival in South Africa, toured *Hansel &*

Gretel around Ireland with Opera Northern Ireland and Opera Theatre Company, and conducted a number of productions for English Touring Opera. John's orchestral reductions include Walton's *Troilus & Cressida* for Opera St Louis, Missouri and Karl Jenkins's *Stabat Mater*.

John, a renowned communicator with audiences, is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Vice-Chairman of the British Music Society, and Choral Director at Clifton Cathedral. His own music has been performed in various abbeys and cathedrals as well as at the Southbank, London. ||

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Rosina Il barbiere di Siviglia, Albine Thais, Governess Queen of Spades, Nenila The Enchantress, Parseis Esclarmonde, Madame Larina Eugene Onegin, Mab La jolie fille de Perth.

She has sung principal roles with Welsh National Opera, English Touring Opera, Grange Park Opera, Longborough Festival Opera, Early Opera Company and Opéra de Toulon, and has sung with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. She appeared as Flosshilde in a semi-staged concert performance of *Das Rheingold* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski at the Royal Festival Hall.

Major concert performances include Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Ravel's *Chansonnnes Madécasses* with the Northern Sinfonia at The Sage, Gateshead and on tour in Hong Kong, and Bach's Cantata No 21 with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Sakari Oramo, also broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Recent engagements include *Brangäne Tristan und Isolde*, for Longborough Festival Opera, *Brangäne Tristan und Isolde Act 2*, Elgar's *Sea Pictures* for Ealing Symphony Orchestra, *Sea Pictures* for Worthing Symphony Orchestra, *Mrs Olsen Street Scene*, at the Teatro Real in Madrid and Opéra de Monte-Carlo in Monaco, Erda *Das Rheingold* and Fricka *Die Walküre*, for Grimeborn Opera Festival, *Second Norn*, Longborough Festival Opera.

She most recently sang Gertrud in *Hansel and Gretel* with the Royal Opera House and will return to sing *Second Norn* in Longborough Festival Opera's Ring Cycle. ||

Harriet Williams made her Royal Opera House Covent Garden début as *Erster Knappe Parsifal* and English National Opera début as *Polinesso Ariodante*. She sang Duparc songs on stage at the Royal Opera House with the Royal Ballet in *L'In-vitation au Voyage*, returning to perform Flosshilde in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* under Antonio Pappano and *Girl in Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*.

Her repertoire includes title roles in *Carmen* and *Ariodante*, Waltraute *Die Walküre*, Erda *Das Rheingold*, *Zweite Norn Götterdämmerung*, *Bradamante Alcina*, *Ottavia*, *Arnalta* and *Fortuna L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Dido Dido and Aeneas*, *Mistress Quickly Falstaff*, *Fenena Nabucco*, *Hannah Kennedy Maria Stuarda*, *Smeaton Anna Bolena*, *Flora* and *Annina La traviata*, *Marcellina Le nozze di Figaro*, *Suzuki Madame Butterfly*, *Angelina La cenerentola*,



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We are grateful for the partnership with Ealing Music Service in support of tonight's performance.

ealingmusicservice.com |

Gifford Primary School Choir have recently returned from the 'Young Voices' concert, singing with thousands of other children at Wembley Stadium. The children have been excited to sing some classical music and relished the challenge of singing in a new language. The Choir is comprised of children from Year 5 and Year 6.

giffordprimaryschool.co.uk |

Members of the choir at **Little Ealing Primary School** are thrilled to be participating in tonight's concert. Music plays a huge part in the life of our school – with 3 choirs, a school orchestra of 30+ children, the formidable EMS Concert Band and scores of children taking music lessons in school. We want to inspire children to love, appreciate and take part in music. We want to challenge them to develop their imagination and creativity, knowledge and skill – as they learn what it means to be a musician. We also strongly believe that music has a powerful role in fostering per-

sonal development and maturity, creating a sense of achievement and self-worth, and increasing pupils' ability to work with others.

littleealing.com |

London Youth Choirs (LYC) is a family of 10 choirs for young people from school year 3 to age 23, working towards a vision of musical excellence and social change by removing barriers to access. In addition to rehearsals and performances, LYC runs regular workshops in schools in order to bring singing to as many young people as possible.

LYC West is an Ealing-based choir for children in school years 3-6 led by conductor Olivia Shotton. Launched online in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was the second LYC regional choir to be created, as part of LYC's 10th anniversary plan to bring brilliant musical education closer to home for more young people across London.

londonyouthchoirs.com |

St Albans Chamber Choir has been a major contributor to the musical life of the St Albans area and further afield for over 60 years, delighting audiences with music from the last six centuries and winning awards for its innovative programming.

John Gibbons has been the St Albans Chamber Choir's Musical Director since 2007.

stalbachamberchoir.org.uk |

The Twyford Trust is made up of 4 exceptionally high achieving schools in Ealing which have the benefit of being very close geographically and being able to benefit from shared curriculum support. There is a Trust music service which co-ordinates teams of peripatetic teachers and provides central support for concerts and performances. The unusually high profile of music in all four schools is the outcome of this commitment. **Twyford CoE High School**, the founding school of the Trust, became a specialist music college in 2005, with 10% of each year group being awarded places on musical aptitude. The school

also attracts students to its Sixth Form from a wide area based on the high quality post-16 offer, and from 2024 will offer a number of music places to talented musicians every year. Our extra-curricular provision includes 3 orchestras, 6 choirs, concert band, string orchestra, 2 jazz bands and a range of smaller ensembles, with 16% of the school performing regularly in our school concerts. We are delighted to have made a connection with the Ealing Symphony Orchestra and are looking forward to performing with them.

twyford.org.uk ||

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Programme Notes

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Symphony No. 3 in D minor

Part I

1. *Vigoroso*

Part II

2. *Tempo di minuetto*

3. *Comodo; scherzando*

4. *O Mensch, gib Acht* (*O man, pay heed*)

5. *Es sungen drei Engel* (*Three angels sang*)

6. *Adagio*

Born in Bohemia (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) to Jewish parents of humble origins, the German-speaking Mahler displayed his musical gifts at an early age. After graduating from the Vienna Conservatory in 1878, he held a succession of conducting posts of rising importance in the opera houses of Europe, culminating in his appointment in 1897 as director of the Vienna Court Opera (Hofoper). During his ten years in Vienna, Mahler — who had converted to Catholicism to secure the post — experienced regular opposition and hostility from the anti-Semitic press. Nevertheless, his innovative productions and insistence on the highest performance standards ensured his reputation as one of the greatest of opera conductors.

For much of his life composing was necessarily a part-time activity while he earned his living as a conductor. His works are generally designed for large orchestral forces, symphonic choruses and operatic soloists. These works were frequently controversial when first performed, and several were slow to receive critical and popular approval.

The Third Symphony was written in 1893–1896, when Mahler was in his mid-thirties, but not played until 1902, at Krefeld. Mahler never premiered his

symphonies in his adopted city of Vienna, knowing that the anti-Mahler faction there would give him, and his music, a hard time.

It is worth comparing the Third to Richard Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* — not really a symphony, rather the last and largest of his one-movement symphonic poems, written three years after Mahler's death, which affected Strauss deeply, despite the ups and downs of their friendship during Mahler's life. Is the Third Mahler's *Alpine Symphony*? Yes, in that it comes the nearest of Mahler's works to an objective look at the natural world, unimpaired by the disillusion that overtook him in his forties, battered by his struggles with the Vienna Opera and under a long-term death sentence from the weakness detected in his heart in 1907. No, because despite his objectivity he is still too involved in the world to stand back and create the Cinemascope pictures that Strauss does. In the opening of the *Alpine Symphony*, Strauss uses his huge orchestra to give that awesome vision of the mountain peak gradually suffused with the light of the rising sun. In his first movement, Mahler uses an orchestra nearly as large to make clear to the listener his vision, not of one mountain but of the whole of creation, swarming with life in all its manifestations. At the end of his *Alpine Symphony*, Strauss lets his mountain peak fade into the darkness. In his Third, Mahler moves from the blackness of his opening, revisited in the *Midnight Song*, to a grand affirmation of a universe bathed in the light of a beneficent Power to whom, for once in his troubled life, he could gladly surrender.

"No need to look at all that scenery I have composed it already". Thus said Mahler to his junior conductor and disciple Bruno Walter, who was following the composer to his mountain 'composing hut' in the Austrian Alps, where he was working on the Third Symphony. In this six-movement work, approximately an hour and a half >

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on which he was working, and in our time only Leonard Bernstein was his match for all-round musical activity and charisma. Such was the power of his personality that “even the cabdrivers fell back when he walked down the Ringstrasse”.

Like the *Resurrection*, the Third fills a concert. The long first movement, after which Mahler asks for a pause, is like nothing else in his music. Deryck Cooke, the Mahler scholar and enthusiast who prepared the performing version of Mahler's Tenth Symphony long after its composer's death, called it “a total formal failure” but also “the most original and flabbergasting thing Mahler ever wrote”. You can find exposition, development and recapitulation if you listen hard enough, but it makes more sense to hear the music as the clash of two worlds, night and day, or the elemental world invaded by human consciousness. It

begins with a call to action on eight horns, and if you cannot help wondering what a theme from the finale of Brahms's First Symphony is doing here, don't worry: it is the only Brahmsian moment in the whole work. It is followed by the voices of night at their most menacing discordant fanfares, moans of despair from the heavy brass, weird bird calls. If Walt Disney had not settled on Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* to provide the backing for his primeval vision of dinosaurs in *Fantasia*, he could have called Mahler to his aid. A long theme for solo trombone emerges, the execution of which gives the player a soloist's importance. When this has come to an end, high woodwind triads, a trademark of Mahler in pastoral mood, usher in a procession, a catchy, skirling march tune that is a transformation of the opening horn-call. This tune goes through every sort of harmonic and orchestral experience. “Summer

long and calling for a very large orchestra, Mahler, having for the time being settled the questions of life and death raised in his Second (*“Resurrection”*) Symphony, turned his gaze on the natural world, and found it good.

This is not to say that the Third is a programmatic nature piece, like Beethoven's *Pastoral*. Mahler's symphonies, unlike those of Brahms or Bruckner, do form a spiritual autobiography, and each has to be considered not only for itself but for its position in the sequence of symphonies (ten in all) and in the sequence of events of his action-packed life. In his 51 years he became one of the greatest orchestral conductors in Europe (which meant the world, as America had not really got into its musical stride), director of the Vienna Opera, and the composer of symphonies and orchestral songs on the grandest scale. In his time only Richard Strauss, born three years after him, equalled him in the scale

marches in”, Mahler exclaimed, but one might compare its accelerating progress to one of the splendid steam locomotives designed by his contemporary Karl Golsdorf assaulting the Alpine gradients leading up to the tunnel bored through the Arlberg mountain in 1884, nine years before Mahler began the Symphony. After the march, night returns, only to be vanquished again by the march in triumph, and a final discordant outburst from the whole orchestra which outfaces everything else in the movement.

Like many Romantics from Berlioz on, Mahler wrote several ‘programmes’ for the Third, only to discard them later, but it

is worth quoting one of them as a guide to the sound-world of each movement, and the six are categorised:

- 1 / *Summer marches in*
- 2 / *What the Flowers tell me*
- 3 / *What the Animals of the Forest tell me*
- 4 / *What Night tells me*
- 5 / *What the Morning Bells tell me*
- 6 / *What Love tells me*

The second and third movements, the *Flowers* and the *Animals*, have the same function in the Third as do the *Ländler* and *Scherzo* in the Second. The *Flower* minuet is lightly scored, a peaceful contrast to the rumbustious ending of summer's march. ➤

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The *Animals* lays stress on the woodwind and is more vigorously scored, in a bucolic mode, which looks back to the *Ländler* of the First Symphony and is thematically based on one of Mahler's more good-natured *Wunderhorn* songs. In both movements Mahler indulges his fondness for developing simple motifs at considerable length. You feel that he is twisting and turning the theme in his hand like a stone, thinking how he can show it in this light, and how he can make it sound like this, and that, and thus leaving, as it were, no stone unturned. This habit of exhausting every possibility has led to charges of long-windedness: Mahler, like his predecessor in Vienna, Anton Bruckner, demands a long time-span for his ideas. Listeners who find his 'corridors of music' (as Neville Cardus called them) too extensive, may have to accept that Mahler is not for them and that they would be happier with the more concentrated music of Sibelius or Carl Nielsen, to name just two contemporary symphonists.

The long post-horn solo which forms the second trio of the *Animals* brings us up against the fact that Mahler uses in his symphonies material that the 19th century did not consider suitable for serious work. Nowadays Mahler might be accused of, or complimented on, his use of 'crossover'. He would anyway have replied with the assertion that to set the mood he wanted, he needed to pull popular, unsymphonic tunes and sounds into his textures. "Symphony is like the world, it must contain everything" he said to Sibelius when they met in Helsinki, and it is the strength of his music, for the sympathetic listener, that his works do include everything, and everything has its right place. The transition from the vigorous woodwind writing to the post-horn solo, itself a parallel to the equally luscious trio of sliding trumpets in the scherzo of the *Resurrection*, is beau-

tifully done, while the bugle call, straight from the barracks opposite which Mahler spent his early childhood, and with which the dreaming listener is brought back to earth is the perfect counterweight.

Whilst the soprano in the *Resurrection*'s 'O Thou Red Rose' fourth movement soars into a blue sky, the contralto who sings the setting of Nietzsche's 'Midnight Song' in the Third's fourth movement is enveloped in deepest night. "The world is deep, deeper than the day reveals; deep is her grief but joy is deeper still than heart's sorrow, grief speaks of death, but joy demands eternity". This is the most still music Mahler wrote (until the finale of *Das Lied von der Erde*, at the end of his life). The vocal line, poised at first on two notes, is carried by the softest of low string tones, until the brass call to each other across the Alpine valleys, and woodwind solos sketch out birdcalls which only increase the sense of loneliness.

The fifth movement brings in a chorus, a children's choir and bells, and is a rather naive representation of an angels' chorus, "Three angels were singing a sweet song", with its repetitive 'bim bams'. But it has its place in the scheme of the Symphony, which is to separate with a few minutes of light-hearted gladness the stillness of the *Midnight Song* from the solemnity of the fine Adagio that ends the Symphony. In his programme Mahler calls this adagio *What Love tells me*, and using a very different but equally heartfelt idiom he achieves the same finality of a hard-acquired faith in God (or is it in Nature?) that the *Resurrection* achieves with its huge apparatus of soloists, choir and organ. Mahler leaves it to the orchestra alone to bring his Third to a close in a resounding D major. ||

Adapted by Martin Jones from a programme note by David Elliot from the Music Bank of Making Music, with additional material from Wikipedia.

Tonight, we turn our spotlight on Rachel Wickham, a seasoned member of our woodwind section, who has been setting our tuning standard with her unwavering A pitch for many years.

1. When did you start playing the oboe? Why did you choose this instrument?

I began learning the oboe at the age of 10 after starting my musical journey first on the recorder and then the piano.

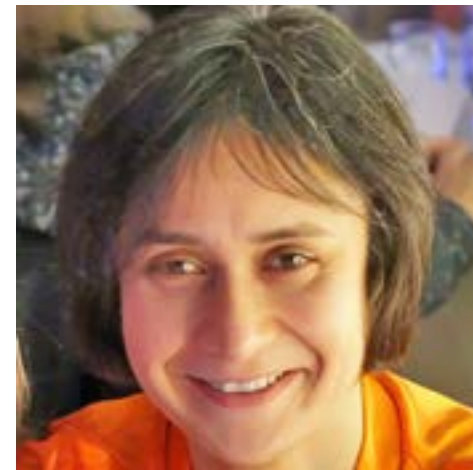
It was my mother's choice, and I did not have a say in the matter! Stringed instruments were ruled out after hearing the next door neighbour's daughter practising the violin! Next on the list were woodwind instruments. When we made enquiries, we discovered that the local flute and clarinet teachers had too many pupils and had waiting lists to take on new students, but the oboe teacher only had six pupils. It was therefore decided that I would learn the oboe. Once I could get a decent sound and had progressed from a plastic to a wooden oboe, I was very happy with this decision.

2. What do you do when you are not playing in the ESO?

Running is a great passion of mine. I've participated in 42 half marathon races to date, including some in European cities, and will be attempting my last marathon this April providing injuries don't get the better of me! I go to the cinema quite a bit to support the film industry, particularly now that I'm working for a film distribution company. I also enjoy visiting art galleries and travelling.

3. Your first time playing with an orchestra?

My first time playing with an orchestra was in a youth orchestra at the Saturday music school in Harrogate. Around this time, I also joined the orchestra in my secondary school.



4. How did you come about the ESO?

I had just finished my undergraduate degree at Bristol University and moved back to London to start a master's degree in Ethnomusicology. I contacted various amateur orchestras, including ESO, to enquire if they had any vacancies. I managed to get quite a bit of depping in several orchestras scattered over London and Surrey, sometimes playing four times a week to fill in for missing players. Shortly afterwards, I was fortunate to be able to join ESO on a permanent basis.

5. What do you like about the ESO?

I've played in the Orchestra for a while and there will always be pieces which I've never played or heard before. Some of the music is quite challenging. The orchestral repertoire is a great mixture of pieces I have played before and more obscure pieces, which most orchestras would not think of programming, but which deserve to be heard. I count myself lucky to have been given the opportunity to learn a number of lesser-known works and gain an insight into them from John Gibbons. The friendliness of the Orchestra is also unrivalled. ||



The Friends of ESO Scheme is a highly active programme that encourages our regular attendees and other supporters to take a closer interest in the development of the Orchestra.

With an annual donation of £30 or more, you too can join in and help the Orchestra fund activities that enhance its reputation and develop its standing in the music world. Staging a concert costs us on average around £5,000, so theirs is a vital contribution. Some Friends help us fund our George Lloyd Symphonic Cycle and contribute to the cost of soloists, while others want to encourage local music. In return, Friends receive a number of privileges:

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Thank you all.

Gary Walker
Friends Representative



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Hywel Walters
David Fletcher

Tuba

Alan Henry

Percussion

Matthew Fletcher
Keith Price
Feargus Brennan
Josh Neale
Matt Kosciecha
Ben Bucknall
Margie Harrison

Harp

Glain Dafydd
Beth Caswell

**Committee members*



CALLING ALL ORCHESTRAL STRING PLAYERS!

- Are you free on Thursday mornings?
- Do you want to play exciting string repertoire?
- Do you have a passion for performing to children as well as adults?

We are a friendly, high-standard string orchestra based in Queen's Park and are now recruiting new players, especially 'cellos, double basses and violins.

See www.nonesuchorchestra.org.uk for more details and how to join

We are always happy to hear from potential new members! Rehearsals are on Thursdays near Ealing Broadway. To find out more, please visit our website: ealingso.org.uk/join, or email us at contact@ealingso.org.uk.

Ealing Symphony Orchestra
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