

# PERTH CONCERT SERIES 2023/24

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Scottish  
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CHAMBER  
ORCHESTRA

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The Gannochy Trust has supported the Perth Concert Series annually since 1995. In recent years the Trust's major grant has enabled the four partners to develop opportunities for young people to engage with live orchestral music, encouraging a lifetime connection while at the same time developing a range of important transferable skills.

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We are very grateful for the continuing support of The Gannochy Trust in making the Perth Concert Series possible and we look forward to sharing many wonderful concerts with you in the coming months.

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# La Mer

**Perth Concert Hall** Thu 7 Mar 2024 7.30pm

Ophelia, Shakespeare's gentle, lovelorn heroine. Salome, the temptress. Cleopatra, the fabled queen. Tonight, the RSNO becomes each of them in turn, in a fantastical lost masterpiece by the 19th-century French composer Mel Bonis. And that's just the start of it, as Music Director Thomas Søndergård joins Scotland's international award-winning mezzo-soprano Catriona Morison to unleash flood tides of passion in an all-French evening inspired by the sea.

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**BONIS** *Trois Femmes de légende* [19']

Ophélie Op165 No2

Salomé Op100 No2

Le Songe de Cléopâtre Op180 No2

SCOTTISH PREMIERE

**CHAUSSON** *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* Op19 [27']

INTERVAL

**RAVEL** *Une barque sur l'océan* [7']

**DEBUSSY** *La mer* [23']

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**Thomas Søndergård** Conductor

**Catriona Morison** Mezzo-soprano

**Royal Scottish National Orchestra**

Kindly supported by **RSNO Patrons**



The performances of Mel Bonis' *Trois Femmes de légende* is made possible with funding from the ABO Trust's Sirens programme, a ten-year initiative to support the performance and promotion of music by historical women composers.

This concert is  
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# Welcome



Welcome to this evening's concert, the last of three given by the RSNO during the 2023/24 Perth Concert Series. Music Director Thomas Søndergård and the Orchestra are joined by mezzo-soprano Catriona Morison. Catriona is one of a handful of world-class Scottish mezzos, and it's great to have her back with us following her most recent appearance in 2021.

Tonight's programme harks back to previous Music Director Stéphane Denève's love for French music. During his tenure, the Orchestra recorded and performed a wealth of scores by composers such as Debussy and Roussel, winning the Diapason d'Or de l'Année, one of the most prestigious music awards in Europe, for a Chandos recording featuring *La mer*. I'm sure Thomas will build on this tonight with his own special style!

In the current awards season, our work on Bernard Herrmann's score for Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and Nicholas Ray's *On Dangerous Ground*, and on *Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora*, has won Best Archival Release and Best Original Score for a Video Game or Interactive Media respectively at the International Film Music Critics Association (IFMCA) awards. To be considered for such awards illustrates the quality and diversity of the Orchestra's work, and we are delighted to have more recording for classical, film and television output over the coming months. The trailer for a major recent project, Kevin Costner's *Horizon: An American Saga*, was released at the end of February, with music performed by the RSNO. Hosting Kevin and his team at Scotland's Studio was an exciting five days for the Orchestra and we eagerly await the film's release on 28 June.

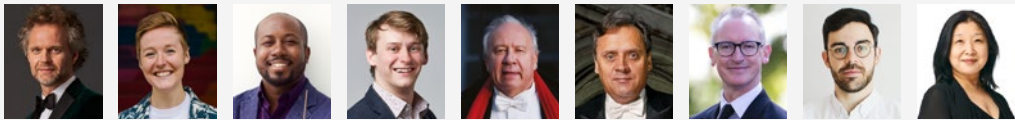
To mark International Women's Day tomorrow, our new schools project for early secondary age is released online. *Still I Rise* focuses on the lives and music of three important but marginalised 20th-century composers – Ethel Smyth, Julius Eastman and Viktor Ullmann – through the lens of Maya Angelou's poem of the same name. Schools and home educators can access the concert film and digital learning resources free at: [rsno.org.uk/still-i-rise](https://rsno.org.uk/still-i-rise)

I hope you enjoy the concert.

**Alistair Mackie**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# Royal Scottish National Orchestra

1-9



10-18



19-27



28-36



37-45



46-54



55-63



64-69



## ARTISTIC TEAM

Thomas Søndergård	1
MUSIC DIRECTOR	
Ellie Slorach	2
ENGAGEMENT CONDUCTOR	
Kellen Grey	3
ASSOCIATE ARTIST	
Derrick Morgan	4
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR	
Neeme Järvi	5
CONDUCTOR LAUREATE	
Alexander Lazarev	6
CONDUCTOR EMERITUS	
Stephen Doughty	7
DIRECTOR, RSNO CHORUS	
Patrick Barrett	8
DIRECTOR, RSNO YOUTH CHORUSES	

## FIRST VIOLIN

Maya Iwabuchi	9
Lena Zeliszewska	10
ASSOCIATE LEADER	
Tamás Fejes	11
ASSISTANT LEADER	
Patrick Curlett	12
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL	
Caroline Parry	13
Ursula Heidecker Allen	14
Lorna Rough	15
Susannah Lowdon	16
Alan Manson	17
Elizabeth Bamping	18
Liam Lynch	19
Veronica Marziano	20

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Marion Wilson	22
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL	
Nigel Mason	23
Paul Medd	24
Harriet Hunter	25
Anne Bünemann	26
Sophie Lang	27
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Susan Buchan	32
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Lisa Rourke	33
SUB PRINCIPAL	
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**Mel Bonis** (1858-1937)

# Trois Femmes de légende



## **FIRST PERFORMANCE**

Orchestral versions: BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conducted by Jessica Cottis, Cardiff, 8 March 2015

## **SCOTTISH PREMIERE**

**DURATION** 19 minutes

**Ophélie**

**Salomé**

**Le Songe de Cléopâtre**

Mel Bonis may be a name largely unknown to 21st-century audiences, but in her day she was a highly prolific composer, with over 300 pieces to her name, spanning the genres from solo piano, organ and chamber music to choral and symphonic works.

Born Mélanie Hélène Bonis, to parents who were less than enthusiastic about her clear musical abilities, her lucky break came aged 16 when she was introduced to César Franck. He spotted her talent, and tutored her privately, before in 1876 she finally entered his class (among others) at the Paris Conservatoire, to study piano accompaniment and composition, her fellow students including Claude Debussy. However, in 1881 her parents pulled her out, disapproving of a romantic attachment she'd formed there.

Instead, 1883 saw her married to an older, twice-widowed businessman, after which subsequent duties as a mother removed her from public musical life. Yet she did not stop composing, and by the early 1900s she was not only able to reprise her career, but enjoyed such success with her songs, solo piano and chamber works that she was emboldened to finally complete her musical education, taking orchestration lessons with composer Charles Koechlin between 1908 and 1909.

In 1910 she became the first woman on the committee of the Société des Compositeurs de Musique (Composers Society). Still, while her works during this period enjoyed regular performances, her public profile as a composer ended with the Great War.

On to the *Femmes de légende* trilogy of tone poems. These began life around 1909 as solo or four-hands piano pieces. While they sit within a whole succession of similarly themed works Bonis wrote over the space of 15 years, all



depicting women of historical, mythological and dramatic legend, they were the only three she orchestrated, presumably at the end of her orchestral training with Koechlin, but the manuscripts aren't dated. None saw light of day, though, until her great-granddaughter, Christine Géliot, prepared them for publication in the 21st century, grouping them to create effectively a three-movement work.

As for the trilogy's musical language, while genre-wise Bonis is taking a leaf out of the old guard's book (France had a decades-long tradition of tone poems, several of which came from her own teacher Franck's pen), the actual sound world suggests a composer in the thrall of the sensuous-sounding new world of Impressionism and Symbolism, with its lush scoring and chromaticism-rich, oriental-inspired harmonies. Think Debussy's *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) meets Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1864), or indeed Richard Strauss' own 1905 operatic depiction of Salome. And while the impression is slightly of a composer yet to find her own unique symphonic voice, the handling of her large orchestra is both imaginative and skilful.

Shakespeare's *Ophélie* (Ophelia) opens with harp colour; the ensuing music's cool-flowing watery beauty is punctuated by passionate swells, simultaneously reminding us of the strength of her love, and of her eventual watery grave.

*Salomé* (Salome) drops us into shimmering desert heat, after which its five-beats-to-a-bar music alternates between steadily processing sections, and faster passages of upper-register, quicksilver delicacy, sparkling with glissandi. It's all audibly the daughter of Herodias – simultaneously innocent and dangerous, calculated and impetuous, spinning the fatal dance of seduction that will result in her being

granted her mother's wish for St John the Baptist's head to be brought to them on a plate.

*Le Songe de Cléopâtre* (The Dream of Cleopatra), the longest of the set, also has a harp opening, this time an ear-pricking ticking figure into which woodwind snake down, whole-tone and pentatonic harmonies seductively evoking the Orient, after which the score plays out as a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of moods, textures, colours and tempi over which high contrasts sometimes happen on the turn of a pin, but always with the sense of smoothly organic flow.

© Charlotte Gardner

**Ernest Chausson** (1855-1899)

# Poème de l'amour et de la mer Op19



## **FIRST PERFORMANCE**

Orchestral version: Paris, 8 April 1893

**DURATION** 27 minutes

### **La fleur des eaux**

### **La mort de l'amour**

When Ernest Chausson first began working on the *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* (Poem of Love and the Sea) in 1882, he had not long stepped away from his music studies at the Paris Conservatoire, where he had been an official pupil of Jules Massenet, and a less official one of César Franck, whose course he attended as an observer. Both composers shaped his style but so too did Wagner; in 1883, Chausson took his new wife, Jeanne Escudier, for their honeymoon to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal*. However, it would be another decade before he revised the *Poème*, readying it to be heard first in a version with piano (Chausson himself was at the keyboard) and then in its orchestral garb. Both versions were premiered in 1893.

And yet if Chausson's language is steeped in French Romanticism and Wagner, not least in the

way he transforms themes across the *Poème*'s three movements, this unusual piece has its own distinct flavour. Not long enough to be a song cycle, it is far more substantial than a single song; perhaps too song-like to be a dramatic monologue, it nonetheless carries operatic weight. Love – and its loss – are at the heart of the work, in which Chausson sets verses by his friend, the Symbolist poet Maurice Bouchor, turning them into an intense, richly perfumed, serious work.

If *La fleur des eaux* (The flower of the waters) breathes an air of sunny, pastoral simplicity at first, Chausson soon evokes more complex moods, as our narrator describes a heady world of scented lilacs, where a sun glows over dazzling ocean waves, and love tantalises. Chausson's glittering evocation of the sea surely paved the way for Debussy's *La mer*. But this halcyon vision turns bittersweet.

The central orchestral interlude, a study in melancholy marked *lent et triste* (slow and sad), makes use of hushed strings and plaintive bassoon, cello and horns. The music builds in intensity before dying away, back to quiet sadness.

Fluttering strings and glinting harp carry us into more joyful realms for *La mort de l'amour* (The death of love), and the singer rejoices with anticipation of seeing the 'blue and joyful isle'. But as we voyage across the amethyst sea – its rise and fall emulated in the music, no doubt also a metaphor for turbulent emotions – darker currents emerge. A fatal word appears in the eyes of the beloved: 'oblivion'. The final verse is full of regret: for the vanished spring, for lilacs and roses, for love.

© Rebecca Franks

## La fleur des eaux

I  
L'air est plein d'une odeur exquise de lilas  
Qui, fleurissant du haut des murs jusqu'au bas,  
Embaument les cheveux des femmes.  
La mer au grand soleil va toute s'embraser,  
Et sur le sable fin qu'elles viennent baiser  
Roulent d'éblouissantes lames.

O ciel qui de ses yeux dois porter la couleur,  
Brise qui vas chanter dans les lilas en fleur  
Pour en sortir toute embaumée,  
Ruisseaux qui mouillerez sa robe, o verts sentiers,  
Vous qui tressaillerez sous ses chers petits pieds,  
Faites-moi voir ma bien-aimée!

II  
Et mon cœur s'est levé par ce matin d'été;  
Car une belle enfant était sur le rivage,  
Laisant errer sur moi des yeux pleins de clarté,  
Et qui me souriait un air tendre et sauvage.

Toi que transfiguraient la jeunesse et l'amour,  
Tu m'apparus alors comme l'âme des choses;  
Mon cœur vola vers toi, tu le pris sans retour,  
Et du ciel entr'ouvert pleuvaient sur nous des  
roses.

III  
Quel son lamentable et sauvage  
Va sonner l'heure de l'adieu!  
La mer roule sur le rivage,  
Moqueuse, et se souciant peu  
Que se soit l'heure de l'adieu.  
Des oiseaux passent, l'aile ouverte,  
Sur l'abîme presque joyeux;

## The flower of the waters

I  
The air is filled with an exquisite scent of lilac  
which, flowering from the top of the walls to the  
bottom,  
perfumes the women's hair.  
The whole sea goes to the great sun to be set  
aglow,  
and, over the fine sand which they come to kiss,  
dazzling waves roll.

Oh sky which has to wear the colour of her eyes,  
breeze which goes to sing among the lilacs in  
bloom  
so as to come out all scented,  
streams which will moisten her dress, o green  
paths,  
you who will tremble beneath her dear little feet,  
let me see my beloved!

II  
And my heart arose on this summer's morning;  
for a beautiful girl was on the beach,  
letting eyes full of brightness wander over me,  
and who smiled to me with a tender and wild  
expression.

You whom youth and love transfigured,  
you appeared to me like the soul of all things;  
my heart flew towards you, you took it forever,  
and roses rained upon us from the part-opened  
sky.

III  
What mournful and wild sound  
will toll the hour of farewell!  
The sea rolls over the beach,  
teasing, hardly concerning itself  
that it is the hour of farewell.  
Birds pass by, wings outspread,  
nearly joyful across the deep;



Au grand soleil la mer est verte,  
Et je saigne silencieux  
En regardant briller les cieux.

Je saigne en regardant ma vie  
Qui va s'éloigner sur les flots;  
Mon âme unique m'est ravie  
Et la sombre clameur des flots  
Couvre le bruit de mes sanglots.

Qui sait si cette mer cruelle  
La ramènera vers mon cœur?  
Mes regards sont fixés sur elle,  
La mer chante, et le vent moqueur  
Raille l'angoisse de mon cœur.

#### **La mort de l'amour**

IV

Bientôt l'île bleue et joyeuse  
Parmi les rocs m'apparaîtra:  
L'île sur l'eau silencieuse  
Comme un nénuphar flottera.

A travers la mer d'améthyste  
DouceMENT glisse le bateau,  
Et je serai joyeux et triste  
De tant me souvenir – bientôt!

V

Le vent roulait les feuilles mortes; mes pensées  
Roulaient comme les feuilles mortes, dans la  
nuit.  
Jamais si doucement au ciel noir n'avaient lui  
Les milles roses d'or d'où tombent les rosées.

in the full sun the sea is green,  
and, silently, I bleed  
while looking at the heavens gleaming above.

I bleed as I watch my life  
departing over the waves;  
my very soul is taken from me  
and the deep clamour of the waves  
smothers the sound of my sobs.

Who knows if this cruel sea  
will guide her back towards my heart?  
My gaze is fixed upon her,  
the sea is singing, and the mocking wind  
jeers at the anguish of my heart.

#### **The death of love**

IV

Very soon the blue and joyful isle  
will appear to me among the rocks:  
the isle will float upon the silent water  
like a water-lily.

Across the amethyst sea  
the boat gently slips,  
and I shall be joyful and sad  
to remember so much – soon!

V

The wind rolled the dead leaves; my thoughts  
rolled like the dead leaves, in the night.  
Never had the thousands of golden roses  
sparkled so softly  
in the black sky, from whence fall the dews.

Une danse effrayante, et les feuilles froissées,  
Et qui rendaient un son métallique, valsaient,  
Semblaient gémir sous les étoiles, et disaient  
L'inexprimable horreur des amours trépassées.  
Les grands hêtres d'argent que la lune baisait  
Étaient des spectres: moi, tout mon sang se  
glaçait  
En voyant mon aimée étrangement sourire.

Comme des fronts de morts nos fronts avaient  
pâli,  
Et, muet, me penchant vers elle, je pus lire  
Ce mot fatal écrit dans ses grands yeux: l'oubli.

VI

Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses  
Ne reviendra plus à ce printemps ci;  
Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses  
Est passé, le temps des œillets aussi.

Le vent a changé, les cieux sont moroses,  
Et nous n'irons plus courir, et cueillir  
Les lilas en fleur et les belles roses;  
Le printemps est triste et ne peut fleurir.

Oh! joyeux et doux printemps de l'année  
Qui vins, l'an passé, nous ensoleiller,  
Notre fleur d'amour est si bien fanée,  
Las! que ton baiser ne peut l'éveiller!

Et toi, que fais-tu? pas de fleurs écloses,  
Point de gai soleil ni d'ombrages frais;  
Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses  
Avec notre amour est mort à jamais.

Maurice Bouchor (1855-1929)

A terrifying dance, and the crumpled leaves  
which rang with a metallic sound, waltzed,  
seemed to moan beneath the stars, and told of  
the inexpressible horror of the dead loves.  
The great silver beaches which the moon kissed  
were ghosts: me, all my blood froze  
upon seeing my beloved smiling strangely.

Our brows had paled like the brows of the dead,  
and, silent, leaning towards her, I was able to read  
that fatal word written in her large eyes: oblivion.

VI

The season for lilac and the season for roses  
will not return this spring;  
the season for lilac and the season for roses  
is passed, the season for carnations too.

The wind has changed, the skies are morose,  
and we shall never again go to run, and gather  
the lilac in bloom and the beautiful roses;  
the spring is sad and cannot blossom.

Oh! Joyful and sweet springtime of the year  
which came, last year, to light us with sunshine,  
our flower of love is so withered,  
alas, that your kiss cannot awaken it!

And you, what are you doing? Not a flower in  
bloom,  
no happy sun nor cool shade;  
the season for the lilac and the season for roses  
with our love has died forever.

© Translated by Christopher Goldsack

# Catriona Morison

## Mezzo-soprano



Scottish mezzo-soprano Catriona Morison is based in Berlin and gained widespread recognition in 2017 when she won the Main Prize and shared the Song Prize at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition. At that time she was a member of the opera ensemble in Wuppertal (2016-18), where she added a diverse range of roles to her repertoire, including Nicklausse (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*), Charlotte (*Werther*), Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Kleiner Araber (*Juliette*), Princess Clarice (*The Love for Three Oranges*) and Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*).

In 2015 she made her debut at the Salzburg Festival under Franz Welser-Möst as part of the Young Singers Project, and the same year also performed at the Salzburg Whitsun Festival. Her guest engagements in opera have taken her to the Edinburgh International Festival, Oper Köln, Bergen Nasjonale Opera, Staatsoper Hamburg and Nationaltheater Weimar. Recent additions to her repertoire include *The Composer* in Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Fricka in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* and Nerone in Monteverdi's (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*). This spring she appears in concert performances of *Die Walküre*

with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

In 2019 Catriona made her debut at the BBC Proms, performing Elgar's *Sea Pictures* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Elim Chan. Additionally, she premiered Errollyn Wallen's *This Frame is Part of the Painting*, a piece specially commissioned for her at the BBC Proms.

In the UK during 2023/24, she appears in four song recitals accompanied by Malcolm Martineau, in London and Oxford, and performed Detlev Glanert's *Prague Symphony* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Semyon Bychkov, at London's Barbican Centre. Elsewhere this season she performs Mahler's Second Symphony conducted by Jaap van Zweden at the Gstaad Festival, songs by Alma Mahler with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra under Vasily Petrenko and the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Paul McCreesh, Mahler's Eighth Symphony with the NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo under Fabio Luisi, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with both the Gewandhausorchester under Manfred Honeck and the Orchestre de Paris under Klaus Mäkelä, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in Rotterdam under John Butt, Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* in Utrecht and Amsterdam under Edo de Waart, and, for the first time, Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, including performances with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Herbert Blomstedt.

Song repertoire holds a profound significance for Catriona, as demonstrated by her most recent CD featuring songs by Grieg, Brahms, Josephine Lang and Schumann, accompanied by Malcolm Martineau. She has appeared in recital at the Wigmore Hall London, Edinburgh International Festival, Leeds Lieder Festival, Oxford Lieder Festival, Schubertiada Vilabertran, Heidelberger Frühling, and in Copenhagen and Barcelona.



**Maurice Ravel** (1875-1937)

# Une barque sur l'océan



**FIRST PERFORMANCE**

Orchestral version: Paris, 3 February 1907

**DURATION** 7 minutes

Ravel composed his set of five piano pieces entitled *Miroirs* in 1905. One year later he orchestrated the third piece, *Une barque sur l'océan*. As in his piano composition *Jeux d'eau*, Ravel was especially good at evoking the play of water – whether fountains or the sea.

*Une barque sur l'océan* begins serenely, a wash of gently shimmering arpeggios being a constant feature. There are some momentarily threatening disturbances from the sea, its swell reflected as the dynamic rises and falls. After a succession of brief climaxes, yearning phrases lead to a bigger, more sustained climax, reinforced by percussion. Gradually the mood calms, though the moments of turbulence persist, so that one never loses the feeling of the sea's immense power. The ending is fragile – a gentle flourish from the celeste, then tremolando string harmonics and final notes on harp and glockenspiel.

Ravel uses a large orchestra, including two harps, with his usual consummate skill. Comparison with Debussy's *La mer* is inevitable. Debussy often exposes the violence of the sea, while Ravel is equally evocative but generally more subtle and impressionistic.

© Philip Borg-Wheeler

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

# La mer



## FIRST PERFORMANCE

Paris, 5 October 1905

**DURATION** 23 minutes

***From dawn to midday on the sea***

***Play of the waves***

***Dialogue of the wind and the sea***

Claude Debussy famously completed the orchestration of his 'three symphonic sketches' that comprise *La mer* (The Sea) not on a storm-tossed liner in the mid-Atlantic, nor gazing into the gently rippling waves of the balmy Mediterranean. Instead, he was looking out across the English Channel from genteel Eastbourne, on the south coast of England. It was March 1905. He'd begun work on the piece two years earlier while on holiday in Bichain, Burgundy – which is itself about 200 miles from the coast. But that's rather the point. Instead of attempting to depict the sea in music – and despite its movement titles highlighting specific times of the day and the effects of wind and water – *La mer* is a work of memory and imagination, not picture-painting.

'I have an endless store of memories of the sea,' Debussy wrote to a friend, referring to childhood summers in Cannes on the Mediterranean, as well as to later trips to the Brittany coast, 'and, to my mind, they are worth more than the reality, whose beauty weighs down thought too heavily.'

He resented being termed an 'impressionist', but there are undeniable parallels between the evocative yet elusive, sensuous musical images that Debussy conjures in *La mer* and what painters such as Monet were attempting, especially in their images conveying the reflections and shimmering textures of water. There are also echoes of Turner, whose seascapes from several decades earlier Debussy had admired on a trip to London in 1902 (although, ironically, he'd hated crossing the Channel). And of Japanese artist Hokusai, whose famous image *The Great Wave off Kanegawa* Debussy insisted should be used on the cover of his score.

Debussy's work on *La mer* came after the huge success in Paris of his single opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1902, and he was hoping for even greater acclaim with the orchestral piece, which he felt was more robust, more assertive than his delicate, pastel-shaded stage work. At its premiere, however, *La mer* had a rather cool reception. In fact, it had been controversial even in rehearsal, when the Lamoureux Orchestra's violinists tied handkerchiefs to the tips of their bows in protest at having to play such supposedly nonsensical music.

Any negative reaction to *La mer*'s first performance, however, was probably tied up more with Debussy's private life at the time than with a proper appraisal of the music itself. In 1905 he was a figure of scandal. While working on *La mer*, Debussy had moved in with his lover Emma Bardac, the wife of a banker, abandoning his wife Lily, who attempted suicide. Two weeks

after *La mer*'s premiere, Bardac gave birth to their daughter Claude-Emma, later known affectionately as Chou-Chou.

*La mer* has gone on, however, to become one of the composer's best-loved and most respected works, for both its unmistakable watery evocations, and its forward-looking approach to musical themes and form. It's been described – provocatively – as the greatest symphony ever written by a French composer (which wouldn't have pleased Debussy, declared enemy of the Germanic symphonic form and everything that came with it). And although *La mer* might sound nothing like Beethoven or Brahms, the careful if unconventional structuring of each movement and cross-references between its themes make the piece far more than a simple tone poem. Instead, it's a unified, truly symphonic creation.

Despite its title, From dawn to midday on the sea, *La mer*'s first movement does not slavishly depict a particular timeline – even if Debussy's friend Erik Satie quipped that he 'particularly enjoyed the bit at a quarter to 11'. There is, however, an undeniable progression from the muted, half-lit opening to the blaze of sunlight at its conclusion.

On that journey, the movement introduces themes that will recur throughout the piece, the first of which is a mysterious, curling melody on cor anglais and muted trumpet heard near the start. The movement's second main section begins with a sumptuous, dancing theme on eight solo cellos, leading to a murkier, more veiled section and then the quiet return of the cor anglais and muted trumpet's curling theme. The texture suddenly clears, however, for a hushed chorale on four horns – the first, brief announcement of the music that will close *La mer* in shining glory. The movement ends grandly with the sun blazing on the ocean.

The playful second movement, Play of the waves, is a flashing, quicksilver scherzo, an ever-changing mosaic of orchestral colours that seems to proceed spontaneously rather than obeying any traditional ideas of musical form. There are a scampering cor anglais and oboe theme, some fanfare-like interruptions from the trumpets, a couple of big swells of orchestral sound, and the movement ends mysteriously with a glitter of harp and glockenspiel.

Debussy unleashes the full force of his orchestra in the third movement, Dialogue of the wind and the sea. It opens with music suggesting the mighty surging of the ocean, or the rumble of an approaching storm, in which we can just about hear fragments of the first movement's themes, later cried out by a solo trumpet as if in distress. An aggressive climax heralds the final movement's restless main theme, first heard as the woodwind obsess over just a couple of notes. This builds to a thundering climax, and when the storm abates, it's with the first movement's glowing horn chorale, heard quietly again. There's an ecstatic restatement of the woodwind's obsessive theme, a stratospheric tone from the violins, a brief playful interlude that takes us back to the world of the second movement, then the horn chorale returns in all its glory, now across the whole brass section, and *La mer* races to an extrovert conclusion.

© David Kettle

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**Mendelssohn-Hensel**

Overture in C Major

**James Burton** The Lost Words

**Mendelssohn** A Midsummer Night's  
Dream, Incidental Music

**Thomas Søndergård** Conductor

**RSNO Youth Chorus**

**Patrick Barrett** RSNO Youth  
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**Pre-concert talk, 6.45pm**

Patrick Barrett, Director, RSNO Youth Choruses

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# Thomas Søndergård

## Conductor



Paris (Orchestre National de France), London (London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, London Symphony and Philharmonia), Amsterdam and Rotterdam (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic), and is a familiar figure in Scandinavia with such orchestras as the Oslo Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Danish National Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony, Finnish Radio Symphony and Helsinki Philharmonic. North American appearances have included the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Baltimore, St Louis, Toronto, Atlanta, Montreal, Vancouver, Houston and Seattle. He has also made highly successful tours to China, Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård has been Music Director of the RSNO since 2018, following six seasons as Principal Guest Conductor. The 2023/24 season has also seen him begin his tenure as Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra. Between 2012 and 2018 he served as Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW), after stepping down as Principal Conductor and Musical Advisor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra.

In addition to his regular appearances with the RSNO during the 2023:24 Season, Thomas led the Orchestra's Residency at Salzburg's Grosses Festspielhaus in October 2023, joined by pianist Lise de la Salle, and an extensive European tour with violinist Ray Chen in January 2024.

He has appeared with many notable orchestras in leading European centres, such as Berlin (Berliner Philharmoniker, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Konzerthausorchester Berlin), Munich (Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunk), Leipzig (Gewandhausorchester),

This season sees Thomas make his return to the London Symphony Orchestra, as well as his debut with the New York Philharmonic, where he will perform the US premiere of Olga Neuwirth's *Keyframes for a Hippogriff*. He also makes regular guest appearances throughout Scandinavia, debuting with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and at the Bergen International Festival, where he leads a full staging of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* to Grieg's complete incidental music. Return visits include the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, a joint collaboration with the Aalborg and Aarhus Symfoniorkestere, and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, celebrating his receipt of the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Foundation's award for his outstanding contribution to Danish musical life.

# Royal Scottish National Orchestra



The Royal Scottish National Orchestra is one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras. Formed in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra, the company became the Scottish National Orchestra in 1950, and was awarded Royal Patronage in 1977. The Orchestra's artistic team is led by Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who was appointed RSNO Music Director in 2018.

The RSNO is supported by the Scottish Government and is one of the Scottish National Performing Companies. The Orchestra performs across Scotland, including concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and the BBC Proms. The RSNO has made recent tours to the USA, China and Europe.

The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving a 2020 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Chopin's Piano Concertos (soloist: Benjamin Grosvenor), conducted by Elim Chan, two Diapason d'or awards (Denève/Roussel 2007; Denève/Debussy 2012) and eight GRAMMY Award

nominations. Over 200 releases are available, including Thomas Søndergård conducting Strauss (*Ein Heldenleben*, *Der Rosenkavalier Suite*) and Prokofiev (Symphonies Nos 1 and 5); two discs of African American Voices featuring the music of George Walker, William Levi Dawson, Margaret Bonds and more, conducted by Kellen Gray; the complete symphonies of Sibelius (Gibson), Prokofiev (Järvi), Bruckner (Tintner) and Roussel (Denève); as well as further discs championing the music of William Grant Still (Eisenberg), Xiaogang Ye (Serebrier) and Thomas Wilson (Macdonald).

The RSNO's Engagement strategy, Music for Life, sees the Orchestra work with schools and community groups, connecting its music with the people of Scotland. Since March 2020, the RSNO has created multiple online Engagement programmes and Digital Seasons, ensuring the RSNO continues to bring world-class music to its audiences in Scotland and around the world on stage and on screen.

# On Stage

## FIRST VIOLIN

Emily Davis  
GUEST PRINCIPAL  
Savva Zverev  
Emil Chakalov  
Charlie MacClure  
Matyas Mezes  
Caroline Parry  
Ursula Heidecker Allen  
Elizabeth Bamping  
Lorna Rough  
Susannah Lowdon  
Alan Manson  
Liam Lynch  
Veronica Marziano  
Shulah Oliver-Smith

## SECOND VIOLIN

Jacqueline Speirs  
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL  
Marion Wilson  
Nigel Mason  
Harriet Hunter  
Anne Bünemann  
Sophie Lang  
Robin Wilson  
Carole Howat  
Helena Rose  
Eddy Betancourt  
Seona Glen  
Joe Hodson

## VIOLA

Tom Dunn  
PRINCIPAL  
Felix Tanner  
Lisa Rourke  
Claire Dunn  
Katherine Wren  
Maria Trittinger  
Francesca Hunt  
Beth Woodford  
Elaine Koene  
Sasha Buettner

## CELLO

Pei-Jee Ng  
PRINCIPAL  
Betsy Taylor  
Kennedy Leitch  
Rachael Lee  
Sarah Digger  
Robert Anderson  
Miranda Phythian-Adams  
Susan Dance

## DOUBLE BASS

Nikita Naumov  
GUEST PRINCIPAL  
Michael Rae  
Moray Jones  
Alexandre dos Santos  
Olaya Garcia Alvarez  
Aaron Barrera-Reyes

## FLUTE

Katherine Bryan  
PRINCIPAL  
Jenny Farley  
Janet Richardson  
PRINCIPAL PICCOLO

## OBOE

Adrian Wilson  
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Peter Dykes  
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# Supporting the RSNO

I am honoured and extremely proud to be Music Director of the RSNO. It is through the continued generosity of you, our friends, donors and supporters, that we can continue to achieve and realise the most ambitious goals of the Orchestra.

One of the wonders of the RSNO is how it brings high-quality music not only to concert halls, but to the wider community. From hospital settings to care homes, from our Astar app for families with newborns to our National Schools Concert Programme, our music touches so many lives in Scotland and beyond. Your support is the

cornerstone of all that we do, as it allows us to continually build and develop.

Thank you for being part of this wonderful Orchestra's journey, as we adapt and grow towards a bright future.



**Thomas Søndergård**  
MUSIC DIRECTOR, RSNO

## RSNO Benefactors

RSNO Benefactors are beacons of philanthropic inspiration, providing truly transformative financial support to the Orchestra that enables us to build and deliver long-term strategic plans. Benefactors share the RSNO's vision for orchestral music and work with us to drive

the organisation forward, helping us to realise our future plans and ambitions.

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Ms Chris Grace Hartness

## RSNO Conductors' Circle

The RSNO Conductors' Circle is an inspirational group of individual supporters at the heart of the RSNO's Individual Giving programme. Our members' annual philanthropic gifts enable us to realise the Orchestra's most ambitious goals. Conductors' Circle members support inspirational concert performances for our audiences alongside transformational education programmes in communities across Scotland, via our ground-breaking initiative Music for Life.

The RSNO is very grateful for the continued support of its Conductors' Circle:

Ardgowan Charitable Trust  
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We would also like to thank those generous donors who wish to remain anonymous.

# Patron Programme

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From musical activities in schools with the musicians of the future to working in community venues across Scotland, as a Chair Patron you are enabling RSNO musicians to explore the many facets of their art and the positive impact it has on people's lives. Supporting an individual musician puts you at the heart of the RSNO family. You're connected directly to the musicians on stage and get to enjoy privileged behind-the-scenes access. RSNO musicians truly appreciate our Chair Patrons and enjoy developing personal relationships with our supporters.

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## LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT PATRON

Our range of Learning & Engagement work is huge. From apps for babies to our free National Schools Concert Programme; community orchestras to professional development programmes; digital care packages for care homes and our pioneering Generations projects. The RSNO aims to provide a lifetime of music. Becoming a Patron will bring you closer to the communities we serve across Scotland and provide vital support for this crucial work.

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The RSNO is dedicated to bringing new works and outstanding new talent to audiences across Scotland. Our New Works Patrons contribute a significant legacy to orchestral music that extends beyond the RSNO, providing new music for orchestras and audiences around the world – for generations to come.

### New Works Patron

Susie Thomson

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If you would like more information or would like to discuss how you can become part of the RSNO Family of Supporters, please contact Jane Donald, Director of External Relations, at [jane.donald@rsno.org.uk](mailto:jane.donald@rsno.org.uk)



We would like to thank all those who continue to generously support the RSNO's Play Your Part Appeal.



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If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Torran McEwan, Individual Giving and Partnerships Officer, in the strictest confidence, at [torran.mcewan@rsno.org.uk](mailto:torran.mcewan@rsno.org.uk)

To the many among you who have pledged to leave a gift already – thank you.





# Charitable Trusts and Foundations

Charitable trusts and foundations have a distinguished history of supporting the RSNO, both on and off stage. From one-off donations for specific projects to multi-year funding for our flagship outreach initiatives, including the National Schools Concert Programme and Young Creatives, every grant in support of our work is truly appreciated. We are grateful to the following trusts and foundations for their generosity:

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If you would like more information about our work and how you can make a difference, please contact Kirsten Reid, Trusts and Projects Coordinator, at [kirsten.reid@rsno.org.uk](mailto:kirsten.reid@rsno.org.uk)

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Our Circle members are a vital part of the RSNO family. You, our community of music-lovers, inspire and support us. To all our existing Circle members, thank you. Your unwavering support allows us to continue bringing the joy of music to all across Scotland.

When you join the RSNO Circle you gain access to exclusive benefits such as priority single ticket booking, our exclusive *Inner Circle* magazine, the RSNO Circle e-newsletter and invitations to special events such as Open Rehearsals. You also help us to bring music to so many people, from children attending our free schools concerts to people in care homes watching our digital care packages.

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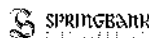
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Scottish Company No. 27809  
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THE INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ÉCOSSE PRESENTS

# TWO COASTS BY LAYALE CHAKER

WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024 AT 7PM

Violinist and composer **Layale Chaker** will be presenting extracts of *Two Coasts: Past and Current Streams*, accompanied by **musicians of Sarafand** (piano, cello, double bass, percussion). This project reimagines works by Baroque French and English composers ranging from Rameau to Dowland as intersecting streams that explore the theme of water.

Info & Booking: [ifecosse.org.uk](https://ifecosse.org.uk)  
Venue: Institut français d'Écosse  
West Parliament Square EH1 1RN





.....  
Wednesday 27 September 2023, 7.30pm  
*Scottish Chamber Orchestra:*  
**MAXIM'S 'EROICA'**  
.....

Friday 13 October 2023, 7.30pm  
*Royal Scottish National Orchestra:*  
**HEINER GOEBBELS — SONGS  
OF WAR I HAVE SEEN**  
.....

Saturday 28 October 2023, 7.30pm  
**NATIONAL SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA OF UKRAINE**  
.....

Thursday 9 November 2023, 7.30pm  
*Royal Scottish National Orchestra:*  
**RACHMANINOV PIANO  
CONCERTO NO 2**  
.....

Wednesday 13 December 2023, 7.30pm  
*Scottish Chamber Orchestra:*  
**BEETHOVEN VIOLIN  
CONCERTO WITH NICOLA  
BENEDETTI**  
.....

Thursday 4 January 2024, 7.30pm  
*Scottish Chamber Orchestra:*  
**VIENNESE NEW YEAR  
CONCERT**

.....  
Friday 26 January 2024, 7.30pm  
*BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra:*  
**VOLKOV CONDUCTS  
'PETRUSHKA'**  
.....

Friday 23 February 2024, 7.30pm  
*BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra:*  
**TCHAIKOVSKY'S FIFTH**  
.....

Thursday 7 March 2024, 7.30pm  
*Royal Scottish National Orchestra:*  
**LA MER**  
.....

Monday 18 March 2024, 7.30pm  
**CHINA SCHENZHEN  
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
.....

Monday 24 April 2024, 7.30pm  
*Scottish Chamber Orchestra:*  
**RAVEL PIANO CONCERTO  
WITH STEVEN OSBORNE**



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The information carried in this programme was correct at the time of publishing. The Scottish Orchestras and Horsecross Arts reserve the right to amend artists and programmes for any of the listed concerts if necessary.

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