



Two hundred years on from Nelson's momentous victory over the French in the Battle of Trafalgar, and 100 years after Debussy composed *L'après-midi à Naples*, the Proms takes as one of its key themes the inspiration the sea has afforded to composers through the ages.

Henry Wood's *Sea Pictures* – a staple of the Last Night of the Proms – was composed in 1905 specifically to celebrate the centenary of Nelson's triumph. This year, marking the work's own centenary, the Proms restores Wood's authentic naval bugle-calls, which herald the regular sequence of sea-songs and hornpipe, with further national sea-songs added from around the UK.



S. M. G. S. HMS Pinafore



Four of the most famous sea overtures are programmed throughout the season: Berlioz's overture *Traité de la mer* (Prom 1) sets the Proms season off to a piratical start, Mendelssohn's *The Hebrides* overture (Prom 11) and Wagner's overture to *The Flying Dutchman* (Prom 59) are two of the most evocative yet concise musical illustrations of storm-ridden seascapes, and Walton's *Peter Grimes* Overture gives yet another naval perspective to the Last Night.

Sir John Eliot Gardiner, his Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists perform Haydn's *Mass in Time of Peril* as the centrepiece of an all-Haydn Late Night Prom (Prom 7). Formally entitled *Mass in Time of Peril*, it was written in 1798 when the war against revolutionary France was at a low ebb. Stanford's *Sea Songs* draw on the glories of England's naval past with settings of poems by Sir Henry Newbolt (Prom 35).

The Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin make their Proms debut and open their Late Night Concert and with Telemann's *Mass in Time of Peril* (Prom 29) and Martyn Brabbins and the Nash Ensemble close their Late Night Prom with Meirion Bowen's arrangement of Tippett's *Sea Pictures* (Prom 70), whilst Sir Thomas Allen gives the Proms Chamber Music series a taste of the sea with Samuel Barber's *Sea Pictures* and a selection of traditional sea-songs (PCM 1).

Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra programme possibly the most famous of sea works and detailed painting of nature, Debussy's *L'après-midi à Naples* (Prom 73), completed in 1905, whilst the six movements of Thea Musgrave's *Thea Musgrave's Sea Pictures*, receiving its London première, are based on the composer's interpretations of Turner's

paintings (Prom 6). Britten's Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Gravel*, performed by Rumon Gamba and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (Prom 68), and Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Shanty*, with Gerard Schwarz and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (Prom 11), provide two of the classics of British sea music. A vivid contrast is afforded by the effervescent Gilbert & Sullivan – *HMS Pinafore* – and Sir Charles Mackerras's brilliant re-orchestration of Sullivan in *Pinafore* on the second night of the season.

English

of fairy tales – whether the traditional tales passed down orally from generation to generation, or the more sanitised or whimsical tales of the 19th century and later.

The theme bursts upon the season with the epic Purcell semi-opera *The Queen of Sheba* (Prom 3), considered by some to be the finest musical score from any English composer before Sullivan. Centred on characters from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, the work – originally a spectacular and lavish musical play – consists of powerful songwriting with interlocking musical interludes and setpieces. The concert performance is given by the Gabrieli Consort and Players and an array of British vocal talent, directed by Paul McCreech, and builds on their critically acclaimed performance at the 2003 Proms of Handel's *Solomon*. Rarely heard in its full version, Mendelssohn's youthful and imaginative interpretation of the Shakespeare play is performed this season by Thierry Fischer and the Ulster Orchestra (Prom 39).

Perhaps Hans Christian Andersen's most famous creation, *The Little Mermaid* receives two contrasting musical interpretations this season: Zemlinsky's lavish symphonic poem *Die Sirenen* is performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Conlon (Prom 67), whilst Bent Sørensen's three-movement semi-dramatic work *The Little Mermaid*, features soprano and tenor soloists (Inger Dam-Jensen and Gert Henning-Jensen) alongside the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and Girls' Choir, who are conducted by Thomas Dausgaard (Prom 38). The work was co-commissioned by the BBC Proms and the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra specifically for the Hans Christian Andersen 200th anniversary.

The bicentenary of the birth of Hans Christian Andersen allows the Proms to programme a raft of music featuring intriguing characters, vivid aural pictures and chilling contrasts of cruelty and love. Throughout the ages, composers have been inspired by the variety

of Hans Christian Andersen's tales – *The Nightingale* and *The Snow Queen* (based on *The Ice Maiden*) – form the other cornerstones of the fairy tales

theme. *T. N.* is performed by Gianandrea Noseda, the BBC Philharmonic and a host of exceptional soloists, including

BBC Symphony Orchestra concert conducted by Donald Runnicles (Prom 33); Leonidas Kavakos is the soloist for the Violin Concerto accompanied by Sir Andrew Davis and the BBC Symphony Orchestra (Prom 55); and Three Fragments from *Wozzeck* form part of Zubin Mehta's programme with the Vienna Philharmonic (Prom 71).

In addition to the centenary of Sir Michael Tippett, two further British composer centenaries are marked – Alan Rawsthorne's

the still-controversial composer's works – from *A C O T* on the opening night, performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Roger Norrington, to the rarely heard *T V S A*, performed by Richard Hickox and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (Prom 14). A Late Night Prom given by the Nash Ensemble conducted by Martyn Brabbins (Prom 70) and the BBC Singers with Stephen Cleobury programmes a variety of Tippett a cappella choral works and the *T* suite. Other key works – such as the Ritual Dances from *A M M* (Prom 31) and the Piano Concerto (Prom 34) – are interspersed throughout the season. And Sir Colin Davis, a long-time champion of Tippett's work, pairs Symphony No. 4 with Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 *E* in the London Symphony Orchestra's Prom (Prom 47).

Seventy years after his death, the music of Alban Berg, often described as the human face of Viennese modernism, is celebrated. The *Lulu* with the Lulu of the age, Christine Schäfer, forms the first half of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's Prom conducted by Daniele Gatti (Prom 44); the Three Pieces for Orchestra, Op 6, form the first half of the