

SWANSEA
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL

Swansea International Festival

Gŵyl
Ryngwladol
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2 – 17 October
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Swansea International Festival

Saturday 17 October

7.30pm

Brangwyn Hall

Dresden Philharmonic

Conductor Michael Sanderling
Cello Thomas Carroll

Wagner Overture: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg
Elgar Cello Concerto in E flat

INTERVAL

Beethoven Symphony No 3 in E flat (Eroica)

Richard Wagner (1813-83)

Overture: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

Wagner composed the overture before his opera, basing it on the motifs he intended to use. Those of the opening represent the Meistersinger, with their rigid rules and regulations. There follows part of the song with which the young knight, Walter, wins their prize – the hand of the beautiful Eva. The efforts of Beckmesser, a conceited Meistersinger, to win the prize provoke ribald comments from the apprentices. Then, with a single note on the triangle, comes the famous combination of themes, whose meaning is made clear by Hans Sachs, the great Meistersinger; the masters deserve their honour because they keep alive the craftsmanship without which inspiration is useless. Therefore the dry rules and prize song combine – a worthy winner is declared, and a young couple are united in love.

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Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934)

Cello Concerto in E minor

- 1 Adagio: Moderato
- 2 Lento: Allegro molto
- 3 Adagio
- 4 Allegro: Moderato: Allegro ma non troppo

The Cello Concerto was Elgar's last significant instrumental work of major importance. He began it in 1918 at Brinkwells, a remote cottage in Sussex, and completed it the following year. Despite a shaky first performance, it has become one of the most loved and admired pieces in the entire concerto repertoire.

The first movement opens with a short Adagio introduction in which the solo instrument plays a broad theme marked, characteristically, nobilmente. The Moderato into which this introduction quickly leads has its developed and discussed by cello and orchestra before making way for a second theme, introduced by clarinets and bassoons.

The second movement is again preceded by a slow introduction, during which suggestions of a new theme are quickly interspersed with references to the music of the opening Adagio. The main theme is a pattern of scurrying, repeated semiquavers, which remains essentially with the solo instrument in its high register. This theme, and a short cantabile motif, provide all the material for the movement which, despite its quick tempo and apparent brilliance, is agitated and distressed in mood.

The short Adagio in B flat major is a meditative solo for the cello and is based on one theme only. The intimate, gentle character of the music is enhanced by the reduction of the wind section to clarinets, bassoons and horns and by the interplay between the solo instrument and the string ensemble.

The first bars of the finale see the orchestra playing a suggestion of the springy rondo theme. Then the cello takes over, lapsing into a brief cadenza that recalls the opening of the first movement and, in doing so, reminds us that the rondo theme itself derives from this. The two episodes of the rondo provide the soloist with a real opportunity for virtuosity. After a recapitulation a memorable coda brings a reminder of both the slow movement and the 'motto' theme of the very beginning.

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Beethoven (1770 – 1828)

Symphony No 3 in E flat (Eroica)

- 1 Allegro con brio
- 2 Marche funebre: Adagio assai
- 3 Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- 4 Finale: Allegro molto

Who is the hero of Beethoven's Eroica? The story is that the Symphony was originally dedicated to Bonaparte, but Beethoven tore out the inscription in a rage when he heard that Napoleon had declared himself Emperor. When the symphony was published it bore the impersonal title Sinfonia Eroica, to which was added the words 'composed to celebrate the life of a great man'.

Who was the great man who apparently died at the end of the first movement? We may wonder why the epic grandeur of that movement and the elegiac solemnity of the second should be followed by the impulsive joy of the Scherzo, and the appearance of the Prometheus ballet music as the main subject of the Finale. We may still ask, as the critics did after the first performance, what Beethoven meant by it all.

What is more significant than any legend of the symphony's origin is Beethoven's statement to a friend after the completion of his Second Symphony: 'I am not contented with my work so far. Henceforth I shall take a new path'. It led to a new dimension of symphonic form. It was not only a matter of size and proportion; in originality of musical thought, and profundity of feeling, this symphony was then music's most momentous adventure.

Such a stupendous act of creation defies brief analysis, but the simplicity of the first and second subjects of the first movement is remarkable; the chief theme ushered in by cellos is contained within five bars. Though the development is elaborate, also note the simple but telling effect of rhythm in the Funeral March; at the first half of each bar there is a halt, a hesitation which seems to stress the sadness.

Then the Scherzo, with its leap into joyous life after a few bars of staccato muttering in the strings, is almost entirely built out of the first theme on the oboe and first violins. In the Finale, Beethoven elaborates massively on his much-favoured Prometheus ballet music theme. Whatever this may have meant to him as a symbol of creative power, it is evident here that he valued the theme for its technical possibilities. After a swift introduction the theme stated by strings pizzicato in the bass is the bass of the real theme, which is announced in the third variation. So the complete theme is really two themes of different characters. There are ten variations and the whole grandiose movement combines the variation form and fugue with infinite virtuosity.

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Dresden Philharmonic

Founded in 1870, the Dresden Philharmonic brought a new spirit to the city's public music culture with its performances at the Gewerbehause-saal. From its beginnings, the orchestra welcomed noteworthy conductors and soloists: Johannes Brahms, Peter Tchaikovsky, Antonin Dvorák and Richard Strauss came to conduct their own works. In 1909 the Dresden Philharmonic became one of the first German orchestras to perform a concert tour in the United States. Since then concert tours have taken the Dresden Philharmonic to the major music centres of Europe, the Americas and Asia.

Michael Sanderling



Born and educated in Berlin, Michael Sanderling is one of the most highly sought-after conductors of his generation. Many engagements with leading orchestras and a highly successful artistic collaboration with the Dresden Philharmonic have earned Sanderling an international reputation. He began his tenure as Principal Conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic in 2011 and will continue in this capacity until 2019. He was previously Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Kammerakademie Potsdam.

Thomas Carroll



Born in Swansea, Thomas Carroll is an exceptionally gifted cellist and one of only two artists to audition successfully for both Young Concert Artists Trust in London and Young Concert Artists, Inc. in New York. He has since gone on to give critically acclaimed debut recitals at Wigmore Hall, Alice Tully Hall (New York) and in Boston, California, Florida and Washington DC.

Thomas is currently a Professor at the Royal College of Music in London and the Yehudi Menuhin School.