



**ROYAL  
PHILHARMONIC  
ORCHESTRA**



# **Jamie Phillips conducts Elgar's Enigma Variations**

**GRIEG** *Peer Gynt: Suite No.1*

**MENDELSSOHN** *Violin Concerto*

Interval: 20 minutes

**DELIUS** *Irmelin: Prelude*

**ELGAR** *Enigma Variations*

Conductor: **Jamie Phillips**

Violin: **Irène Duval**

**FRI 15 OCTOBER 2021**

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NORTHAMPTON

# Tonight's Music

## Grieg, Mendelssohn, Delius and Elgar

### **Peer Gynt, Op.23 (1875)**

**Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)**

**Suite No.1 Op.46 (publ. 1888)**

1 *Morning Mood*

2 *Åse's Death*

3 *Anitra's Dance*

4 *In the Hall of the Mountain King*

When in 1874 celebrated playwright Henrik Ibsen invited Grieg to compose the incidental music for his groundbreaking five-act drama *Peer Gynt*, the composer was initially less than enthusiastic. Yet, as he began making sketches, it dawned on him that this might be the masterwork he had struggled for so long to achieve. In a letter to his friend, Franz Beyer, he announced excitedly: 'I've done something about the Hall of the Old Man of Dovre!'.

Despite its seemingly limitless flow of spontaneous invention, *Peer Gynt* caused Grieg endless problems – especially the theatre-band orchestration. Indeed, following the death of his parents within a fortnight of one another, he even began to wonder whether he had lost his creative facility. His struggles were compounded by having to compose to the precise timings provided by the theatre management. Yet he eventually produced around 90 minutes of music, encouraged by the fact that Ibsen had advanced him a generous 50 percent of his fee. Grieg later created two orchestral suites using extracts from the score, the first of which we are hearing tonight. They achieved huge international acclaim and,

much to Grieg's frustration, the full piece has been left on the outer fringes of the repertoire.

Tonight's selection opens with *Morning Mood*, originally the opening section of the third act, which evokes a glorious sunrise over the Arabian Desert. There follows a heart-rending depiction of the death of Gynt's beloved mother, Åse, and a sultry dance, whose exotic sensuality captures the beguiling charms of the Bedouin's daughter, Anitra. The finale of the first suite sees Gynt trying desperately to escape the troll-infested terrors of the Hall of the Mountain King.

## **Violin Concerto In E Minor, Op.64 (1884)**

**Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**

1. *Allegro molto appassionato*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegretto non troppo - Allegro molto vivace*

In July 1838, Mendelssohn informed his friend and mentor in all things violinistic, Ferdinand David: 'I should like to write a violin concerto for you this winter. The beginning of one in E minor runs constantly through my head, giving me no peace'. Things were a little slow to get started, however, and a year later Mendelssohn was clearly struggling: 'The task is not an easy one. You ask that it should be brilliant, but how can anyone like me do this?' Nevertheless, and despite the composer's considerable doubts and misgivings, David was evidently delighted with the provisional draft of the new concerto, enthusing: 'This is going to be something very special'.

Ferdinand David had been appointed Konzertmeister of the Gewandhaus Orchestra by Mendelssohn in 1836, and such was the composer's devotion in tailoring the concerto to David's exact requirements that it took him a further five years to complete. Even after the score had been submitted for publication in December 1844, the composer was still making last minute revisions and corrections. This most effortlessly mellifluous of all the





great violin concertos was therefore not the product of a blinding moment of inspiration but – unusually for Mendelssohn – several years of painstaking alteration and refinement.

It is rather ironic that on the day of the première, 13 March 1845, Mendelssohn was too unwell to conduct the masterwork on which he had lavished so much care – his replacement was the Danish composer, Niels Gade. It was after this historic first performance that Schumann made his famous remark to David, the soloist, dedicatee and also a keen amateur composer: ‘You see, you have now played the concerto you always wanted to compose yourself!’

Interval: 20 minutes

## **Irmelin (1892): Prelude**

### **Frederick Delius (1862–1934)**

Delius might never have become a composer had he continued running the Florida orange plantation bought specifically for him to manage by his father in 1882. After four years he could stand the tedium no longer and headed back across the Atlantic to study music full-time at the Leipzig Conservatory. Here, he rekindled his natural enthusiasm for all things Nordic through his friendship with Edvard Grieg, while visits to Paris awakened in him such a passion for French culture that

in 1897, he settled permanently in the picturesque village of Grez-sur-Loing.

Throughout the 1890s, one can sense Delius gradually feeling his way towards his own inimitable musical style. In 1892 he produced both his first published piece – the *Légende* for violin and orchestra – and his first of six operas or ‘lyric dramas’, *Irmelin*. This remarkably assured and individual work established his musical credentials in a form that he felt had the potential ‘to become the supreme vehicle for the expression of the finest and subtlest psychological ideas.’

Remarkably it was not until sixty years later in 1953 that *Irmelin* received its premiere under the baton of Delius’s most devoted supporter Sir Thomas Beecham, conducting the orchestra he had founded in 1946, the Royal Philharmonic. The popular Prelude that we hear tonight was dictated by the ailing Delius in 1931 to his devoted amanuensis, Eric Fenby, and is based on four themes taken from the original opera’s preludes to acts one and three.

## **Enigma Variations, Op. 36 (1898-9)**

### **Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)**

*Theme. CAE (Var. 1). HDS-P (Var. 2). RBT (Var. 3). WMB (Var. 4). RPA (Var. 5). Ysobel (Var. 6). Troyte (Var. 7). WN (Var. 8). Nimrod (Var. 9). Dorabella (Var. 10). GRS (Var. 11). BGN (Var. 12). \*\*\* (Var. 13). EDU (Var. 14)*

Arguably the finest of all Elgar’s large-scale works, the Variations are in effect a series of character portraits dedicated ‘To my friends pictured within.’ He began the work with the most humorous of intentions (‘I’ve written what I think they [i.e. his friends] would have written, if they were asses enough to compose’), but – as he later confessed – he ‘continued in deep seriousness.’ Not all is introspective, however, as is hilariously illustrated by Elgar’s tone-deaf architect friend’s valiant attempts at playing the piano (Variation 7, Troyte Griffith), and his fond portrait of George Robertson Sinclair’s bulldog (Variation 11) as it falls in the River Wye and scrambles to get back out again. Hew David Steuart-Powell’s habit



of running his fingers over the piano keys as a prelude to chamber music sessions with Elgar and friends is also gently sent up in Variation 2.

The more cryptic headings for each variation were successfully decoded long ago – the ravishing ‘Nimrod’ Variation (No. 9), for example, alludes to Elgar’s publisher at Novello’s, August Jaeger (‘Jaeger’ in German means ‘hunter’, hence the reference to the Biblical ‘Nimrod’). Variation 13 is marked purely with asterisks, and many now believe that they refer to one Helen Weaver, a music student to whom Elgar was once engaged and utterly heartbroken at losing. Elgar and his wife also make appearances at opposite ends of the work: Variation 1 is headed C.A.E. (Caroline Alice Elgar), and the rip-roaring finale (Variation 14) E.D.U. (Elgar himself)

Rather more perplexing is the ‘Enigma’ of the title which refers to a theme that apparently forms a ‘silent counterpoint’ to the one we actually hear at the beginning. *Auld lang syne* and *God Save the Queen* are particular favourites, although recent years have witnessed a whole series of ingenious solutions. Elgar himself left us almost totally in the dark: ‘The Enigma I will not explain – its “dark saying” must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the apparent connexion between the Variations and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set, another and larger theme “goes” but is not played’.

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# Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

**Music Director: Vasily Petrenko**

As the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) celebrates its 75th Anniversary, its mission to enrich lives through orchestral experiences that are uncompromising in their excellence and inclusive in their appeal places it at the forefront of music-making in the UK. Performing approximately 200 concerts each season and with a worldwide audience of more than half-a-million people, the Orchestra embraces a broad repertoire that enables it to reach the most diverse audience of any British symphony orchestra. Whilst artistic integrity remains paramount, the RPO is unafraid to push boundaries and is equally at home recording video game, film and television soundtracks and working with pop stars, as it is performing the great symphonic repertoire.

Join the journey and discover more about the RPO at [www.rpo.co.uk](http://www.rpo.co.uk)



## **Conductor: Jamie Phillips**

Jamie Phillips's penetrating insight and innate musicality convey an infectious joy in his music-making. Praised for his *"ability to pick up a familiar piece by the scruff of its neck and shake invigorating new life into it"* (Bachtrack), Phillips is a natural story-teller whose clear and expressive hands deliver his ardent vision.

Jamie Phillips has developed a strong guest conducting profile across Europe, recently conducting the Philharmonia, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna Tonkünstler Orchestra, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, Munich Chamber Orchestra, and the Oslo Philharmonic, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Opera de Lyon and Camerata Salzburg.

To read his full biography, go to **[www.jamie-phillips.com/bio](http://www.jamie-phillips.com/bio)**





## **Violin: Irène Duval**

In 2021 Irène was a prize-winner at the Young Classical Artists Trust International Auditions.

Born in France, to a French father and Korean mother, Irène grew up in Japan and Hong Kong before returning to France at the age of 11. Since graduating from the Conservatoire de Paris and Kronberg Academy Irène has emerged as a compelling and versatile performer with a strong interest in combining little-known works with works central to the repertoire.

Recent highlights include a recital at Wigmore Hall with Steven Isserlis (live streamed and broadcast by Radio 3) performing Schubert's E flat Trio at the first evening concert with an audience, and a Gala Concert at the Philharmonie de Paris with Khatia Buniatishvili.

To read her full biography, go to [www.ireneduval.com/en/Biography/](http://www.ireneduval.com/en/Biography/)

# The Orchestra

## **First Violins**

### **Tamás András**

Esther Kim

Eriko Nagayama

Andrew Klee

Kay Chappell

Anthony Protheroe

Erik Chapman

Rosemary Wainwright

Imogen East

Cindy Foster

Edward McCullagh

Jeff Moore

## **Second Violins**

### **Andrew Storey**

Charlotte Ansbergs

Jennifer Dear

Peter Graham

Stephen Payne

Manuel Porta

Sali-Wyn Ryan

Nicola Hutchings

Sarah Thornett

Colin Callow

## **Violas**

### **Abigail Fenna**

Chian Lim

Esther Harling

Jonathan Hallett

Clive Howard

Joseph Fisher

Pamela Ferriman

Raquel Lopez Bolivar

## **Cellos**

### **Chantal Webster**

Roberto Sorrentino

Jean-Baptiste Toselli

William Heggart

George Hoult

Tim Steggals

Colin Alexander

Lucy Gijsbers

## **Double Basses**

### **David Gordon**

Ben Wolstenholme

Mark O'Leary

David FC Johnson

Siret Lust

Joseph Cowie



# The Orchestra (cont.)

## **Flutes**

**Emer McDonough**

Joanna Marsh

Katherine Bicknell

## **Piccolo**

**Katherine Bicknell**

## **Oboes**

**John Roberts**

Katie Bennington

## **Cor Anglais**

**Patrick Flanagan**

## **Clarinets**

**Sonia Sielaff**

Harry Cameron Penny

## **Bass Clarinet**

**Katy Ayling**

## **Bassoons**

**Paul Boyes**

Helen Storey

## **Contrabassoon**

**Fraser Gordon**

## **French Horns**

**Alexander Edmundson**

Kathryn Saunders

Andrew Budden

Tim Anderson

Richard Ashton

## **Trumpets**

**Matthew Williams**

Adam Wright

Toby Street

## **Trombones**

**Matthew Gee**

Matthew Knight

## **Bass Trombone**

**Josh Cirtina**

## **Tuba**

**Kevin Morgan**

## **Timpani**

**Elsa Bradley**

## **Percussion**

**Stephen Quigley**

**Martin Owens**

Gerald Kirby

## **Harp**

**Suzy Willison-Kawalec**



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