

## **Bramwell Tovey conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

Friday, November 23, 2018 at 8:00pm

Prelude Recital at 6:45pm

Pre-concert Talk at 7:15pm

This is the 886<sup>th</sup> concert in Koerner Hall

**Bramwell Tovey**, conductor

**Hannah Craig**, cello

**Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

### **PROGRAM**

Bramwell Tovey: *Field of Light*

Edward Elgar: Cello Concerto in E Minor, op. 85

- I. Adagio – Moderato
- II. Lento – Allegro molto
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro, ma non troppo

Gustav Mahler: *Blumine*

### INTERMISSION

Richard Strauss: Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, TrV227, op. 59

## **Bramwell Tovey**

Born in Ilford, England, July 11, 1953

### ***Field of Light* (2017)**

Bramwell Tovey's catalogue includes an opera (*The Inventor*, 2011), concertos for cello (2001) and for trumpet (*Songs of the Paradise Saloon*, 2009), orchestral, brass band, choral ensembles, film scores, and many arrangements. His *Requiem for a Charred Skull* for brass band and large chorus won the 2003 Juno Award as Classical Composition of the Year. In 2005, Tovey wrote *The Night to Sing*, which draws inspiration from the celebrations for VE Day, 1945, as the test piece for the British Open Brass Band Championship. *Field of Light* (2017), written for and dedicated to Tania Miller, the outgoing music director of the Victoria Symphony, takes its starting point from the 2017 centenary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge in northern France, widely seen as the coming of age of the Canadian military. Military victory was achieved, with the four divisions of the Canadian Corps fighting side-by-side, though at the terrible cost of 3,598 dead out of 10,602 Canadian casualties. Tovey writes: "Using fragments of the 1878 hymn 'Breathe on me, breath of life. Fill me with life anew ... that I may never die ...' my intention was to try and imagine the psyche of a soldier awaiting the moment of attack, just before dawn, as the battlefield is bathed in light." *Field of Light* is scored for chamber orchestra, flute, cor anglais, bassoon, two horns, celeste, and strings.

## **Edward Elgar**

Born in Broadheath, nr. Worcester, England, June 02, 1857; died in Worcester, England, February 23, 1934

### **Cello Concerto in E Minor, op. 85 (1918-19)**

The 20-year period, from the 1899 success of his *Enigma Variations*, to 1919, the year of the Cello Concerto, formed the heart and soul of Elgar's composing career. This was the time of the grandeur of the Marches, the lush Violin Concerto written for Kreisler, the large choral works, and the majesty of the First Symphony written for Richter. It is noble music, much of it – often, these days, viewed through a prism of Edwardian assurance and ceremony. But while his music carried the pomp and circumstance of the times, Elgar himself had doubts. Then the 1914-18 war left

him depressed and abstracted. He turned to chamber music, expressing his melancholy in the Piano Quintet and String Quartet of 1918. Once he began composition of the concerto, his wife Alice, eight years his senior, died. Nevertheless, emotionally, the Cello Concerto is one of the most tightly wrought of all Elgar's compositions. Its scoring is slender and economical throughout, often closer to chamber music than to full symphonic writing. "It is good and alive," Elgar said at the time of writing the concerto. He also described the work as 'large,' referring to its deeply personal expression of a man whose attitude and expectations from life had been turned upside down.

At the formal level, the concerto's four movements are divided two and two, with the short opening recitative turning up again in the second and fourth movements and providing the main subject of the finale. The concerto develops in a personal and unified way. The second movement is a will-o'-the-wisp scherzo, but tense and agitated beneath the surface. The slow movement, a mere 60 bars long, is an eloquent song without words, and the emotional centre of the concerto. The finale opens with march-like assurance, but it is not long before a mood of heart-aching wistfulness returns. At the end, the questioning is brushed aside, but it is the haunting, elegiac mood of the Adagio that hangs over the close.

## Gustav Mahler

Born in Kalischt, nr. Iglau [now Kaliště, Jihlava], Czech Republic, July 7, 1860; died in Vienna, Austria, May 18, 1911  
**Blumine (1884)**

There was a 70-year gap between the last time Mahler conducted this short *Andante*, June 3, 1894, in Weimar and its next public performance under the baton of Benjamin Britten at the 1967 Aldeburgh Festival, in England. Mahler included it as the second of five movements of his First Symphony, then known as *Titan, a Tone Poem in Symphonic Form*, referring to the driven, idealist hero of Jean Paul Richter's novel, with whom Mahler eagerly identified. Mahler subsequently rejected this title and others, together with the *Blumine* movement, in the four-movement, revised symphony he premiered two years later and published in 1889. *Blumine* had, in fact, been borrowed from earlier incidental music he wrote to a once popular but now forgotten play, *The Trumpeter of Säkkingen*, where it functioned as a serenade, played by Werner the trumpeter across the moonlit Rhine to the castle where his beloved lives. Like the original title of the symphony, the title *Blumine* is drawn from the writings of Richter. While rooted in the German word *Blume* (flower), the word appears to have been an invention of Richter's imagination. Mahler's thumbprint is evident from the start of his tender and very beautiful – if, perhaps, somewhat sentimental – movement. The trumpet theme is heard throughout the piece, played by horn, oboe, and clarinet as well as the strings, in a much smaller configuration than Mahler uses in his final version of the symphony. Mahler told conductor Bruno Walter that he felt *Blumine* to be 'insufficiently symphonic' to be included in the symphony. But that has not prevented conductors from questioning Mahler's final thoughts and including *Blumine* in performances of the symphony. Heard alone, we can enjoy it as a young composer's lyrical portrayal of the tenderness of nocturnal young love.

## Richard Strauss

Born in Munich, Germany, June 11, 1864; died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, September 8, 1949  
**Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, TrV227, op. 59 (1909-10)**

After a decade of writing highly successful tone poems, Strauss turned to opera, and his most enduring and productive collaboration was with the Austrian playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929). Their biggest success came early with *Der Rosenkavalier* and its bittersweet and risqué portrayal of the doomed love of a married noblewoman for a young man of half her age. The young man is also her cousin. The fact that he is played by a trousers-role soprano further spiked audience interest. Today, with no hint of *scandale*, *Der Rosenkavalier* continues to grace the opera stages of the world, more than a century after its Dresden premiere, January 26, 1911. Of course, there are many more layers to the story than that of a straightforward love story. And while Strauss's music graphically conveys passion and physicality at one level (spectacularly so in the opening bedroom scene), it also revealingly opens a window onto different strata of the class system, to the subtleties of language, to age and to youth, and to grace under pressure. The score contains some of the most ravishing music Strauss wrote, notably in the closing scene where the Marschallin poignantly watches and encourages the young Octavian, her lover, to cross the room and join his young, new love, the beautiful Sophie. Past, present, and future are resolved in the exquisite music.

Hofmannstahl and Strauss set their opera in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Vienna, during the reign of the Empress Maria Theresa. Although minuets would be the historically appropriate dance for the dance scenes, Strauss went one better and turned to that most Viennese of 19<sup>th</sup> century dances, the waltz. *Der Rosenkavalier* is the apogee of his own association with the waltz. In the 1940s, Strauss himself drew two dance sequences from the opera for concert use, but not before it had been plundered by many hands for many other arrangements. The Suite usually played by orchestras (and to be played tonight) was copyrighted in 1945, with the composer's approval (he urgently needed money at the time, since royalties from his music had dried up during the war). It is believed to have been made by the Polish-American conductor Artur Rodzinski.

- Program notes © 2018 Keith Horner

## **Bramwell Tovey**

### **Conductor**

Grammy and Juno Award-winning conductor and composer Bramwell Tovey has been announced as the new Principal Conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra, taking up his position in January 2018.

Following an exceptional 18-year tenure as music director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (VSO), which concluded in summer 2018, he now returns as the orchestra's Music Director Emeritus. Under his leadership, the VSO toured China, Korea, the United States, and across Canada. His VSO innovations included the establishment of the VSO School of Music of which he is Artistic Advisor, the VSO's annual festival of contemporary music, and the VSO Orchestral Institute at Whistler, a comprehensive summer orchestral training program for young musicians held in the scenic mountain resort of Whistler in British Columbia.

During 2018-19, his guest appearances include the Chicago, St. Louis, Houston, Indianapolis, and Toronto symphonies, and special Christmas programs with The Philadelphia Orchestra. In January, he will return to the Winnipeg Symphony's New Music Festival which he initiated during his tenure there.

In 2013, he was appointed an honorary Officer of the Order of Canada for services to music. Since 2006, he has been Artistic Director of the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain and, in 2017, he joined the faculty of Boston University where he teaches conducting and oversees the university's extensive orchestra program.

## **Hannah Craig**

### **Cello**

Hannah Craig considers it a very distinct privilege to be studying music during a time in which the world requires art with great desperation. Cello has been the crux of her life for as long as she can remember, having been born into a family of great musical talent. Both of her parents teach at The Royal Conservatory and, prior to attending university, she was a scholarship student under the tutelage of Joowon Kim and David Hetherington at The Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists. In 2013, she began her undergraduate studies at McGill University in the studio of Matt Haimovitz. It was during these four years that her love for the cello and her appreciation for its versatility was greatly amplified. She had the opportunity to be a part of UCCELLO, Haimovitz's Grammy Award nominated cello ensemble, in which she has performed jazz and rock as well as classical music. During the summer of 2016, Ms. Craig was extremely fortunate to have been the only Canadian cellist invited to the Piatigorsky International Cello Festival as a Fellow. She had the opportunity to work and study with esteemed musicians such as Desmond Hoebig, Richard Aaron, Richard Lester, Clive Greensmith, Daniel Phillips, and Kyoko Hashimoto. Currently, she is completing her Artist Diploma under the tutelage of Andrés Díaz and Hans *Jørgen* Jensen, and is the recipient of the full-tuition Sheryl & David Kerr Scholarship.

## **Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

### **Joaquin Valdepeñas, Resident Conductor**

The Royal Conservatory Orchestra (RCO), part of the Temerty Orchestral Program, is widely regarded as an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America. Through the RBC Guest Conductor Program, four renowned conductors work with the RCO each season, allowing GGS students to gain experience through professional rehearsal and performance conditions. The week culminates in a Koerner Hall performance under the batons of such distinguished guest conductors as Johannes Debus, Andrés Keller, Gábor Takács-Nagy, and Bramwell Tovey, who lead the RCO this season. Past guest conductors have included Ihnatowycz Chair in Piano

Leon Fleisher, Sir Roger Norrington, Mario Bernardi, Richard Bradshaw, Nathan Brock, Julian Kuerti, Uri Mayer, Tania Miller, Tito Muñoz, Peter Oundjian, Ivars Taurins, and Lior Shambadal. The RCO ensures that instrumental students in the Bachelor of Music and the Artist Diploma Program of The Glenn Gould School graduate with extensive orchestral performance experience. Additionally, winners of The Glenn Gould School Concerto Competition have the opportunity to appear each year as soloists with the RCO. Graduates of the RCO have joined the ranks of the greatest orchestras in the world, including the Cleveland Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the BBC Orchestra, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, Tafelmusik, the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus. The RCO has been heard repeatedly on the national broadcasts of the CBC Radio, has been invited to perform at the Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre in Kingston, and toured China during the 2004-05 season.