



WHITE ROCK
CONCERTS

2018-2019
OUR 62ND SEASON

MAHLER'S
SONG OF THE EARTH

SUSAN PLATTS, MEZZO
BENJAMIN BUTTERFIELD, TENOR
WITH THE JOHN AVISON CHAMBER ORCHESTRA,
CONDUCTED BY PETER DALA

Friday, October 26, 2018

About the Artists



Peter Dala

Born in Toronto, Peter Dala has had an impressive and extensive musical career which includes years of conducting and playing with various ballet companies around the world. He studied piano and conducting at England's Royal College of Music and while in London, he worked at the Royal Ballet School, which led him to the Basel Ballet in Switzerland as conductor and pianist. With Basel Ballet he conducted in Monte Carlo, New York, Beijing and Israel. He worked at the International Opera Studio, Zurich Opera, where he conducted his first opera, and guest conducted for the Zurich Ballet.

In 1988, Mr. Dala joined the Hungarian State Opera and Ballet in Budapest, where he conducted both opera and ballet performances. In 1996, he moved back to Canada and joined Edmonton Opera as chorus director/repertoireur, and since 2002 has been Resident Conductor. Mr. Dala started conducting for Alberta Ballet in 2001 with the Nutcracker, and was appointed Music Director in 2005.



Susan Platts

British-born Canadian mezzo-soprano Susan Platts brings a rich, distinctive and soulful voice to an nearly all-inclusive range of concert, opera and recital repertoire for alto and mezzo-soprano.

She is most renowned for her Mahler interpretations, her recordings including both the full and chamber versions of *Das Lied von der Erde* as well as *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the Smithsonian Chamber Players and Santa Fe Pro Musica on the Dorian label.

About the Artists *(continued)*

Ms. Platts has commissioned a work for mezzo-soprano and orchestra from celebrated Canadian composer Marjan Mozetich entitled *Under the Watchful Sky*, comprised of three songs using ancient Chinese texts from Shi Jing (“*The Book of Songs*”) that explore the universal passions and tribulations of humankind, and was premiered by the Québec Symphony under Yoav Talmi in November 2010.

Especially well-versed in art song, Ms. Platts has appeared on many distinguished series including twice for both the Vocal Arts Society at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and Ladies Morning Musical Club in Montreal, the Aldeburgh Connection in Toronto, and on both the Frick Collection and Lincoln Center “*Art of the Song*” series in New York City. Her first solo disc, of songs by Robert Schumann, Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms on the ATMA label earned considerable critical acclaim.



Benjamin Butterfield

Praised by The New York Times as "clarion voiced and vibrant", tenor Benjamin Butterfield is known for his performances throughout North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. He has performed with many of the world's leading conductors including Sir Andrew Davis, James Conlon, Nicholas McGegan, Charles Dutoit, Leonard Slatkin, Bramwell Tovey, Seiji Ozawa, Bernard Labadie, Yannick Nezet-Seguin, Jeffrey Thomas, Trevor Pinnock, Bruno Weil and Marc Minkowski.

He continues to appear annually with the Bach Choir of Bethlehem including their upcoming 111th annual Bach Festival. His other performances include Carnegie Hall with Orchestra of St. Luke's (Haydn's *Creation*), Lincoln Center with American Classical Orchestra, Utah Symphony (Mozart's *Requiem*) and Britten's *Serenade and War Requiem* with L'Orchestre Lyrique de Montreal and Victoria Symphony.

About the Artists *(continued)*

As a prolific recording artist, Mr. Butterfield has recently recorded the Rhien transcription of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* for Yellow Barn and a sixth CD of *Ukrainian Art Song* for the Ukrainian Art Song Project in Toronto. As associate Professor, head of voice and co-head of performance for the School of Music at the University of Victoria, Butterfield is the 2015 recipient of the UVic Craigdarroch Award for Excellence in Artistic Expression.

John Avison Chamber Orchestra

For 70 years, from 1938 until 2008 the Canadian Broadcast Corporation maintained a recording and broadcast orchestra at its Vancouver studios. For its final fifteen years, the ***CBC Vancouver Chamber Orchestra*** stood as the last remaining radio orchestra anywhere in North America.

The orchestra was founded in the early days of Canadian broadcasting by John Patrick Avison who remained its conductor until 1980. In its heyday in the 60's and 70's, the ***CBC Vancouver Orchestra*** broadcast as many as 39 hour-long concerts each season. Avison, who was known equally as a pianist and accompanist for visiting artists, dedicated much of his conducting career to the performance of contemporary works by leading Canadian composers. Many important 20th century works were written especially for the ***CBC Vancouver Chamber Orchestra***.

In recent seasons, the orchestra has been re-established as the ***John Avison Chamber Orchestra***, featuring key players of the Vancouver freelance musical community. It is dedicated to the faithful rendition of the great orchestra repertoire which John Avison first cultivated in Vancouver, and to accompanying numerous visiting guest artists.



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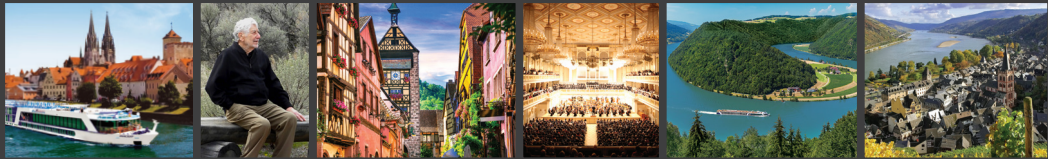
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Ben Heppner*

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Programme

MAHLER'S SONG OF THE EARTH

Soloists: Susan Platts and Benjamin Butterfield
Conductor: Peter Dala

Violins: Patricia Shih, Yuel Yawney

Viola: Nikita Pokrebnoy

Cello: Sungyong Lim

Bass: David Brown

Flute/piccolo: Laura Vanek

Oboe/English horn: Emma Ringrose

Clarinet/Eb clarinet/bass clarinet: AK Coope

Bassoon: Jesse Read

French Horn: Holly Bryan

Percussion: Martin Fisk

Piano: Elizabeth Bergmann

Harmonium/celeste: Marcel Bergmann

Scherzo from Octet in F major D 803

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918)

INTERMISSION

Das Lied von der Erde

Gustav Mahler (1860 - 1911)
arr. Arnold Schoenberg and Rainer Riehn

I. Das Trinklied von Jammer der Erde (Allegro Pesante) - *The Drinking Song of Earth's Sorrow or The Drinking Song of Earthly Woe*

II. Der Einsame im Herbst (Etwas schleichend. Ermüdet) - *The Solitary One in Autumn*

III. Von der Jugend (Behaglich heiter) - *Youth*

IV. Von der Schönheit (Comodo. Dolcissimo) - *Beauty*

V. Der Trunkene im Frühling (Allegro) - *The Drunkard in Spring*

VI. Der Abschied (Schwer) - *The Farewell*

***Das Lied von der Erde* - Gustav Mahler (1860 - 1911)**

The first movement sets a tone for the rest of the piece with its refrain, “Dark is life, is death”, each successive repeat sung a semitone higher. Like many drinking poems by Li Po, the original poem mixes drunken exaltation with a deep sadness. The music verges on chaos and madness, dense and loud but vivid. The abrasive tone of Chinese opera is exploited to great effect.

The second movement is a much more subdued piece whose tone colors can be described as “faded gold”. It begins with a repetitive shuffling in the strings that brings to mind the drifting of leaves, mirroring the restlessness of the soul. Solo wind instruments pierce through the fog. The singer laments the dying of flowers, the passing of beauty.

The third movement creates an intentionally artificial scene of ancient China, “friends, beautifully dressed, drinking, chatting, some writing down verses.” The music in this movement is the most obviously pentatonic.

In the fourth movement, young girls are picking flowers on the riverbank; young boys ride by on their horses. The music of this movement is mostly delicate and sensuous, with a violent outburst in the brass as the young men ride by. One of the girls casts “long looks of yearning” after her secret lover. And the long gaze of the music itself lingers after the last words have been sung, almost as if unwilling to part with it.

The true scherzo of the work is the fifth movement- the narrator is enjoying himself perhaps too much, like a man who has nothing left to lose. The drunkard rages at life, which has become a series of unnatural shocks and jolts, without memory or continuity. “What has spring to do with me?” he cries. In the middle section a solo violin introduces a moment of tenderness. Here the violin is the voice of a bird, singing outside the drunkard’s window, telling him that spring has come. But to the drunk man, real life appears “as in a dream”.

The final movement is nearly as long as the previous five movements combined. Its text is drawn from two different poems, both involving the theme of leave-taking. The instruments fall in small clusters or play by themselves, each voice piercing the emptiness for a moment before breaking off, as if choked by what does not bear saying. In the instrumental funeral march at the center of the movement, these voices become more and more discordant. This is the life-world whose harsh essence becomes clear to the one leaving it; yet he holds onto this world with the last of his strength.

Text and translation of Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde

1. Drinking song of the sorrow of the earth

The wine already beckons
from the golden goblet,
but don't drink just yet -
first, I'll sing you a song!
The song of sorrow shall sound out
in laughter in your soul.
When sorrow draws near,
the gardens of the soul lie wasted,
both joy and song wilt and die.
Dark is life, dark is death.
[Your cellar holds
plenty of golden wine!]
Master of this house!
Your cellar holds
plenty of golden wine!
Here, this lute shall be mine!
Strumming the lute
and draining glasses,
those are the things
that go well together.
A full goblet of wine
at the right time
is worth more
than all the riches of this world!
Dark is life, dark is death.
The firmament is forever blue,
and the earth
Will remain for a long time

and blossom in spring.
But you, Man/Woman,
how long will you live?
Not even for a hundred years
are you allowed to revel
in all the rotten
trinkets of this earth!
Look down there!
In the moonlight,
on the graves
crouches a wild, ghostly figure -
It's a monkey!
Listen how the sound
of its howls pierce
the sweet fragrance of life!
Now take the wine!
Now is the time, Comrades!
Drain your golden goblets to the bottom!

2. The Lonely one in autumn

Blueish autumn mists
hover over the lake;
white frost covers all grasses;
One would think an artist
had strewn jade dust
over the delicate stems.
The sweet fragrance
of the flowers
has been blown away;
a cold wind bends their stems down.
Soon the withered golden petals

Text and translation of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*

of lotus flowers
will float by on the water.
My heart is weary.
My little lamp has gone out
with a hiss;
reminding me of sleep.
I am coming to you,
beloved resting place!
Yes, give me rest -
I need to be refreshed!

I weep a lot in my loneliness.
The autumn in my heart
has lasted too long.
Sun of love,
will you never shine again,
to gently dry my bitter tears?

3. *On youth*

In the middle of the small lake
stands a pavilion made of green
and white porcelain.

Like a tiger's back
the bridge of jade arches
across to the pavilion.

Friends sit in the little house,
beautifully dressed, drinking, chatting;
some are writing down verses.

Their silk sleeves glide
back, their silk caps

pushed jauntily back on their heads.
On the small lakes' still surface,
all strange things are shown
as a mirror image.

Everything is turned on its head
in the pavilion made of green
and white porcelain.

Like a half-moon seems the bridge,
its arch inverted. Friends,
beautifully dressed, drinking, chatting.

4. *On beauty*

Young girls pick flowers,
pick lotus flowers at the water's edge.
They sit among bushes and leaves,
Gathering blossoms in their laps
and calling to one another teasingly.

Golden sunlight weaves
around the figures,
mirroring them in the shiny water.
The sun reflects their slender limbs,
their sweet eyes,
and Zephyr lifts
with flattering caresses
the fabric of their sleeves,
carrying the magic
of their fragrances through the air.

O look, what handsome boys
are gathering there along the shore

Text and translation of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*

on their brave horses,
Shining far and bright like sunbeams;
Already among the branches
of the green willows,
the fresh-faced youth
are approaching!
The horse of one of them
whinnies merrily,
and shies and dashes away;
over flowers, grasses,
hooves are swinging,
crushing the fallen blossoms
like a storm.
Ha! How its mane
flutters in a frenzy,
How hot the steam
is from its nostrils!
The golden sun weaves
around the figures,
mirroring them in the shiny water.

And the most beautiful
of the young women
sends long, yearning looks after him.
Her proud posture is only a pretense.
In the sparkle of her wide eyes,
in the darkness of her burning gaze,
the agitation of her heart
still lingers on, lamenting.

5. The drunkard in Spring

If life is only a dream,
why then the toil and misery?
I drink until I can no more,
The whole day long!
And when I can drink no more,
because my body and soul are full,
I stagger to my doorway
and sleep wonderfully!

What do I hear when I awake?
Listen!
A bird singing in the tree.
I ask him if it is spring yet,
I think I'm dreaming.

The bird twitters, "Yes! Spring
is here, it has come overnight!"
Roused from deep contemplation
I listen
The bird sings and laughs!

I fill my goblet once again
and drain it to the bottom
and sing, until the moon shines out
from the pitch-black sky!

And when I can sing no longer,
I fall asleep again,
for what do I care about spring?
Let me be drunk!

Text and translation of Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde

6. The farewell

The sun vanishes
behind the mountains.
Evening descends
into all the valleys,
with its cool,
refreshing shadows.
O look! Like a silver boat,
the moon floats up
onto the sky's blue lake.
I feel a fine wind blowing
behind the dark spruce!

The stream sings pleasantly
through the darkness.
The flowers turn pale
in the twilight.
The earth breathes,
full of peace and sleep,
and all longing wants
to dream now.
Weary people make their way home,
to learn again in their sleep
forgotten happiness and youth!
The birds perch silently
on their branches.
The world is falling asleep!

A cool breeze blows
in the shade of my spruce.
I stand here and wait for my friend;
I wait to bid him a last farewell.

O my friend,
I long to enjoy at your side
the beauty of this evening.
Where are you?
You leave me alone for so long!
I wander up and down with my lute,
on paths swelling with soft grass.
O beauty! O world,
drunk with eternal love and life!

He climbed down from his horse
and offered his friend
the drink of farewell.
he asked him where he was heading,
and why it had to be so.
He spoke - there was sadness in his
voice: You, my friend,
Fortune has not favoured me
in this world!
Where am I going?
I go away,
I'll walk into the mountains.
I seek peace for my lonely heart.
I walk towards my homeland, my abode.
I shall never wander far from there.
Quiet is my heart as it awaits its hour!
Everywhere the good earth
blossoms in spring and turns green
once again!
Everywhere and forever,
distant spaces shine their blue light!
Forever... forever...

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Fiddler on the Roof in TukTuk

I'm always pleased to see the *John Avison Orchestra* taking part in our *White Rock Concerts* programme. As you see, the orchestra is as versatile as the repertoire requires. Today it is just 13 musicians. At the next concert in November, you will be hearing the winds of the *John Avison Orchestra* in the rarely heard Mozart *Gran' Partita*.

In the 70's, when John Avison was still active, the orchestra embarked on numerous remarkable tours to remote regions of Canada.

One such tour took an orchestra of 22 musicians as far north as Tuktoyaktuk on the edge of the Arctic Ocean. Long before the oil boom, "Tuk" was still a settlement without streets. There was an air strip, but no terminal building. The runway, just 200 metres away from the centre of town was frozen solid many months of the year, and gumbo mud for the rest.

Downtown Tuk boasted a Hudson's Bay store, a power station, a school, a post office, a Northern Store, an RCMP office, and a scattering of houses and huts set apparently without design, along the waterfront.

When the orchestra arrived, one blustery April morning, the town appeared strangely deserted. Not a soul in the post office. Nobody in the RCMP office. The school, empty, silent. But warm, and heated. Was it the wrong day? The wrong town? Had the pilot landed by mistake in Aklavik - 100 kilometres in the wrong direction?

And then a janitor arrived, sweeping the gym floor. "We're here for the concert...." "Right" - he says. "11 o'clock!" (The school clock says 10.50) "They'll be here. They're all out fishing. I'll dig up some chairs." he adds loquaciously.

John has an idea. Sound is amplified across ice. He points to concertmaster Cam Trowsdale. "You! - become the first fiddler on the roof in Tuk! - Climb on the roof of the post office - take your fiddle with you....and Play!!"

Cam climbs and gingerly removes his violin (fearing for cracks from the cold). For the first time in his career he begins a performance without tuning. The opening melody sings out across the ice. The vibrato stems much more from the sheer cold than from any emotion. He shivers his way through the phrase made famous by Isaac Stern in the movie of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Suddenly on the ice, we see movement. They have heard the call to the concert! From their ice-holes they raise their heads, down their fishing gear, and stream towards the townsite. Men, women, children, dogs, cats, chickens - who knows, maybe even an arctic char or two. By the time we start (admittedly late at 11.09) there are 342 people packed into the gym of the Tuktoyaktuk school - close to 80% of the total population of the village.

At 12.30, after a lunch of - yes, smoked arctic char - we head back to the airstrip, and head on to Paulatuk, Holman and Sachs Harbour. This is the heritage of the *John Avison orchestra* that plays for you tonight.

GZ, Oct 2, 2018



WHITE ROCK
CONCERTS

Our Next Concert
.....
Mozart's Gran Partita

Friday, November 23, 2018

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