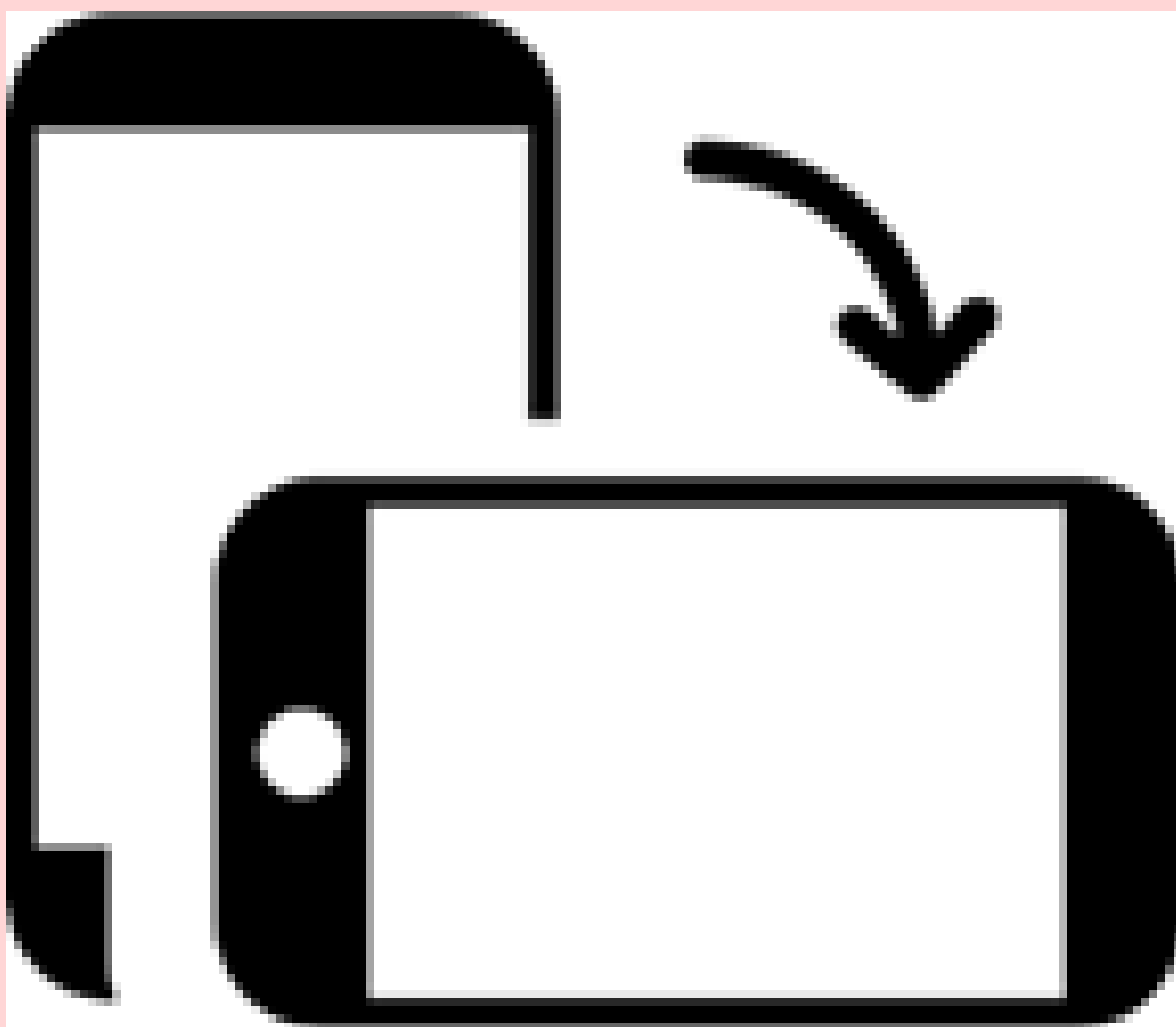


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PROGRAMME NOTES**



HEROISM, ELEGANCE AND
DISCOVERY
RECORDED FOR BBC RADIO 3
CLASSICAL LIVE



WEDNESDAY 26TH AUGUST 2026
ULSTER HALL BELFAST

TESS JACKSON, CONDUCTOR



Tess Jackson is a dynamic British conductor who is quickly gaining international recognition. She has been named a Classic FM Rising Star and just completed a two-year tenure as Associate Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

Her versatility spans a broad repertoire with a commanding presence in both symphonic and operatic works. Most recently, her 2024-25 season included three separate concerts at the BBC Proms, with the National Youth Orchestra with Holst's *The Planets*, Britten Sinfonia with Gavin Higgins' *Rough Voices*, and the Royal Northern Sinfonia at the Glasshouse.

Subsequently, she was named one of the BBC Proms' ten "exceptional" artists under 30 and one of the "brightest rising stars on the international stage". She also made her Berliner Philharmonie debut, conducting works by Schumann and Chopin, and conducted *A Form on Exile* (a concert inspired by Edward Said) at the Southbank Centre.

Other highlights include conducting the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, London Mozart Players, and the City of London Sinfonia; as well as collaborations with Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen, the Ulster Orchestra, and the Kammerorchester Basel.

While assisting Jac van Steen on *The Bartered Bride* at Garsington Opera, Jackson made a highly acclaimed jump in, leading to the invitation to make her symphonic debut with the Philharmonia Orchestra (Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 2* with Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4*).

Having been awarded Garsington Opera's 2023 Leonard Ingrams Award for "exceptional work both on stage and in the rehearsal room", she returns to the house next summer to conduct two performances of *La Traviata*, while assisting Douglas Boyd.

This season she returns to the BBC Proms for a performance with BBC Concert Orchestra, she conducts Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor* with Philharmonia Orchestra, she conducts a programme of Prokofiev, Saint Saens, Ravel, and Poulenc, with Royal Northern Sinfonia, as well as collaborations with City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Sinfonia Smith Square and her work as Emerging Conductor Fellow with Chromatica Orchestra.

She begins next season conducting Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Halle Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and CBSO. In the summer, she conducts performances of *La Traviata* at Lyric Opera Chicago, before covering Enrique Mazzola on *Cenerentola* at Glyndebourne.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Egmont - overture to Goethe's tragedy, Op.84

If Goethe's 1787 tragedy *Egmont* is not exactly familiar in the English-speaking world, there's no doubt that Beethoven rated it highly. Count Egmont was a leader of the Netherlands' struggle for freedom from Spanish rule. Captured and executed in Brussels in 1588, he became a martyr of the liberation struggle. Goethe turned the raw historical facts into a visionary drama of courage and freedom – exactly the sort of subject that set Beethoven's imagination on fire. In June 1810 he completed a suite of incidental music for the play, and sent a deluxe edition to Goethe at his own expense:

No theatre capable of staging Goethe's drama in the early 19th century was able to accommodate anything like a full modern orchestra. That didn't bother Beethoven, who wrote to Goethe glowing with enthusiasm for "your glorious *Egmont*, which I have set to music as powerful as my emotions on reading it". And it shouldn't prevent us from responding to this musical drama of tyranny, struggle and liberation, crowned by the ringing fanfares that accompany the hero's final words: "Fall joyfully, as I give you the example".

Elizabeth Maconchy (1907-1994)

Music for Strings

Molto moderato

Scherzo

Mesto

Finale. Allegro

“I cannot imagine a life without being engaged in composition” said Elizabeth Maconchy, and from her first attempts – aged six – to create music on the piano in her parents’ home in Howth, that is exactly how she lived. Born in Hertfordshire and raised in Ireland, she studied composition at the Royal College of Music with Ralph Vaughan Williams, who wrote in her final report that “I can teach her no more – she will work for her own salvation and will go far”. She did, too; winning a string of awards and studying in Prague, where her Piano Concerto was premiered (in 1930) before any of her orchestral music had been played in the British Isles.

Maconchy’s ardent, distinctly modern music was not really what music publishers expected from a young female composer between the wars. For Maconchy, however, “a passionately intellectual and intellectually passionate musical discourse is what I seek to express”. She did exactly that in her thirteen string quartets – and on a larger scale, in her *Music for Strings*, premiered at the BBC Proms on 26 July 1983. In her own words:

Writing for strings has always been what I have most enjoyed- whether for strings quartet or for larger groups - so when I was offered a commission for the Proms in 1983 I was grateful for the opportunity of writing for a big body of strings.

My Music for Strings is in four movements and plays about twenty minutes. It opens quietly with warm sombre repeated chords, placed low in the strings. The texture then breaks up into individual lines, and the rest of this fairly extended movement is contrapuntal in character. The Scherzo is in direct contrast, very lightly scored, much of it pizzicato. The third movement, Mesto (Sad) opens with a statement for solo viola, and this lonely melody stamps its character on the whole movement. A more vigorous passage builds up, with long interweaving lines, but subsides again leaving the solo viola alone at the end.

The Finale is an extrovert happy-go-lucky movement, strongly rhythmical. The strings toss little melodic figures backwards and forwards, stabbing them with off-beat accents...[a tune] from the Scherzo makes a brief reappearance, combined with the rhythmic figures, and leads to an insouciant throwaway ending.

Ernest Moeran (1894-1950)

Sinfonietta

Allegro con brio

Tema con variazioni

Allegro risoluto

Sinfonietta literally means a “little symphony” - a term that composers use when they’ve written a work that has the basic outlines of a symphony, but would prefer that we don’t overthink it. When Ernest Moeran composed his *Sinfonietta* in 1944 (a commission from Arthur Bliss, who was then working for the BBC) he’d already written one full-scale symphony - the passionate child of years of creative struggle.

Moeran was a restless soul; a clergyman's son who suffered a severe head injury while fighting on the Western Front in May 1917. He transferred to the Royal Irish Constabulary, and fell in love with Ireland. In postwar life the landscape of Norfolk, and his house in Kenmare, County Kerry would be his anchors in an existence that veered from booze-fuelled hellraising to melancholy solitude. He told friends that he was planning a Second Symphony, and that it would open with an Irish vision: "the view from Moll's Gap looking across to the Reeks and Killarney Lakes 1000ft below on a brilliant spring morning".

The *Sinfonietta* is not that piece: it's crisp and buoyant, scored for a Mozart-sized orchestra, and so vigorous that some commentators have called it "neo-classical". Moeran was living at the time with his parents in a farmhouse near Kington in Herefordshire, and he conceived the *Sinfonietta* (or so he said) on long walks in the Radnor Forest. Fresh air and a sense of open spaces blows through the score, though the energy of the first movement is mingled with moments of poetic, tranquil reflection. The second movement takes a quiet country walking song and follows it through the hills and vales of six variations, before fading into the horizon. But the finale is all vigour and freshness once more. Strings bustle and trumpets ring out, and it's laced with the reels and fiddle tunes of Moeran's beloved County Kerry. The ending is exuberant.

ULSTER ORCHESTRA PLAYERS' LIST

Music Director Laureate Daniele Rustioni

Honorary Principal Guest Conductor Jac van Steen

Conductor Laureate Rafael Payare *Artist Laureate* Sir James Galway

Leader Ioana Petcu-Colan

1ST VIOLIN

Ioana Petcu-Colan
Thomas Jackson
Danny McCann-Williams
Krzysztof Rucinski
Jennifer Murphy
Beverley Scott
Ana Vandeppeer
Jonathan Griffin
Alys Jackson
Katherine Sung
Zuzanna Edmonds
Clare Hadwen

2ND VIOLIN

Elizabeth McLaren
Nicholas Rippon
Ruta Mazolyte-Aghaunor
Aisling Manning
Usman Peguero
Jasmine Morris
Scott Lowry
Sarah White
Mafalda Galante
Megan Lowry

VIOLA

Julia Doukakis
Richard Hadwen
Feargal Ó Dornáin
Richard Guthrie
Ralph Tartaglia
John Murphy
Philip Walton
Ruth Nelson

CELLO

Thomas Isaac
Morag Stewart
Sarah Shephard
Lavinnia Rae
Rosalie Curlett
David Edmonds
Peter Flanagan

DOUBLE BASS

Ben Burnley
Helen Glynn
Gabriel Rodrigues
Roger McCann
Aura Stone

FLUTE

Mark Taylor
Andrew Douglas

OBOE

Lydia Griffiths
Emily Cockbill

TRUMPET

Stephen Murphy
Stuart Essinhigh

BASSOON

Guylaine Eckersley
Tom Donkin

CLARINET

Giacomo Arfacchia
Ciaran McQuaid

TIMPANI

Jonathan Herbert

PERCUSSION

Sam Staunton

HORN

Paul Klein
Sarah Johnson
Peter Mullen
Jesse Durkan

Please switch off mobile phones during the performance and refrain from taking photos or recordings.

Infra-red headsets are available for use with hearing aids inside the Grand Hall.