

philharmonia orchestra

Tim Jackson, Philharmonia Orchestra Third Horn:

Welcome to the Philharmonia Orchestra's April podcast. I'm Tim Jackson, and I'm the third horn in the Philharmonia Orchestra, and today we're in Bedford, one of our residency venues across the UK, for a concert this evening. But as well as concerts, the Orchestra has recently been working in Bedford primary schools. We went to find out more.

Isobel Timms, Philharmonia Orchestra Education Administrator:

We're going to go to two primary schools in Bedfordshire this morning, and we're going to take part in the Stepping Stones project. It's a project that aims to use music in the classroom to help teach numeracy and literacy.

Singing (Animateur: "Have you brought your singing voice?" Children: "Yes we have, yes we have.")

Julia Williamson, Philharmonia Orchestra Head of Education:

Primarily the children are not the focus, it's more about training local musicians and local animateurs to be able to carry on the work once the project has finished.

Isobel Timms:

When we arrive, we usually do a warm up song. Christine did a song using 'Hello' in different languages.

Singing

And then we learnt a bit about the double bass and how big it is, how loud it is and how low it is.

Workshop

Musician: Is it a double bass?

Children: Yes.

Musician: Who can feel it in the ground? Can you feel it?

Children: Yes.

Animateur: The sky above the village...

The main bulk of the workshop is based around a story into which we integrate music and rhythm and dance. There's a little boy called Charlie who has to go and climb up the mountain and climb across the river and go and see the magic wizard called Louanu, who lives on top of the mountain in a cave.

Workshop

Animateur: Who wants to make some music to match the sky falling?

There's one section where the children get the opportunity to conduct.

We have a magic spell where we have to chop up lots of ingredients.

Workshop

Children singing: Chop, chop, choppety chop, chop off the bottom and chop off the top. What there is left we will put in the pot, chop, chop, choppety chop!

Put them in the pot, and mix them up, and make a spell, and put all the bits of broken sky into the cauldron as well, and then in the end the wizard manages to pull out a big piece of sky from the box.

Singing ("Time to put your coats on and go and have some lunch!")

Tim Jackson:

April is a busy month for the Orchestra, including a series of concerts with Lars Vogt. We met up with Lars to discover what he's looking forward to.

Lars Vogt:

What a fantastic programme I have: Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel*, Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto and Schumann's Third Symphony. Three such amazing pieces leading us through one of the most substantial times of musical history. But doing Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4 is always a huge challenge and it's one of the great, great challenges for pianists. For me it's maybe in a way the central piano concerto.

In Beethoven's works you can see a huge development. You have these three phases – early, middle, and late – that are really quite distinctly different. He's really gone a long way in his artistic life. It reflects so many things, like Beethoven does so often, reflects a lot of things from the past, and has a vision so far out into the future that even to us it's still absolutely miraculous what he has done. The psychological journey from these opening chords on the piano to this struggle to victory in the last movement is just an incredible thing, and to be playing that with the Philharmonia Orchestra – for me one of the best orchestras in the world – is just a huge privilege. And working with Sir Charles Mackerras: it's the first time for me, we've never worked together. I've obviously heard so many things about him, so many wonderful things and so many exciting things, and to be working with such a legend of the music world is just absolutely amazing. Particularly he has so much to say, and in spite of being a legend his mind is so fresh; that's just a real inspiration I think.

It is true that as an artist you have to let out really intimate things and display them out there in public. I think my wonderful colleague Manny Ax [Emanuel Ax] said once that you have to have this mixture of being extremely sensitive and also have a certain defence around you, because especially in an arts life you are also going to be attacked, whereas you also need to know when it's necessary to let something in, also something difficult or something critical or something painful. Ultimately I would, especially on stage, I would always go for opening up. That's what people want, they want a personal message, they want to know what does this person really feel about this music and who is this person, and there's no better way to find out than by listening to them making music.

London's an incredibly exciting city and it's such a fantastic new experience for me. For 15 years I've lived in the countryside in Germany and I've always lived in Germany all my life, so it's the first time that I've lived abroad, and I've been living here for nearly two years now. It's very exciting, it also has definitely its difficult sides to it but on the other hand when something exciting is going on... I went to hear Radu Lupu playing with Muti with the Philharmonia, for example, or I went to hear the French programmes with Charles Dutoit, so I really get to listen to fantastic things and wonderful programmes; the Philharmonia in particular have some exciting things going on.

Tim Jackson:

Lars Vogt performs in Bedford and London on 1 and 3 April with the Philharmonia Orchestra and conductor Sir Charles Mackerras. Sir Charles also conducts the Orchestra on 6, 8, and 10 April in London and Leicester in varied programmes including Brahms' and Beethoven's third symphonies.

This month also sees a series of concerts with the Philharmonia Orchestra's Principal Conductor Christoph von Dohnányi in Cardiff and London on 15, 17, and 27 April. The highlight of these concerts for me is a performance of the Berg Violin Concerto with Frank Peter Zimmermann and Mahler's First Symphony in the Royal Festival Hall. Podcast viewers can receive a 25% discount for this concert by calling our Box Office on 0800 652 6717 and quoting 'Podcast offer'.

April also sees a free recital in the Royal Festival Hall by oboist Xiaodi Liu as part of the Martin Musical Scholarship Fund awards scheme. The MMSF scheme supports exceptional young musicians to help them bridge the gap between their studies and becoming a professional musician. We went behind the scenes with last month's recitalist Sulki Yu to find out what this opportunity means.

Music

Martyn Jones, MMSF Administrator:

Any students coming to study from all over the world can apply to us for funds. We have approximately six to eight pre-concert recitals in the Festival Hall, and we also put on four or five full Purcell Room recitals, and we have a series of concerts at St Margaret's at Westminster now to give them performing experience, that side of the awards. Mostly we aim at postgraduate students, but the yardstick is excellence.

Sulki Yu:

This is truly an unbelievable opportunity for students like me to be able to play in these big venues in London. It's just an incredible experience and you get to learn so much.

Music

Martyn Jones:

This evening's recital, which is a full recital in the Purcell Room, is by Sulki Yu. She's a tremendous virtuoso talent. We've been helping Sulki now for three or four years, she's studying at the Guildhall School of Music with David Takeno and is a very big talent in my opinion.

Sulki Yu:

This Martin Fund is such a big encouragement for me, it's such a wonderful experience to be working with those professional organisations.

Music

Martyn Jones:

We do welcome anybody who wants to come into the concerts, if they're just on the South Bank it'd be great if they would drop in to either the pre-concert recitals which are between 6pm and 7pm or the full evening recitals which are at 7.45pm. All the details that are necessary for applicants will be found on the Philharmonia website, philharmonia.co.uk.

Music

Tim Jackson:

Finally, we're pleased to announce a new scheme for our audiences today. Here's Classic FM's Jamie Crick with more details.

Jamie Crick, Classic FM:

The Philharmonia Orchestra is pleased to announce a new scheme with Classic FM to allow audiences to interact with the Orchestra during live performances. The Philharmonia Orchestra are going to allow audiences to have their say during the concert. For many years, concertgoers have shown their appreciation for performances by applauding, cheering, standing, or with less popular works, booing, or in the case of the *Rite of Spring*, resulting in a riot.

For a series of forthcoming concerts this month, the Orchestra will provide each member of the audience with a pair of flags, one red and one green. As the concert takes place, audience members will be invited to hold up a flag according to whether they're enjoying the performance, and technology will do the rest. CCTV cameras trained on the audience will relay the image to the computer which will analyse the number of flags. If the number of people not enjoying the performance goes over 50%, then the computer will send a message to the conductor via a headset to move on to the next piece.

I'm here with Philharmonia Manager David Whelton. David, tell me a bit about the scheme.

David Whelton, Philharmonia Orchestra:

Well Jamie, gone are the days when you had to wait until the end of a performance before you could let everybody know what you think of the musicians' performance.

Jamie Crick:

Really?

Long silence

David Whelton:

We're now moving to something much more 21st-century, this is just really like skipping a track on your MP3 player, and this is the future.

Jamie Crick:

The Orchestra will provide an emergency stop mechanism in case something goes very wrong. Under each seat in the concert hall will be an air horn which can be used by the audience if they feel the Orchestra has made a mistake.

David Corkhill, Philharmonia Orchestra Principal Percussionist:

I think this is the future of music. We have to move with the times, we need to reach out to our audiences, we need to know that they are on our wavelength and we are on theirs. It's the future of music, I'm convinced of it.

Jamie Crick:

The new scheme, **Audiences: Participate, Respond, Interact – Live**, begins today, but not at every concert, so if you don't get handed a red or green flag and there's no air horn under your seat then you don't need to take part.

Personally I think the Philharmonia are incredibly brave to put themselves out there in front of an audience, and allow them....

AIR HORN