

making
music

Saturday 23rd March 2024

7.30pm

Turner Sims, Southampton

Conductor - Lucia Švecová

Mendelssohn

The Hebrides

Grieg

Peer Gynt Suite no. 1

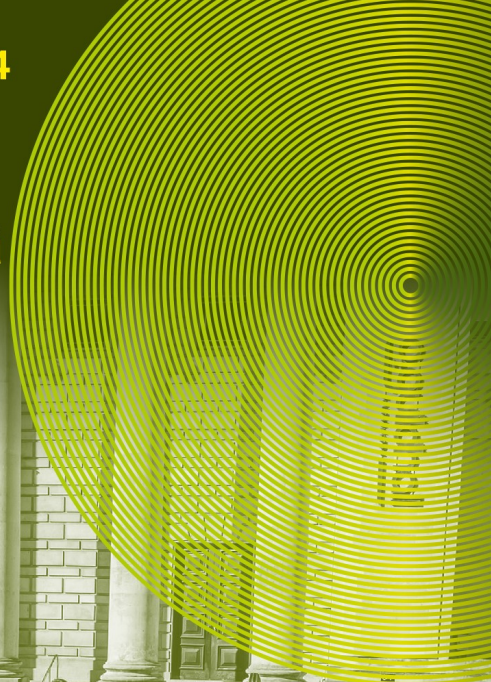
Sibelius

Finlandia


Dvorak

Symphony no. 9

"From The New World"



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Orchestra



Saturday 23rd March 2024

Conductor: Lucia Švecová

Leader: Christa Porter

Felix Mendelssohn: *Hebrides Overture*

Edvard Grieg: *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1*

1. Morning Mood (Morgenstemning)
2. The Death of Ase (Åses død)
3. Anitra's Dance (Anitras dans)
4. In the Hall of the Mountain King (I Dovregubbens hall)

Jean Sibelius: *Finlandia*

Interval

Antonin Dvořák: *Symphony No. 9 "From the New World"*

1. Adagio—Allegro molto
2. Largo
3. Scherzo: Molto vivace—Poco sostenuto
4. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Lucia Švecová

Conductor



Lucia is a Slovak-born conductor, based in the UK and currently coaching young players and singers as the Assistant Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra and the Director of the Chapel Choir at St Catherine's School, Bramley.

She conducted the Welsh National Opera Orchestra in a Showcase in May 2023 and the City of London Sinfonia at the Jette Parker Young Artists' Women Conductors Course at the Royal Opera House in July 2021. She was the Assistant Conductor at the David Seligman Opera School during her studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, where she studied with David Jones and assisted James Southall in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Here, she was also the Musical Director of a semi-staged performance of Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale* and of a staged production of Handel's *Choice of Hercules*. Before that, she was the Musical Director and Producer of Krása's *Brundibár* at The Purcell School for Young Musicians in March 2022, and the Musical Director and Co-Producer of an international filmed production of Cui's *Feast in Time of Plague* with the Oxford Opera Society in May 2021.

During her undergraduate studies at the University of Oxford, Lucia founded her own orchestra and worked with a variety of ensembles, including as a Musical Director at the Oxford Contemporary Opera Festival. Her other musical engagements have included performing as a singer and a conductor of Viktória Šinkorová's *After Dowland* at the New Pathways in Improvisation Conference at Middlesex University in 2021, arranging music for the Oxford University Wind Orchestra in 2020 and 2021, and winning national organ competitions in Slovakia in 2013 and 2015.

Felix Mendelssohn

(1809 — 1847)

Hebrides Overture (Op.26)

(1833)



Felix Mendelssohn was a German composer, pianist, organist and conductor of the early Romantic period whose compositions include symphonies, concertos and large scale choral works alongside music for piano, organ and a range of chamber ensembles.

His father, the banker Abraham Mendelssohn, was the son of the German Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, whose family was prominent in the German Jewish community. Felix was baptised at the age of seven as a Lutheran Christian, but was brought up largely without religion. He was recognised early as a musical prodigy, as was his sister Fanny who was a talented composer and pianist in her own right. They grew up in an intellectual environment. Frequent visitors to the salons organised by his parents at their Berlin home included artists, musicians and scientists, among them Alexander von Humboldt, renowned explorer, geologist and ecologist. The musician Sarah Rothenburg wrote of the household that "Europe came to their living room".

At the age of fifteen, Felix composed his first symphony and conducted a private orchestra which played many of his early compositions. A year later he wrote his *String Octet*, a work marking the beginning of his maturity as a composer. This was soon followed by the *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*, which still ranks as a masterpiece. His later works include the *Italian Symphony*, the *Scottish Symphony*, the oratorios *St. Paul*, and *Elijah*, and the *Violin Concerto*. He enjoyed early success in Germany, and revived interest in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, notably with his performance of the *St Matthew Passion* in 1829. He was deluged by offers of music from rising and would-be composers; these included Richard

Wagner, who submitted his early Symphony, the score of which, to Wagner's disgust, Mendelssohn lost or mislaid. He also revived interest in the music of Franz Schubert, giving the première of his Ninth Symphony in 1839, more than a decade after Schubert's death. Sadly, Mendelssohn died when only age 38, almost the same age as Mozart, another young genius.

Mendelssohn's conservative musical tastes set him apart from more adventurous musical contemporaries such as Franz Liszt and Hector Berlioz. He was generally on friendly terms with them but in his letters expresses his disapproval of their works, for example writing of Berlioz's overture *Les Francs-juges*, "The orchestration is such a frightful muddle that one ought to wash one's hands after handling one of his scores."

Mendelssohn came from a well-off family and so was able to travel regularly. During ten visits to Britain, he made a deep impression on British musical life as a composer, conductor and soloist, many of his major works receiving their première here.

The Hebrides is perhaps the earliest example of a concert overture – a piece not written to accompany a staged performance but to explore a usually romantic theme in performance on a concert platform. An indication of the esteem in which it is held by musicians is given by a comment by Johannes Brahms: "I would gladly give all I have written, to have composed something like the *Hebrides Overture*". Mendelssohn found his inspiration for this work during a holiday in Scotland in 1829 during which he went to the Hebridean island of Staffa. Here he watched the relentless battering of the Atlantic waves upon the seashore, and experienced the grandeur of the basalt Fingal's Cave. He wrote to his sister, "In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, the following came into my mind there," and he quoted the opening theme of the overture. On the orchestral parts he labelled the music *The Hebrides*, but on the score he wrote *Fingal's Cave*.

The overture starts with a short, restless, haunting opening theme played initially by the violas, cellos, and bassoons. It does not feel like the start of something; it is as if we are coming across something that has been going on forever. It portrays the roll of the waves through the mouth of the cave and runs through the entire composition, sometimes peaceful, sometimes violent. The peaceful grandeur of the scene is portrayed in the second theme, first heard in the cellos and bassoons, but the pounding waves always return. A staccato section perhaps depicts rain drops with the increasing intensity suggesting a storm gathering momentum. The overture closes with the second subject played slowly by a solo clarinet; a blissful ending to this beautiful reminder of the beauty and power of nature.

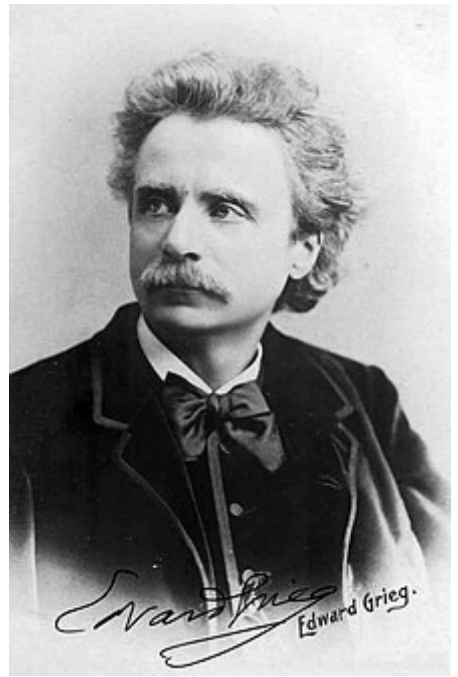
Edvard Grieg

(1843 — 1907)

Peer Gynt Suite No. 1 (Op. 46)

(1888)

1. Morning Mood
(Morgenstemning)
2. The Death of Ase (Åses død)
3. Anitra's Dance (Anitras dans)
4. In the Hall of the Mountain King



Edvard Grieg was a Norwegian composer and pianist whose use of his country's folk music brought the music of Norway to fame, helping to develop a national identity, much as Sibelius did with *Finlandia* in Finland and Dvořák in Bohemia. He was born in Bergen; his father was a merchant and the British Vice-Consul in Bergen and his mother was a music teacher who taught him piano from the age of six. The family name, Greig, came originally from Scotland. After the Battle of Culloden in 1746, Grieg's great-grandfather left Scotland, eventually settling in Norway in 1770 and establishing business interests in Bergen.

At the age of fifteen Edvard went to study piano at the Leipzig Conservatory. Although he enjoyed the many concerts and recitals given in Leipzig he disliked the discipline of the conservatory. About his study there, he wrote to his biographer, "I must admit that I left Leipzig Conservatory just as stupid as I entered it. Naturally, I did learn something there, but my individuality was still a closed book to me."

Grieg eventually established himself in Bergen where he taught, gave piano concerts and performed his own compositions. He was director of the Philharmonic concerts at Christiania (now Oslo). His compositions included many songs, sonatas for piano and violin and, of course his popular piano concerto which helped make him famous. Despite the fame Grieg eventually

did achieve, it is worth noting that most of his attention was given to his piano music, giving him the status of a miniaturist. Consequently, some of his chamber and orchestral music remains a 'hidden jewel' deserving of exploration. A nice indication of his fame is that when, for health reasons, he declined to conduct in Atlanta for a fee of \$25,000, Richard Strauss was appointed instead for \$6,000.

In 1874, Grieg was invited by Henrik Ibsen to compose incidental music for a forthcoming production of his drama *Peer Gynt*. It was an immediate success, running for 37 performances before the theatre was accidentally burned down. He later selected some of the original incidental music to form his *Peer Gynt Suites*, two of his best and most popular works.

Morning: Peer Gynt is in North Africa watching the sunrise over the Sahara Desert, reflected in the music by a gradual build-up of orchestral texture and dynamic levels. The cool freshness of morning is conjured up in the first movement by a pastoral melody on the flute, which is taken up by the oboe and eventually by the whole orchestra.

Åse's Death: Peer Gynt sits beside his mother, Åse, who is on her deathbed, recalling their happy and sad times together. The music is a short, sad elegy for strings alone. A single four-bar tune is repeated six times, gradually increasing in intensity. As Åse fades away, the theme is inverted and the music gradually decreases to nothing.

Anitra's Dance: In a tent in a desert oasis, Peer Gynt is welcomed by an Arab Sheik who provides coffee, a hookah pipe and dancing girls. Anitra dances a solo *mazurka*, aiming to attract Peer Gynt and his money. She succeeds in fascinating him but perhaps also making him wonder where she learnt to dance a Polish dance in the Arabian desert. The music is in strong contrast to the previous sad section, being in *mazurka* rhythm, built around alternating bowed and pizzicato strings.

In the Hall of the Mountain King: In a cave in the Norwegian mountains, Peer Gynt flirts with the mysterious daughter of the Troll King. In his journey through the cave to meet the king he becomes increasingly terrified as he is accompanied by menacing, unearthly creatures, who, realising that he is mortal, end the movement with shrieking death threats. Starting slowly in the very lowest part of the orchestra, its single theme is repeated faster and louder until it is finally played by the full orchestra. This was not Grieg's favourite composition: he is said to have described it as, "Cow pats full of self-satisfied ultra-Norwegianism," and explained that it was intended as an ironic jibe directed at certain other nationalist composers. Nonetheless, it makes a dramatic and entertaining end to the Suite.

Jean Sibelius
(1865 —1957)
Finlandia (Op.26)
(1900)



Jean Sibelius was a composer of the late Romantic and early-modern periods, widely regarded as Finland's greatest composer. His music is often credited with having helped Finland develop a stronger national identity when his country was struggling from several attempts of Russification in the late 19th century.

Jean's father died when he was three years old and he was brought up by his mother and widowed grandmother. An aunt gave him piano lessons from the age of seven but when he was ten years old he was given a violin which he preferred. In 1881, he started to take violin lessons from the local bandmaster, soon becoming very accomplished and setting his heart on a career as a great violin virtuoso. However, despite considerable success as an instrumentalist, he ultimately chose to become a composer. He later wrote that, "My tragedy was that I wanted to be a celebrated violinist at any price. Since the age of fifteen I played my violin practically from morning to night. I hated pen and ink—unfortunately I preferred an elegant violin bow. My love for the violin lasted quite long and it was a very painful awakening when I had to admit that I had begun my training for the exacting career of a virtuoso too late." This love for the violin led later to his composing one of the greatest of all violin concertos.

The first reference he made to his compositions was in 1883, writing, "They are rather poor, but it is nice to have something to do on rainy days." After graduating from high school in 1885, Sibelius began to study law but, showing far more interest in music, soon moved to the Helsinki Music Institute (now the Sibelius Academy) where he studied from 1885 to 1889. He also studied in Berlin and Vienna. After returning home he became a Professor at the Academy of Helsingfors and established himself as the prominent national composer of Finland. In 1897 a government stipend provided a regular income for his lifetime, enabling him to devote himself entirely to composition.

The tone-poem *Finlandia* is one of Sibelius's earliest works, composed for the Press Celebrations of 1899, a covert protest against increasing censorship from the Russian Empire. It soon became a musical expression of Finnish patriotism, known throughout the world. *Finlandia* does not necessarily represent the composer's greatest work but it is especially important because of the national pride that these few minutes of music inspired. The success of *Finlandia* came to irritate Sibelius, particularly when it overshadowed greater and more substantial works. With added Finnish words this has become an unofficial Finnish national anthem. For many people the tune is best known from the hymn *Be still my soul*. Sibelius said that, "It is written for orchestra, but if the world wants to sing it, it can't be helped," and in 1948 he himself arranged a choral version. However even without the great 'Finlandia theme' this is wonderfully tuneful and exciting music..

Ominous brass chords introduce the piece, the melody within them being taken over by woodwind and strings, soon to be interrupted by staccato trumpets and timpani, The trumpet rhythm then accompanies another impressive faster tune which is developed by the rest of the orchestra, the rousing and turbulent music perhaps evoking the national struggle of the Finnish people. The woodwind section now introduces the serene 'Finlandia theme'. Darkness and conflict take over again, building up to a climax which culminates in its victorious return.

Antonin Dvořák

(1841 — 1904)

Symphony No. 9 “From the
New World”, Op. 95

(1893)

1. Adagio—Allegro molto
2. Largo
3. Scherzo: Molto vivace
4. Finale: Allegro con fuoco



Dvořák was a Czech composer, frequently using aspects of the folk music of Moravia and his native Bohemia, and was perhaps the most versatile composer of his time. He was the eldest son of an innkeeper and butcher who rented an inn in Nelehorzeves, a village on the Vltava River north of Prague. Construction of a railway line through the village formed the basis for Dvořák's lifelong passion for trains. His father, who played the zither, encouraged his son's musical talent. When he was about 12 years old, he went to live in Zlonice fifteen miles away with an aunt and uncle and began studying harmony, piano, and organ. He wrote his earliest works, polkas, during the three years he spent there. In 1857 a perceptive music teacher, persuaded his father to enroll him at the Institute for Church Music in Prague where Dvořák completed a two-year course and played the viola in various inns and theatre bands, augmenting his small salary with a few private pupils. He graduated from the Organ School, ranking second in his class.

The next few years were difficult for Dvořák, who was hard-pressed for time to compose. He played viola in an orchestra that performed in Prague's restaurants but its high standard led to it being engaged as the Bohemian Provisional Theater Orchestra. In 1863, he played in a programme conducted by Wagner for whom he said he had "unbounded admiration". By

about 1865 he had written many (mainly unperformed) pieces but they included his first string quartet and his first symphony. These compositions indicated that he was becoming increasingly influenced by Wagner and Liszt. In 1871, Dvořák left the orchestra to have more time for composing and a year later his *Piano Quintet* was performed in Prague. The constant need to supplement his income pushed him to give the piano lessons through which he met his future wife.

In 1874, after his marriage, Dvořák secured the job of organist at St. Adalbert's Church in Prague. A year later he was awarded the Austrian State Prize for composition by a jury including the famous critic Eduard Hanslick and Johannes Brahms with whom he formed a close and fruitful friendship. The jury had received a massive submission from Dvořák, including two symphonies, several overtures and a song cycle. Brahms was said to be visibly overcome by the mastery and talent of Dvořák. The two symphonies were Dvořák's third and fourth, both of which had been premiered in Prague in the spring of 1874. He won the State Prize again in 1876 and finally felt free to resign his position as an organist. In the next four years he composed his *second String Quintet*, *5th Symphony*, first *Piano Trio*, *Serenade for Strings*, *String Sextet*, *Violin Concerto* and the *Symphonic Variations*.

The admiration of the leading critics, instrumentalists and conductors of the day continued to spread his fame abroad. In 1884 he made the first of 10 visits to England and, in 1890, he enjoyed a personal triumph in Moscow, where two concerts were arranged for him by his friend Tchaikovsky. The following year he was made an honorary doctor of music of the University of Cambridge.

Around the same time, in the USA, a new National Conservatory of Music in New York was founded by Mrs. Jeannette Thurber, the wife of a wealthy New York grocer. She had decided that America should have a Conservatory of Music based on the European pattern and that it should have a European director. Two names were suggested to her; Dvořák, then aged 50 and with a considerable international reputation, and Sibelius, who was 32 and less well-known. She chose Dvořák, and in September 1892 he and his family arrived in New York where he composed his ninth symphony and his Cello Concerto. However in 1895, due to homesickness, his partially unpaid salary and increasing recognition in Europe he decided to return to Bohemia

One of the founding aims of the New York Conservatory was to create an American style of music, but based on the European musical tradition. Dvořák took the challenge seriously, studying Afro-American music,

especially Negro spirituals and plantation songs, saying that, "They are the folk music of America and your composers must turn to them." With hindsight it appears that American composers were more influenced by European music or by jazz, which had no European roots at all. However, Dvořák's teaching must have had some second hand influence because three prominent American composers, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin and Aaron Copland, all studied with pupils of Dvořák.

Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, composed in 1893, was the first of Dvořák's compositions to be written wholly in America. This symphony, widely considered one of the greatest in the romantic repertoire, caused discord among America's music critics as many thought it should have a European perspective. Instead, Dvořák chose the rhythms and tonalities of the music of indigenous peoples and of African-Americans which was thought by many white Americans to be primitive. He said that "In the Negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music." However, it was only the musical structures that he used, the many beautiful tunes being entirely Dvořák's own creation. As regards Native American influences, he once more stated that the melodies were original, using only the "peculiarities of the Indian music," but how he acquired this understanding is a matter of doubt. He had little opportunity to hear this music until after his symphony was completed and he acknowledged being inspired by Longfellow's oratorio *Hiawatha*. It has often been suggested that much of this symphony is firmly based in his homeland and reflects the home-sickness which he felt throughout his stay in New York

The first movement of the symphony (*Adagio: Allegro molto*) begins with a mysterious introduction by the cellos, repeated by the woodwind and soon to be followed by the first main *Allegro molto* theme which is one of those melodies that have suggested a Native American origin; it reappears in various forms in each of the subsequent movements. A later theme, contrasting strongly with this vigorous opening, played first by the flute, bears a distinct likeness to the familiar spiritual *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*; this and other themes are developed at length, in a vigorous, exciting and often dramatic Slavonic fashion. The movement ends with a brilliant coda, built mainly on the principal theme.

The solemn brass chords that introduce the *Largo* movement are soon followed by a beautiful, serene cor anglais melody accompanied by muted strings, inspired by the verses in Longfellow's poem *The Song of Hiawatha* describing Minnehaha's death and her burial in the forest. This melody, sounding like a spiritual itself in fact became the basis of one, entitled *Goin' home*. It has, of course, been used in many contexts whenever its essence

of nostalgia is needed. It is developed lovingly by woodwinds and strings. A contrasting central section follows - opened by a solo flute, underpinned by a gentle walking pizzicato from the basses. The energetic first theme from the first movement makes a brief appearance before the beauty and pathos of the beautiful *Largo* theme makes its reappearance to close the movement when we also hear the same brass chords as we heard in the introduction.

Dvořák is said to have returned to Longfellow again for the *Molto vivace scherzo*, and found inspiration from the scene in Hiawatha's Wedding Feast "at the feast where the Indians dance." A gentler section with predominating woodwind follows, interrupted by the rather aggressive principal theme from the first movement, leading back to the initial 'Indian dancing'. Whatever we think about the Native American 'Indian' influence, it is also evident that both sections of this movement use the rhythms and energy of Czech folk-dances, as in Dvořák's previous eight symphonies.

The mainly dramatic and fiery finale (*Allegro con fuoco*) opens fortissimo with a majestic subject given to the French horns and trumpets. A second theme is first heard on the clarinet over tremolo strings. The development section uses both these main themes and recalls several subjects from all three earlier movements. The brief appearance of the nursery rhyme 'Three blind mice' is presumably an accident. In the recapitulation, the themes of the finale are restated. The coda recalls earlier ideas once more and the movement builds to a powerful climax, ending in a blaze of orchestral colour that slowly fades away to silence.

Chris Anthony, March 2024

City of Southampton Orchestra



The City of Southampton Orchestra has been described in a BBC Radio 3 broadcast as “one of the best non-professional orchestras in the south”. Our purpose is to promote concerts of as high a musical standard as can be achieved while maintaining the friendly approach needed to encourage regular attendance at rehearsals on a volunteer basis.

The City of Southampton Orchestra celebrated its 50th anniversary in the 2021-22 season. To mark the occasion, current members of the orchestra contributed ideas towards the commission of “A Southampton Overture”, composed by John Traill, currently also the orchestra’s principal conductor.

The music played by the orchestra usually exploits the full scope of symphonic instrumentation used from the 19th century onwards. We aim to reach a wide audience and each winter a Saturday morning family concert is performed that is designed for children. Each of the remaining concerts contains both well-known items and less familiar works. We hope that the introduction of the latter will prove rewarding.

The orchestra has an important part to play in the local community. We provide an arena for musicians to use and develop their talents, and our weekly rehearsals are a time of study and relaxation for members. The culmination of all this pleasurable activity is our regular concert season where we offer our talents back to the community in a series of performances in the City and surrounding areas. We are proud to display the results of our labours and wish to share the exhilaration of making music with our concert goers.

The Orchestra is a registered charity (no. 281214) and is affiliated to Making Music. For more information visit our website at www.csorchestra.org.

The City of Southampton Orchestra is proud to have the Mayor of Southampton as Patron.

City of Southampton Orchestra

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Gordon Thick
Brian Hodgson
Ingrid Isaac
Caroline London
Rachel Barlow
Iola Jenkins
Sue Osmond
Carol Lo

2nd Violin

Annastasia Radford
Kinga Kowalczyk
Alison Little
Sue Dancer
Philippa Headley
Kathy Smalley
Sarah Smith
Ruth Powell
Paul Watson
Jane Nunn
Hannah Martin
Mary Bell
Debra Lain

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Lucy Biddle
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All our Friends are listed in our programmes (unless you prefer otherwise) and are invited to special events like pre-concert talks and social events.

Our Friends Scheme options:

Option 1: A simple, annual donation. The amount is up to you.

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Please visit our website for more information about the orchestra, including details for our upcoming concerts.

www.csorchestra.org



Saturday 18th May 2024, 7:30pm

Thornden Hall, Chandlers Ford

Conductor: John Trill

Violin: Charlie Lovell-Jones

Holst: The Perfect Fool

Walton: Violin Concerto

Vaughan Williams: London Symphony

Saturday 6th July 2024, 7:30pm

Romsey Abbey

Conductor: John Trill

Beach: Gaelic Symphony

Schubert: Symphony no. 9

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