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R O Y A L
C O L L E G E
O F M U S I C

London

RCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: MAHLER 9

Thursday 21 November 2024, 7.30pm

Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall

Nicholas Collon conductor

RCM Symphony Orchestra

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Mahler (1860–1911)	Symphony no 9 <i>i Andante comodo</i> <i>ii Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländlers</i> <i>iii Rondo-Burleske: Allegro assai. Sehr trotzig</i> <i>iv Adagio: Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend</i>	81'
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Welcome to the Royal College of Music

Founded in 1882, the Royal College of Music moved to its present site on Prince Consort Road, opposite the Royal Albert Hall, in 1894, and has been recognised as the leading conservatoire in the world for Performing Arts in the QS rankings for the last three years. Illustrious alumni include Benjamin Britten, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Gustav Holst, Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Thomas Allen, Sir Colin Davis, John Wilson, Alina Ibragimova, Gerald Finley and Dame Sarah Connolly. In addition to the vocational training it provides to its 1000 full time students, the College engages dynamically with a wider and diverse community of children and adults through a dedicated range of creative activities delivered by RCM Sparks' education and participation projects, RCM Junior Department programme and the Creative Careers Centre. Graduates from the RCM are to be found performing at the highest levels as soloists, composers and in ensembles around the world.

You can follow the RCM on **X** and **Instagram @RCMLondon**, find us on **Facebook/royalcollegeofmusic** and subscribe to our **YouTube** channel **@RCMLondon**

The Royal College of Music Symphony Orchestra performs with conductors and musicians of the highest international stature and is frequently invited to perform in prestigious venues across London and beyond. Past and forthcoming conductors include Sakari Oramo, Sir Antonio Pappano, Thomas Zehetmair, Ryan Bancroft, Vasily Petrenko, Jessica Cottis and Rafael Payare. Performances are given after intensive rehearsals; and many concerts are broadcast live and on demand to an international audience online. The members of the RCM Symphony Orchestra are some of the world's very best young instrumentalists, who have chosen to study at the RCM for its unrivalled blend of superlative teaching, extensive performance opportunities, and close connections with the orchestral profession. In addition to the many professors who are active professional instrumentalists, the RCM participates in side-by-side and other experience schemes with, amongst others, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of English National Opera, the Philharmonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Opera House Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. This enables students to experience professional conditions and achieve professional standards before they graduate. The RCM's long tradition of high-quality orchestral training has launched the careers of many distinguished orchestral players throughout its history.

The RCM Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Nicholas Collon presents Gustav Mahler's last complete symphony, a monumental and emotive composition. In understanding the essence of this masterpiece – often regarded as his 'farewell to the world' – it is essential to explore the personal experiences and ideas which affected the composer during this time.

In the summer of 1906, Mahler was at the pinnacle of his career, he had sketched the Eighth Symphony in an impressively short time of six weeks and he was also serving as the Director of the Vienna Court Opera. However, things were set to change and the following year brought profound sorrow when his eldest daughter Maria passed away from scarlet fever. Furthermore, conflicts with singers and an anti-Semitic press forced Mahler to resign from his opera post. Compounding these events, he was also diagnosed with a heart condition. Heartbroken and unwell, he moved to a summer retreat in the Tyrol mountains along the Austro-Italian border. This period marked a defining moment in his life, compelling him to confront the realities of human mortality. Yet, what other factors may have shaped this sombre and introspective musical outlook? One possibility is the infamous 'curse of the ninth', a superstition prevalent in the late-19th and early-20th centuries that suggested a composer's ninth symphony would be their last. In light of his belief, Mahler even refused to number his previous work *Das Lied von der Erde* as his ninth, although it is considered by many as a symphony. Regardless of the factors at play, Mahler wrote his final works, including the Ninth, in the solitude of his Tyrol cabin. He did not hear any of these pieces performed during his lifetime.

The symphony begins and concludes with two expansive movements each lasting around 25 minutes – comparable to the entire duration of many traditional four-movement symphonies. The middle movements feature Mahler's favoured Ländler, an Austrian folk dance characterised by a slow triple rhythm reflecting his love of nature and the outdoors. In the opening movement, Mahler develops his themes from a four-note motif, a kind of rhythmic pattern derived from the words 'Leb' wohl!' (farewell), which Mahler wrote in the score. This motif is initially played by the harps and then elaborated by the strings. The composer Alban Berg remarked 'The first movement is the greatest Mahler ever composed. It is the expression of a tremendous love for this earth, the longing to live on it peacefully and to enjoy nature to its deepest depths – before death comes'. The symphony culminates in the final 'Farewell' movement, noted for its marking *zurückhaltend* (very slow and restrained), where repeated motifs become quieter until the last note, marked *ersterbend* (dying away).

It remains uncertain whether Mahler set out to deliberately convey his personal reflections, or if these themes emerged unconsciously. Nevertheless, they resonate with audiences past and present, solidifying the work as a striking and poignant representation of the human experience. The work was aptly described by the conductor of its premiere, Bruno Walter, as 'a peaceful farewell; with the conclusion, the clouds dissolve in the blue of heaven.'

Nicholas Collon

British conductor Nicholas Collon is Founder and Principal Conductor of Aurora Orchestra, and Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony (the first non-Finnish conductor ever to hold this post). He was Chief Conductor of the Residentie Orkest (latterly also Artistic Advisor) 2016–2021 and Principal Guest Conductor of the Guerzenich Orchestra 2017–2022.

He is recognised as a born communicator, innovative programmer, and high-calibre interpreter of a wide repertoire. Under his direction, Aurora Orchestra has become known for its eclectic programming, for performing complete symphonies from memory, and becoming Resident Orchestra at the Southbank Centre. The orchestra regularly tours Europe (including this season to Munich Elbphilharmonie, Berlin Philharmonie, Frankfurt Alte Oper and Cologne Philharmonie) and appears every year at the BBC Proms.

Collon's elegant conducting style, searching musical intellect and inspirational music making have prompted guest invitations from orchestras such as the Dresden Staatskapelle, DSO Berlin, Orchestre National de France, Danish National Symphony, Vienna Radio Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Toronto Symphony and many of the leading British orchestras. In 2024/25 Collon debuts with the San Francisco Symphony, Munich Philharmonic and WDR Symphony.

He records with the Finnish Radio Symphony on Ondine, receiving a Diapason d'Or for Adès in 2022 and a Gramophone Award for Wennäkoski in 2023, as well as five star reviews in Finland and internationally for their Sibelius disc. With Aurora Orchestra he has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon and Warner Classics.

Violin I

Elif Cansever
 Tienne Yu
 Kynan Walker
 Karen Matoba
 Anya Robins
 Nellie Whittam
 Michelle Kolesnikov
 Sharon Zhou
 Theo Elwes
 Clarissa Cheuk
 Maya De Souza
 Kelvin Ng
 Isabell Karlsson
 Sophie Jobanputra
 Maria Panczyk

Violin II

Enya Barber
 Jane Park
 Zhi Hsuan Lim
 Ruihan Sun
 Julie Piggot
 Jessie To
 Harry Nim
 Ayana Jaycox
 Mine Ibrahim
 Antigone Hourt
 Emily Ames
 Xixuan Zhang
 India Reilly

Viola

Clem Pickering
 Mitzi Marley Clarke
 Declan Wicks
 Becca Marr
 Tianyi He
 Karis Lee
 Zephyr Wills
 Lizzie Rowland
 Anthony Ip
 Yue Wang
 Leo Lam
 Toby Warr

Cello

Rasmus Andersen
 Aoqing Yang
 Fabiola Sebastian
 Guijarro
 Niccolo Citrani
 Yuwei Chen
 Ozgur Kaya
 Alexander Scott-Brown
 Floora Valila
 Philip Heide
 Astrid Munro

Double Bass

Will Duerden
 Roberto Blanes
 Natalia Vazquez
 Nathan Ng
 Yunze Wei
 Nigel Smith
 Joseph Straker

Flute

Zoe Borseth Rasmussen
 Matthew Bottaro
 Sara Bolstad
 Leah Hallinon
 Julia Klampfer (pic)

Oboe

Hannah Seymour
 Jane Sullivan
 Patricia Gomes
 Annabelle Pizzey (cor)

Clarinet

Ellie Kershaw
 Sydney Minor
 Siena Barr
 Christian Hoddinott (E flat)
 Hannah Shimwell (bass)

Bassoon

Will Kidner
 Jonathon Churchett
 Eva Serksnaite
 Jamie King (contra)

Horn

Stefan Grant
 Tom Findlay
 Alexander Harris
 Josh Pizzofferro
 Amelia Lawson

Trumpet

Katie Bannister
 Nina Noble
 Stone Tung
 Callum Robb

Trombone

Robyn Anderson
 Max Pritchard
 Jonathan Lovatt (bass)

Tuba

Matthew Lait

Timpani

Julie Scheuren
 Mariella Bromfield

Percussion

Stan Talman
 Kian Hsu
 Hoi Yin Ng
 Matthew Kosciecha

Harp

Annest Davies
 Milly Chan

Personnel correct at the time of going to print.

Italics denote section principals.

The RCM would like to thank the following orchestral coaches:

Gabrielle Lester (violin and tutti strings)

Steve Doman (viola)

Amanda Truelove (cello)

Nicholas Bayley (double bass)

Amos Miller (brass)

Chris Ridley (percussion)

Timothy Lines (woodwind; tutti strings; tutti woodwind, brass, percussion & harp; and tutti orchestra)



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Latecomers will not be allowed into the auditorium until a suitable break. In the interests of safety, sitting or standing on the steps or floors is strictly prohibited. Thank you for your cooperation.

Programme details correct at time of going to print.

OPERA TRIPLE BILL: BRITTEN, WEILL & RAVEL

Monday 25, Wednesday 27, Friday 29 and Saturday 30 November, 7pm
Britten Theatre

Michael Rosewell conductor
Ella Marchment director
Simon Brown assistant to the director
Cordelia Chisholm designer
Kevin Treacy lighting designer
Adam Haigh choreographer

Britten *Les Illuminations*
Weill *Chansons des Quais*
Ravel *L'heure espagnole*

The Royal College of Music Opera Studio presents a triple-bill of vocal masterpieces sung in French. This intoxicating trio of works celebrates the French language and showcases the versatility of RCM singers.

Les Illuminations is a contemplative song cycle by RCM alumnus Benjamin Britten, comprising settings of some of Arthur Rimbaud's most important work, expressing vivid imagery and surrealistic themes.

Then comes a song cycle conceived from Kurt Weill's early work *Marie Galante*, made up of a selection of beguiling, rarely performed songs and musical scenes. Our musical triptych ends with Ravel's popular one-act opera, the comédie musicale *L'heure espagnole*, which follows a farcical plot featuring the hapless Torquemada, his mischievous wife and a host of comical characters concealed in clocks.

This production is made possible with the assistance of the Basil Coleman bequest.

Please note this production contains adult themes and may not be suitable for children. The performance will also use haze.

Approximate total running time: 2 hours 15 minutes

Tickets: £60, £40, £20; £10 under 35
Box Office 020 7591 4314 | www.rcm.ac.uk/events