

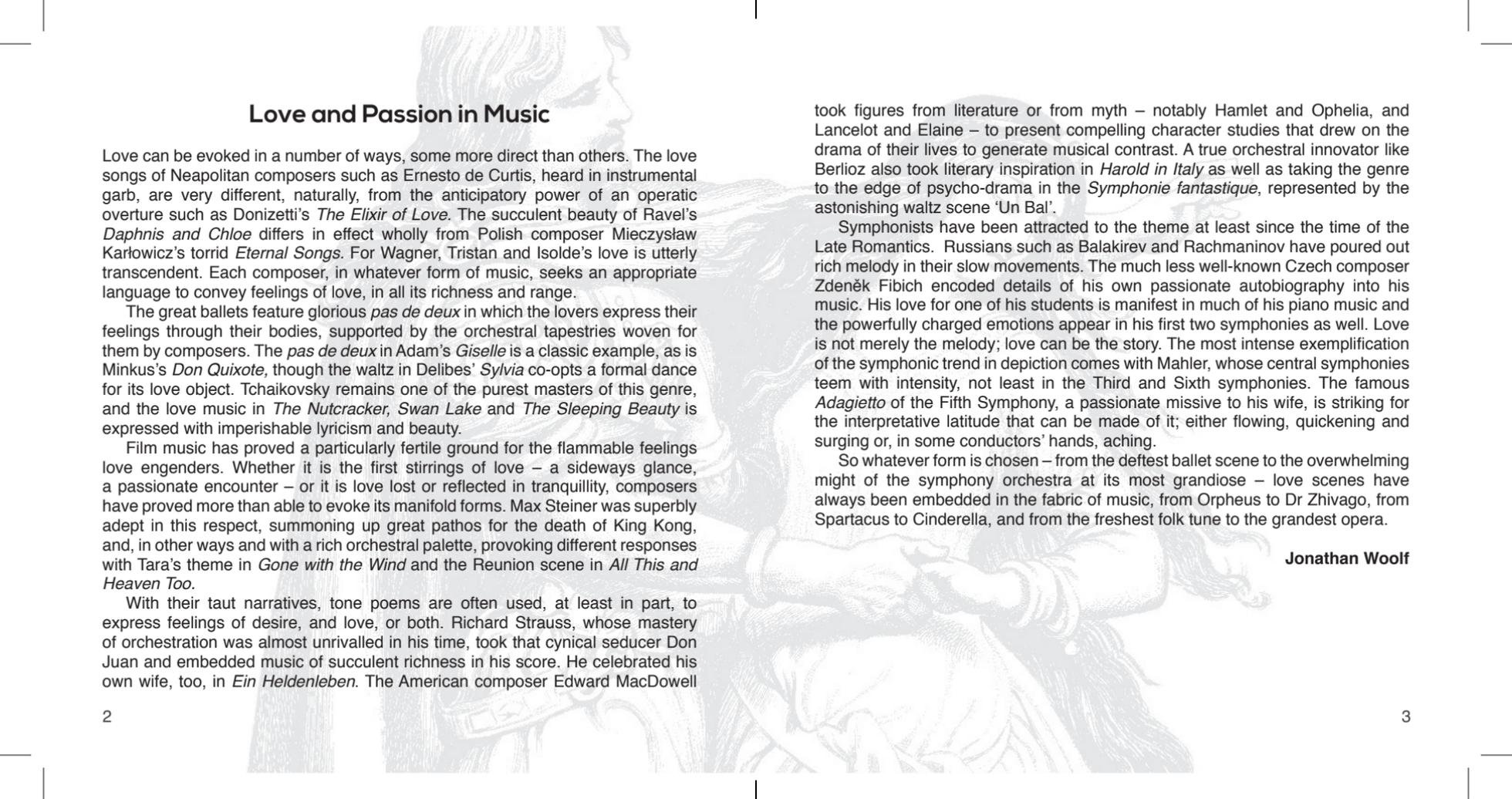


2 CD

Love and Passion in Music



8.578289-90



Love and Passion in Music

Love can be evoked in a number of ways, some more direct than others. The love songs of Neapolitan composers such as Ernesto de Curtis, heard in instrumental garb, are very different, naturally, from the anticipatory power of an operatic overture such as Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*. The succulent beauty of Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* differs in effect wholly from Polish composer Mieczysław Karłowicz's torrid *Eternal Songs*. For Wagner, Tristan and Isolde's love is utterly transcendent. Each composer, in whatever form of music, seeks an appropriate language to convey feelings of love, in all its richness and range.

The great ballets feature glorious *pas de deux* in which the lovers express their feelings through their bodies, supported by the orchestral tapestries woven for them by composers. The *pas de deux* in Adam's *Giselle* is a classic example, as is Minkus's *Don Quixote*, though the waltz in Delibes' *Sylvia* co-opts a formal dance for its love object. Tchaikovsky remains one of the purest masters of this genre, and the love music in *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty* is expressed with imperishable lyricism and beauty.

Film music has proved a particularly fertile ground for the flammable feelings love engenders. Whether it is the first stirrings of love – a sideways glance, a passionate encounter – or it is love lost or reflected in tranquillity, composers have proved more than able to evoke its manifold forms. Max Steiner was superbly adept in this respect, summoning up great pathos for the death of King Kong, and, in other ways and with a rich orchestral palette, provoking different responses with Tara's theme in *Gone with the Wind* and the Reunion scene in *All This and Heaven Too*.

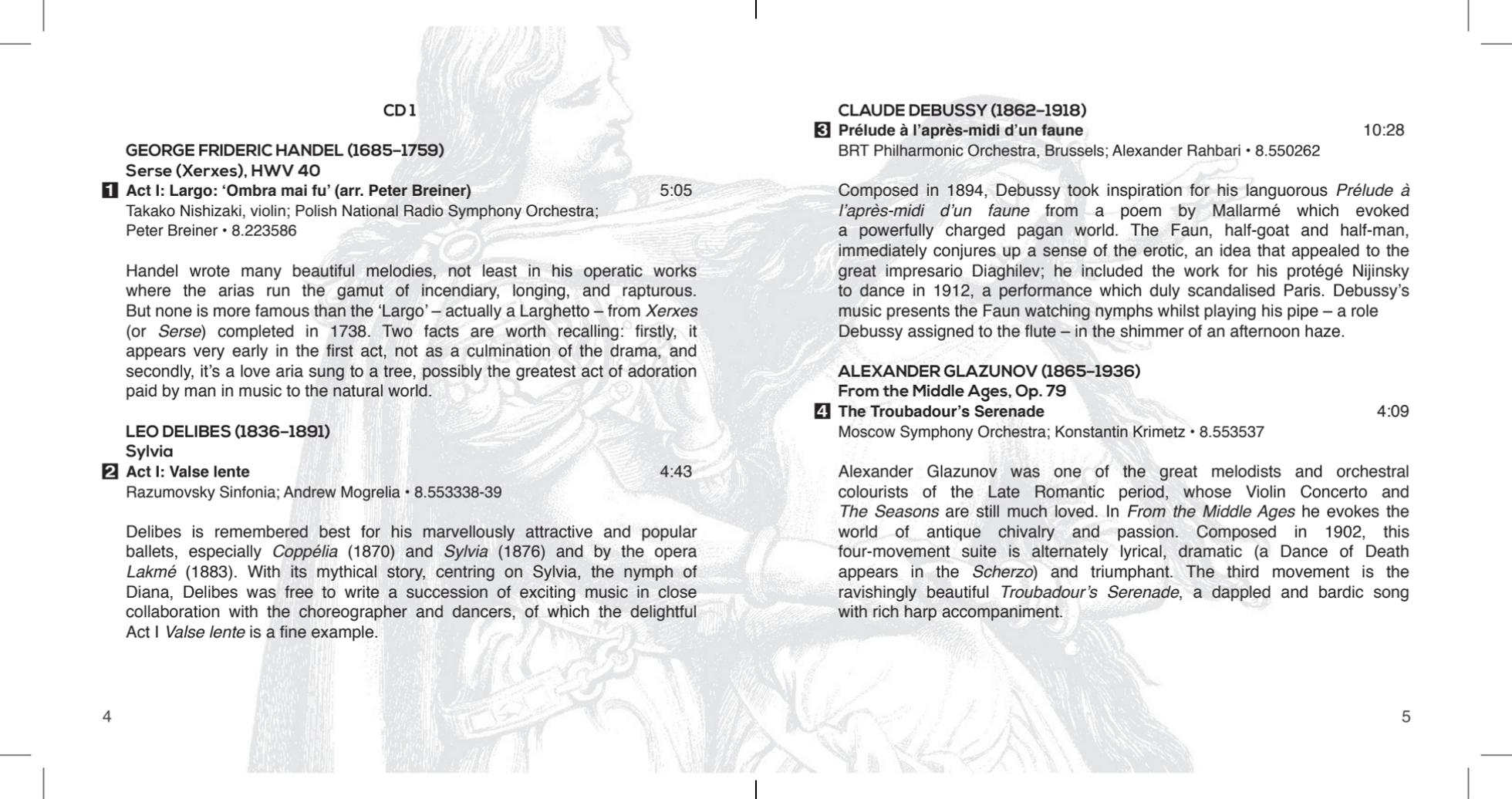
With their taut narratives, tone poems are often used, at least in part, to express feelings of desire, and love, or both. Richard Strauss, whose mastery of orchestration was almost unrivalled in his time, took that cynical seducer Don Juan and embedded music of succulent richness in his score. He celebrated his own wife, too, in *Ein Heldenleben*. The American composer Edward MacDowell

took figures from literature or from myth – notably Hamlet and Ophelia, and Lancelot and Elaine – to present compelling character studies that drew on the drama of their lives to generate musical contrast. A true orchestral innovator like Berlioz also took literary inspiration in *Harold in Italy* as well as taking the genre to the edge of psycho-drama in the *Symphonie fantastique*, represented by the astonishing waltz scene 'Un Bal'.

Symphonists have been attracted to the theme at least since the time of the Late Romantics. Russians such as Balakirev and Rachmaninov have poured out rich melody in their slow movements. The much less well-known Czech composer Zdeněk Fibich encoded details of his own passionate autobiography into his music. His love for one of his students is manifest in much of his piano music and the powerfully charged emotions appear in his first two symphonies as well. Love is not merely the melody; love can be the story. The most intense exemplification of the symphonic trend in depiction comes with Mahler, whose central symphonies teem with intensity, not least in the Third and Sixth symphonies. The famous *Adagietto* of the Fifth Symphony, a passionate missive to his wife, is striking for the interpretative latitude that can be made of it; either flowing, quickening and surging or, in some conductors' hands, aching.

So whatever form is chosen – from the deffest ballet scene to the overwhelming might of the symphony orchestra at its most grandiose – love scenes have always been embedded in the fabric of music, from Orpheus to Dr Zhivago, from Spartacus to Cinderella, and from the freshest folk tune to the grandest opera.

Jonathan Woolf



CD1

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)

Serse (Xerxes), HWV 40

- 1 Act I: Largo: 'Ombra mai fu' (arr. Peter Breiner)** 5:05
Takako Nishizaki, violin; Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra;
Peter Breiner • 8.223586

Handel wrote many beautiful melodies, not least in his operatic works where the arias run the gamut of incendiary, longing, and rapturous. But none is more famous than the 'Largo' – actually a Larghetto – from *Xerxes* (or *Serse*) completed in 1738. Two facts are worth recalling: firstly, it appears very early in the first act, not as a culmination of the drama, and secondly, it's a love aria sung to a tree, possibly the greatest act of adoration paid by man in music to the natural world.

LEO DELIBES (1836–1891)

Sylvia

- 2 Act I: Valse lente** 4:43
Razumovsky Sinfonia; Andrew Mogrelia • 8.553338-39

Delibes is remembered best for his marvellously attractive and popular ballets, especially *Coppélia* (1870) and *Sylvia* (1876) and by the opera *Lakmé* (1883). With its mythical story, centring on Sylvia, the nymph of Diana, Delibes was free to write a succession of exciting music in close collaboration with the choreographer and dancers, of which the delightful Act I *Valse lente* is a fine example.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

- 3 Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune** 10:28
BRT Philharmonic Orchestra, Brussels; Alexander Rahbari • 8.550262

Composed in 1894, Debussy took inspiration for his languorous *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* from a poem by Mallarmé which evoked a powerfully charged pagan world. The Faun, half-goat and half-man, immediately conjures up a sense of the erotic, an idea that appealed to the great impresario Diaghilev; he included the work for his protégé Nijinsky to dance in 1912, a performance which duly scandalised Paris. Debussy's music presents the Faun watching nymphs whilst playing his pipe – a role Debussy assigned to the flute – in the shimmer of an afternoon haze.

ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV (1865–1936)

From the Middle Ages, Op. 79

- 4 The Troubadour's Serenade** 4:09
Moscow Symphony Orchestra; Konstantin Krimetz • 8.553537

Alexander Glazunov was one of the great melodists and orchestral colourists of the Late Romantic period, whose Violin Concerto and *The Seasons* are still much loved. In *From the Middle Ages* he evokes the world of antique chivalry and passion. Composed in 1902, this four-movement suite is alternately lyrical, dramatic (a Dance of Death appears in the *Scherzo*) and triumphant. The third movement is the ravishingly beautiful *Troubadour's Serenade*, a dappled and bardic song with rich harp accompaniment.

MAX STEINER (1888–1971)

Gone With the Wind (film score)

- 5** **Tara's Theme** 3:54
Richard Hayman Symphony Orchestra; Richard Hayman • 8.990021

Max Steiner was one of the busiest and best of all Hollywood composers and 1939 was a high point for him, with no fewer than 12 scores to his credit. Prominent among them was the three-hour score – 16 main themes with 300 separate pieces – for *Gone with the Wind*, one of the great epic films. Studio heads wanted Steiner to synthesise pre-existing classical scores but he refused, producing instead what was then the longest film score yet composed. *Tara's Theme* is one of the great indelible classics of American music.

PIOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

The Sleeping Beauty

- 6** **Act I: Pas d'action: 'Rose Adagio'** 6:35
Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra (Košice); Andrew Mogrelia • 8.550490-92

The Sleeping Beauty, composed in 1889 and premiered the following year in St Petersburg, is Tchaikovsky's longest ballet, lasting almost four hours when performed uncut. The scenario is based on a story called *La Belle au bois dormant* by Charles Perrault, in which the forces of good and evil confront one another. It wasn't until after Tchaikovsky's death that his ballets achieved worldwide popularity. In this scene Princess Aurora and her four suitors enact a brilliant, virtuoso dance.

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

Ein Heldenleben

- 7** **III. Des Helden Gefährtin (The Hero's Companion)** 12:52
National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland; Gerhard Markson • 8.554417

Richard Strauss wrote *Ein Heldenleben* ('A Hero's Life') in 1898 and it remains one of his most important symphonic tone poems. It is in essence a six-movement musical autobiography, with Strauss as the Hero and his wife Pauline as the object of his love. Strauss's critics were mercilessly lampooned in a scherzo passage, and there is much martial music to be heard, but his wife was exalted in the movement called *Des Helden Gefährtin* ('The Hero's Companion'). Here she is represented, in all her many varied moods, by the solo violin, before the music is swept up in a rapturous song of love.

SERGEY RACHMANINOV (1873–1943)

14 Songs, Op. 34

- 8** **No. 14: Vocalise (arr. for orchestra)** 6:34
Detroit Symphony Orchestra; Leonard Slatkin • 8.572458

Famed as a virtuoso pianist and composer, Sergey Rachmaninov's music has often been co-opted to underscore themes of love and longing, most famously as the soundtrack to the film *Brief Encounter*. His magnificent Second Symphony has proved equally suggestive, but for a simple distillation of his great gifts as a melodist one can do no better than *Vocalise*, Op. 34 No. 14, completed in 1915. It is part of a set of fourteen songs and the *Vocalise* is, of course, wordless. Rachmaninov's own orchestral arrangement is an aching song of love.

EDWARD MACDOWELL (1860–1908)**Suite No. 2, Op. 48 'Indian'****9 II. Love Song**

6:23

Ulster Orchestra; Takuo Yuasa • 8.559075

Despite many works in extended forms – he premiered his own First Piano Concerto, for instance – American composer Edward MacDowell still remains better known for his small-scale works, such as the *Woodland Sketches*. However, he was tempted to explore a historic theme in his 1892 symphonic 'Indian' Suite, Op. 48. Some of the themes seem to derive from Native American tribes – notably the Iroquois and Chippewa – and in the second movement, a richly textured *Love Song*, which possibly in part derives from the Iowas, he reveals why he was so admired in America as a composer of stature.

ZDENĚK FIBICH (1850–1900)**Symphony No. 1 in F major, Op. 17****10 III. Adagio non troppo (alla romanza)**

5:27

Czech National Symphony Orchestra; Marek Štílek • 8.572985

A composer who managed to circumvent the tricky question of the division between Czech Nationalism and New German music was Zdeněk Fibich. He studied in Prague and Leipzig, absorbing much from leading composition teachers of the day. He wrote a significant series of piano compositions charting his love affair with a young pupil, Anežka Schulzová, but is also remembered as an important Czech symphonist. The slow movement of his First Symphony of 1883 reveals just how potent were his gifts for lyricism, and this tender *romanza* is distinguished by deft orchestration and songful warmth.

SERGEY PROKOFIEV (1891–1953)**Romeo and Juliet****11 Love Dance**

5:47

Ukraine National Symphony Orchestra; Andrew Mogrelia • 8.554590

The Kirov Theatre in Leningrad commissioned Sergey Prokofiev to write a ballet, a project soon taken over by the Bolshoi. *Romeo and Juliet* was the result but it had a troubled history. Taking only four months to write during 1935, Prokofiev preferred a happy ending, complaining that 'living people can dance, the dying cannot'. Rejected as inappropriate, significant revisions took place and the work was only premiered in December 1938 and then in Czechoslovakia. The *Love Dance* illustrates the alluring expressivity of this dramatic score.

CD 2**GEORGES BIZET (1838–1875)****Carmen****1 Entr'acte**

1:38

Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Alexander Rahbari • 8.660005-07

Carmen, one of the most beloved of all operas, had a remarkably turbulent history and its early years were marked by scandal and failure. It was first presented at the Opéra Comique in Paris in 1875, but critics found fault with the work's subject matter and with its music, which they considered unmelodic. It wasn't until after Bizet's early death that the work became accepted as an operatic masterpiece, and even then it was after some significant revisions to the original production. The *Entr'acte* evokes the soldiers' song.

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD VON GLUCK (1714–1787)

Orfeo ed Euridice

2 Che farò senza Euridice (arr. Peter Breiner)

4:12

Takako Nishizaki, violin; Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Peter Breiner • 8.223586

It was inevitable that the mythological tale of Orpheus and Eurydice should inspire composers. One of the great operatic pioneers, Monteverdi, set it to music, but it was Christoph Willibald von Gluck's work – with its new insistence on language and drama – that immortalised it. In 'Che farò senza Euridice' Orpheus, having fatally looked back as he was leading Eurydice out of the land of the dead, laments his beloved's death – though Gluck romantically engineered a happy ending.

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803–1869)

Harold in Italy, Op. 16

3 III. Allegro assai (Serenade of an Abruzzi Mountain-Dweller to His Mistress)

6:47

Rivka Golani, violin; San Diego Symphony Orchestra; Yoav Talmi • 8.553034

Berlioz stood in the vanguard of Romantic composers, and in his music drama, passion, and colour abound. It was the virtuoso Paganini who commissioned *Harold in Italy* as a Viola Concerto, but Berlioz fashioned a very different piece of work in which the viola is a commentator, not a flashy focus of attention – a distinction that was somewhat lost on Paganini. Supposedly based on passages from Byron's poem *Childe Harold* it stands as one of the peaks of romantic programme music. In the section called the *Serenade of an Abruzzi Mountain-Dweller to his Mistress* we hear the work's passionate *idée fixe*.

GAETANO DONIZETTI (1797–1848)

The Elixir of Love

4 Act I, Scene I: Prelude

2:46

Hungarian State Opera Orchestra; Pier Giorgio Morandi • 8.660045-46

The succession of great Italian opera composers ran from Rossini and Bellini to Gaetano Donizetti, and then to Verdi and beyond. Donizetti earned his first success with *Anna Bolena* (1830) but it was two years later with the staging of his comic masterpiece *L'elisir d'amore* that he became truly established. Known in English as 'The Elixir of Love', this bubbling sentimental comedy of manners reveals his humour and wit and his admirable technical resources.

LÉON (LUDWIG) MINKUS (1826–1917)

Don Quixote

5 Act III. Amour

2:51

Sofia State Opera Orchestra; Nayden Todorov • 8.557065-66

Léon Minkus was born in Vienna and gravitated to the world of ballet at an early age and by twenty he was collaborating on productions for the Paris stage. Soon after, he moved to Russia – it's presumed he had Russian ancestry – where he held a series of distinguished positions. Cervantes's novel had inspired other ballets but Minkus's *Don Quixote* is focused on the wedding scenes in the second part of the novel, and includes a series of delightful episodes of which *Amour* suggests the central couple's happiness.

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860–1911)
Symphony No. 5 in C sharp minor

- 6** **IV. Adagietto: Sehr langsam** 10:39
London Symphony Orchestra; James DePriest • 8.557990

Though it has become known in some quarters as a melancholy piece of music, the *Adagietto* of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 5 was actually composed after he married Alma Schindler in 1902. The movement recalls earlier Mahler settings, principally *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* and Mahler deftly uses strings and harp to portray music of great richness and beauty of spirit – marked *seelevoll* ('soulful').

PIOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Swan Lake

- 7** **Act II, No. 14: Scène; Moderato** 2:17
Russian State Symphony Orchestra; Dmitry Yablonsky • 8.555873-74

Tchaikovsky wrote three full-length ballets, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*. *Swan Lake* was first performed by the Bolshoy Company in 1877, with the libretto based on an old German fairy story called *The Stolen Veil*. Unsuccessful at first, choreographic changes followed, and changes too were made to the plot line, principally the insertion of a happy rather than a tragic ending. Later still Tchaikovsky's brother Modest made further, imaginative changes. The Act II scene depicts Odette and her companions at dawn.

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897–1957)
The Adventures of Robin Hood (film score)

- 8** **Love Scene** 6:25
Moscow Symphony Orchestra; William Stromberg • 8.225268

Shot in three-strip Technicolor, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) is a spectacular big-budget movie starring the irrepressible Errol Flynn, Basil Rathbone, Claude Rains and Olivia de Havilland. Costing an astronomical \$2m, it has non-stop action, legendary fight scenes, and a great deal of witty banter. The magnificent score was composed by the Viennese prodigy Erich Wolfgang Korngold and at its heart is the *Love Scene*, a rippling evocation of passion, tracing Robin's precarious climb to Marian's balcony in Nottingham Castle.

RICHARD WAGNER (1813–1883)
Tristan and Isolde

- 9** **Prelude to Act I / Isolde's Liebestod** 15:56
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Johannes Wildner • 8.550498

The events depicted in *Tristan and Isolde* reflected the drama of Wagner's own life. His adulterous affair with Mathilde Wesendonck, wife of the banker Otto, mirrored Tristan's love for King Mark's wife, Isolde. In the *Prelude to Act I*, the themes (or 'leitmotifs') are unveiled, each associated with ideas of longing and desire, seamlessly unfolding and couched in language of epochal harmonic novelty. After Tristan's death comes the *Liebestod*, a word coined by Franz Liszt for the passionate 'Love Death' that Isolde undergoes.

PIETRO MASCAGNI (1863–1945)

Cavalleria rusticana

- 10** **Intermezzo** 3:38
Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Alexander Rahbari • 8.660022

Pietro Mascagni was a leading composer of *verismo*, the art of operatic realism. He was variously a double-bass player and conductor before, in 1888, very unexpectedly and not yet 26 years old, he won a competition for a one-act opera. This was *Cavalleria rusticana*, which launched his name and remains his most popular work. Based on a short story by Giovanni Verga concerning Sicilian country life, Mascagni fashioned a remarkably vivid, dramatic and theatrically convincing opera. The *Intermezzo* reflects this drama but in a reflective and very beautiful way.

EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

- 11** **Salut d'amour** 3:25
Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Adrian Leaper • 8.554585

Edward Elgar played the violin and also the piano, for which instrument he originally wrote his delectable *Salut d'amour* in September 1888. Known in German as *Liebesgrüss*, or 'Love's Greeting', he wrote it just before his engagement to his erstwhile piano pupil Alice Roberts, whose poem *Love's Grace* he had taken with him on holiday and which inspired him to write this lovely tribute to her. This arrangement by the composer for orchestra is still the most famous.

PIOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY

- 12** **Francesca da Rimini, Op. 32 (extract)** 9:23
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Antoni Wit • 8.550782

Francesca da Rimini was composed in 1876, and the theme Tchaikovsky took was the forbidden passion of the characters Paolo and Francesca, which Dante depicts in Canto V of his *Inferno*. The music opens and closes in turbulent intensity, reflecting the winds of the second circle of the Inferno, but its central panel, depicted here, is a long unfolding of Francesca's intense love.

JULES MASSENET (1842–1912)

- Thaïs**
13 **Méditation** 4:46
János Selmeczy, violin; Camerata Transylvania; György Selmeczy • 8.554703

Composed in 1894, Massenet's opera *Thaïs* takes a story by the writer Anatole France set in ancient Alexandria. The central character is Thaïs, a courtesan who is induced to convert to God by a monk, who then tries to inveigle her from her brothel. The *Méditation* for violin and orchestra is one of the most famous in the repertoire, a refined musical oasis in this passionate operatic world.