

- **East/West** – features Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble; premieres from Tan Dun, Zhou Long and Bright Sheng; plus Eastern-inspired music by John Adams, Britten, Debussy, Mahler, Messiaen and Ravel

- **Back to Bohemia** – celebrates the anniversaries of Dvořák, Janáček and Biber, and brings top Czech musicians to the Proms

- **England at the Crossroads: 1934** – marks 70 years since the deaths of Elgar, Holst and Delius, and 70 years since the births of Sir Harrison Birtwistle and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies

- **Diaghilev** – 75 years after his death the Proms brings together the most famous ballet scores

- **Anniversary tributes** – for Charles Ives, Luigi Dallapiccola, Sir John Tavener, Johann Strauss I, Marc-Antoine Charpentier and Engelbert Humperdinck

East/West

Western traders have been bringing back riches from the East for centuries and music from the great Eastern civilisations and trading routes has been influencing Western music for just as long. The 2004 BBC Proms brings music from the ancient Silk Road routes performed by Da

by Da

in China during the Cultural Revolution, worked for years with a folk music troupe in a remote province near Tibet before getting a place at the Shanghai Conservatory and then moving to New York to study with Leonard Bernstein. Bright Sheng's 26-minute *The Song and Dance of Tears* was inspired by a two-month trip to China four years ago in which the composer set out to collect folk music along the route of the ancient Silk Road. It calls for a quartet of *pipa* (a lute-like instrument first brought into China over 2,000 years ago), *sheng* (an ancient Chinese mouth organ), cello and piano. In the same concert is Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony*, which is full of a variety of Eastern influences from its Sanskrit title, to naming the percussion section 'gamelang' (Prom 38).

The Silk Road weekend continues with a Sunday matinee (Prom 40) and a chamber music concert (PCM 5), giving UK audiences their first chance to hear a huge variety of the music at the heart of the Silk Road Project – from Armenian folk songs and Iranian composer Kayhan Kalhor's *Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur* to Debussy's Cello Sonata, which reflects the theme of cross-cultural exchange. The Ensemble also takes part in the Proms' major education project of the year, Silk Road Tales, a series of workshops at the British Library with around 120 teenagers from various Asian and Turkish communities in London, in which children create new work for performance at a concert involving Yo-Yo Ma and the musicians of the Silk Road Ensemble.

As well as the UK premiere of Bright Sheng's *The Song and Dance of Tears*, new works by leading Chinese-American composers Tan Dun and Zhou Long are a key component of the East/West theme. Zhou Long's *The Immortal*, the BBC World Service's first commission for the Proms and the first world premiere of the season, is described by Zhou Long as 'a tribute to the Chinese artists and intellectuals of the 20th century'. Zhou Long (born 1953) is

married to Chen Yi, whose Percussion Concerto was played at last year's Proms; like Bright Sheng and Tan Dun, he grew up during the Cultural Revolution in China but is now a US citizen. The 15-minute orchestral work is premiered at the Proms (Prom 68).

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Other pillars of the Western repertoire inspired by Eastern themes at this year's Proms include Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth), based on sixth-century Chinese poetry (Prom 57), Bartók's ballet suite *The Miraculous Mandarin* (Prom 28), Ravel's two works related to the tale of *Shéhérazade* (Proms 29 and 33), excerpts from Puccini's Japanese opera *Madam Butterfly* (Prom 74) and Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (Prom 74), and Debussy's great gamelan-tinged piano work *Estampes* (PCM 4), but it is some of the lesser-known works which promise to be Proms highlights in 2004.

Holst and Britten both wrote operas based on Eastern literature. Britten's *Curlew River*, brought to the Proms in a production specially created for the Royal Albert Hall by Graham Vick with his Birmingham Opera Company, is based on a Japanese Noh play about a madwoman desperately looking for her lost son (Prom 17), while Holst's *Sāvītri* is based on an episode from the Hindu epic, the *Mahābhārata* (Prom 54). Holst was frequently inspired by Hindu literature and even taught himself Sanskrit, and this is reflected in his beautiful settings of

It is a century since the death of Dvořák and 150 years since the birth of Janáček. It is also 300 years since the death of Biber, one of the 17th century's most celebrated composers and violin virtuosos.

The BBC Proms' Bohemian feast does not end with anniversary composers. It also features music of other Czech masters Petr Eben, Martinů, Mysliveček, Novák, Smetana, Vejvanovský and Zelenka, and brings to the UK many of the top Czech and Slovak performing groups including the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, the Prague Philharmonia under its esteemed founder-conductor Jiří Bělohlávek, the Czech Philharmonic Chorus of Brno and the Slovak Philharmonic Choir, as well as top-flight soloists including Magdalena Kožená (pictured left)

Dvořák has long been the best-known among Czech composers and actually conducted at the Royal Albert Hall (his *Stabat mater* in 1884). The BBC Proms marks the centenary of his death with performances of 20 of his best-known works, ranging from the famous 'New World' Symphony (Prom 70) and Cello Concerto (Prom 29) to rarities such as the opera *Dimitrij*, which picks up the story of Tsarist Russia where Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* left off (Prom 3).

The BBC Proms is pleased that the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, whose founding concert Dvořák himself conducted in 1896, has chosen to mark the composer's birthday, 8 September, at the BBC Proms. Sir Charles Mackerras conducts an all-Dvořák concert which comprises his *Scherzo capriccioso*, the Violin Concerto (played by Sarah Chang) and the 'New World' Symphony (Prom 70).

Dvořák's last four symphonies are conducted by an impressive line-up during the season: Vassily Sinaisky conducts Symphony No. 6 (Prom 25); Bernard Haitink Symphony No. 7

(Prom 66); Mariss Jansons Symphony No. 8 (Prom 19); and Sir Charles Mackerras Symphony No. 9 (Prom 70).

A particular Dvořák highlight promises to be his rarely performed oratorio *The Spectre's Bride*, with star Czech soprano Eva Urbanová and the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus under the baton of internationally acclaimed Czech conductor Jiří Bělohlávek (Prom 32). Other.9(to (Pr)24. Jir

Vrchlický's retelling of the words of a medieval prophet, which gets its first outing at the Proms in a concert with soprano Gweneth-Ann Jeffers and tenor John Daszak, the London Philharmonic Choir and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Principal Conductor Ilan Volkov (Prom 36).

Janáček's music starts and finishes the Proms Chamber Music concerts. The First String Quartet, 'The Kreutzer Sonata', launches the lunchtime series at the Victoria & Albert Museum, played by the leading Czech Škampa Quartet, and the exquisite Concertino played

cantata *The Music Makers* with celebrated American mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson in the solo role. Two of Elgar's most popular works follow a few days later when the BBC National Orchestra of Wales performs his *Cockaigne Overture* and the *Enigma Variations* (Prom 4). Other major Elgar highlights include a performance of the Violin Concerto given by the great virtuoso Pinchas Zukerman (Prom 13) and a revival of Anthony Payne's acclaimed completion of the Third Symphony (Prom 14). Of course, no Proms season would be complete without the Last Night performance of his *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1* ('Land of Hope and Glory') and 2004 is no exception.

Gustav Holst was only 59 years old when he died in 1934, just a few months after Elgar.

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