

TORONTO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

Simon Rivard, TSYO Conductor

Program 1

Saturday,
February 17, 2024

3:00pm

George Weston Recital Hall

Britannia

Simon Rivard, conductor*

Trevor Wilson, conductor°

.....
Hannah Kendall°

The Spark Catchers

.....
Gustav Holst°

Egdon Heath, Op. 47

Intermission

.....
James MacMillan*

Britannia

.....
Edward Elgar*

Variations on an Original Theme "Enigma",
Op. 36

Theme: Andante "Enigma"

Variation I. L'istesso tempo "C.A.E."

Variation II. Allegro "H.D.S-P."

Variation III. Allegretto "R.B.T."

Variation IV. Allegro di molto "W.M.B."

Variation V. Moderato "R.P.A."

Variation VI. Andantino "Ysobel"

Variation VII. Presto "Troyte"

Variation VIII. Allegretto "W.N."

Variation IX. Adagio "Nimrod"

Variation X. Intermezzo: Allegretto "Dorabella"

Variation XI. Allegro di molto "G.R.S."

Variation XII. Andante "B.G.N."

Variation XIII. Romanza: Moderato "* * *"

Variation XIV. Finale: Allegro "E.D.U."

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Hannah Kendall (b. 1984)

The Spark Catchers

Composed 2017

11 min

FROM THE COMPOSER: Lemn Sissay's incredibly evocative poem "The Spark Catchers" is the inspiration behind this work. I was drawn to its wonderful dynamism, vibrancy, and drive. Specific words and phrases from the text have established the structure of the work and informed the contrasting musical characteristics created within the piece's main components.

The opening "Sparks and Strikes" section immediately creates vigour and liveliness, with the piccolo and violins setting up a swelling rhythmic drive, interjected by strong strikes from the rest of the ensemble. This momentum continues into "The Molten Madness", maintaining the initial kinetic energy, whilst also producing a darker and brooding atmosphere introduced in the bass lines. A broad and soaring melodic line in the French horns and first violins overlays the material, moving into a majestic episode led by the full string section, accentuated by valiant calls in the woodwind, brass, and percussion; culminating in a sudden pause. A lighter variation of the opening rhythmic material in the clarinets, harp, and strings follows, creating a feeling of suspense. The texture builds up through a jazzy figure led by the brass, leading to powerful and surging interplay between the flutes, oboes, and violins.

The lighter, clearer, and crystalline "Beneath the Stars/In the Silver Sheen" section follows. Quiet and still, it is distinguished by its gleaming delicacy through long interweaving lines, high-pitch range, and thin textures. An illuminating strike, underpinned by the glockenspiel and harp, signifies the climax of this section. Subsequently, the opening zest comes

back again through dance-like material that culminates in "The Matchgirls March" with its forceful and punchy chords. *The Spark Catchers* ends with a coda-like section, which carries over the power of the March, whilst also incorporating variations on musical motives from "Sparks and Strikes" and "The Molten Madness"; finally concluding on a sparkling flourish.

COMPOSER BIO: Known for her attentive arrangements and immersive world-building, Hannah Kendall writes music that looks beyond the boundaries of composition. Her work bridges gaps between different musical cultures, both honouring and questioning the contemporary tradition while telling new stories through it. Contrasting fine detail with limitless abandon, she has become renowned both as a composer and as a storyteller, confronting our collective history with narrative-driven pieces centred on bold mission statements. Born in London in 1984, Kendall is currently a Doctoral Fellow in composition at Columbia University. Her music is published by Ricordi (Berlin).



“

Hannah Kendall's The Spark Catchers also lives up to its title with brilliantly flickering music.

—FINANCIAL TIMES

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

Egdon Heath, Op. 47

Composed 1927

15 min

ALTHOUGH ENGLISH COMPOSER GUSTAV HOLST remains best known for his evergreen orchestral suite *The Planets*, his most lasting compositional influences were more terrestrial. Together with his friend Ralph Vaughan Williams, Holst was a central figure in the development of a 20th-century

English style that looked to country landscapes and folk inspirations to breathe new life into the orchestral medium. Such is the case with *Egdon Heath*, Op. 47; the titular heath is a fictional scrubby location imagined by author Thomas Hardy, who set his literary works in a hazily defined, semi-fictional English region of Wessex.

For inspiration, Holst drew upon Hardy's description of Egdon Heath in the 1878 novel *Return of the Native*: "A place perfectly accordant with man's nature—neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly; neither common-place, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and [furthermore] singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony!"

Holst chose to capture this image in the form of a tone poem, a free-form orchestral genre that lent him the flexibility to explore the ambiguities and nuances of Hardy's landscape. The resulting work is notable

for its unsettled atmosphere and frequent use of chromaticism. The string section, which Holst requested to be larger than usual, meanders through cryptic melodies in dialogue with the woodwinds, which repeatedly highlight a lonely oboe. A brass choir—so quintessentially English—makes a brief appearance. Later, a curious lilting dance passage calls to mind a Renaissance band haunting the heath.

Egdon Heath was premièred in 1928 by

an early incarnation of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and the next day Holst himself led a performance by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in Cheltenham. The reception of the work was mixed. Holst considered this to be his finest output, an opinion matched by critics and composers of his time; but audiences were less certain, particularly as the work's experimental aspects strayed far from the accessible tonality and imagery of

The Planets. For Holst, this reception was not a discouragement: by all accounts, he shied away from fame and was uncomfortable with the popular success of *The Planets*. In the wake of *Egdon Heath*, Holst felt empowered to continue experimentation with new influences and techniques, leading to a late-career fluorescence of some of his most innovative work.

—Program note by Arlan Vriens



↑
Gustav Holst—by Kalya Ramu

James MacMillan (b. 1959)

Britannia

Composed 1994

14 min

FROM THE COMPOSER: *Britannia* was written in 1994 as a celebration of a major force in our musical lives, the British orchestra. The work fulfils a commission from British Telecommunications PLC with the Association of British Orchestras as part of the BT Celebration Series, and provides all the major UK orchestras with a new concert overture for performance in the 1994/95 season.

Britannia is a ten-minute orchestral fantasy based on “patriotic themes.” There is no programme of story as such, but the tapestry of popular melodies and resonant allusions, given their new and unfamiliar contexts, may provoke some surprising scenarios in the mind of the listener, particularly at a time when petty chauvinism threatens to rear up once again throughout Europe. The piece grows out of a short sketch written earlier this year, *Mémoire Impériale*, which is based on a march tune by General Reid, an 18th-century British army officer who established the music department at Edinburgh University. This theme and the “imperial” themes of Elgar and Arne are thrown into a volatile concoction with other materials—an Irish reel (which becomes a jig), a Cockney drinking song, other march tunes, and a hazy Celtic modality.

All the main ideas are presented in quick and stark succession during the fast opening section. The slow middle part begins with a serene canon that is gradually undermined by military allusions on brass and percussion. This confrontation leads to the work’s climax followed by an unsettled coda. *Britannia* is dedicated to Libby MacNamara of the Association of British Orchestras.

COMPOSER BIO: James MacMillan is the pre-eminent Scottish composer of his generation, with music that combines rhythmic excitement, raw emotional power, and spiritual meditation. He first attracted attention with the acclaimed BBC Proms première of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* (1990). His percussion concerto *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* (1992) has received over 500 performances; and his extensive choral catalogue ranges from simple motets such as *O Radiant Dawn* (2007), through chamber choir classics including *Seven Last Words from the Cross* (1993), *Miserere* (2009), and *Stabat Mater* (2015), to large-scale works with orchestra such as *Quickening* (1998), Symphony No. 5 “Le grand Inconnu” (2018), and *Christmas Oratorio* (2019). MacMillan has been programmed worldwide by orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, and Cleveland Orchestra. He founded the Cumnock Tryst festival in Scotland in 2014 and was awarded a Knighthood in the 2015 Queen’s Birthday Honours.



“
... a rather expert orchestral
showpiece.”

—THE GUARDIAN

Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

Variations on an Original Theme “Enigma”, Op. 36

Composed 1889–1899

29 min

ON OCTOBER 21, 1898, Elgar relaxed after dinner by improvising at the piano. “Edward, that’s a good tune,” said his wife of one particular idea. “Tune? What tune?” the composer replied (for the “tune” sounded less like a lyrical melody than an accompaniment to one). But Alice was right, and as Elgar developed the tune, his thoughts turned to musical memories and to his friends. His sketching soon coalesced around a “quaint idea” for an ingenious and unprecedented orchestral work: a set of variations depicting persons within the composer’s circle—musical portraits, drawn from life. In the score he even labelled each variation with initials to identify the subject being portrayed, and over the years he explained his pictorial intentions in considerable detail.

The work was a resounding success at its première in London on June 9, 1899. It is Elgar’s most celebrated work, and for all its tone-painting and inside jokes, it withstands comparison with the best “abstract” sets of variations in the repertory; the work, Elgar recalled, was “commenced in a spirit of humour and continued in deep seriousness.” The form is fresh and inspired, the theme developed with fertile imagination in 14 highly individual variations, intelligently organized and scored with great originality. Elgar drew on the musical experiences of his circle. The gorgeous cello writing in Variation XII, for instance, depicts a “serious and devoted

friend” who was an amateur cellist. And in the dignified “Nimrod”, Elgar recalls a long summer evening spent talking about Beethoven’s slow movements with one of his closest friends; he alludes, in the opening bars, to the popular *Adagio cantabile* of the “Pathétique” Sonata. Some of the variations are good-natured parodies; Variation VI, for instance, with its leaping, wide-ranging melody in the violas, depicts an amateur violist who had difficulty crossing strings, and in Variation VII, Elgar noted the “uncouth rhythm of the drums and lower strings,” and satirizes a brusque and outspoken architect who made “maladroit essays to play the pianoforte.”

Elgar’s portraits can be remarkably specific—in Variation IV, he depicts a “country squire” hustling out of a room with an inadvertent slam of the door—and also remarkably personal; Variation V depicts a friend whose conversation was “continually broken up by whimsical and witty remarks,” and Elgar mimics his friend’s characteristic laugh (“*Ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-*

ha-ha-ha”) with staccato woodwinds and horns. Variation X depicts the “dance-like lightness” of a young girl, who also possessed a youthful stammer (she was charmed, not offended, by the result, incidentally). Some of the variations do not depict the person identified by the initials. The elegant Variation VIII, for instance, depicts an 18th-century house owned by two sisters of Elgar’s acquaintance. Even when he’s poking fun, Elgar’s love for his friends is always apparent.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana



↑
Edward Elgar—by Kalya Ramu



Simon Rivard, TSYO Conductor

Conductor Simon Rivard is becoming one of the most sought-after conductors on the Canadian music scene, as evidenced by his most recent appointment as Music Director of the Edmonton Opera. Rivard has been the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra Conductor since 2018.

The 2023/24 season sees Rivard on the podium with I Musici de Montréal, Orchestre symphonique de Laval, and l'Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, while leading the Edmonton Opera's full season, which includes Bizet's *Carmen*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. From 2018 to 2022, he held the title of RBC Resident Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, where

he was mentored by Music Director Gustavo Gimeno and Conductor Laureate Sir Andrew Davis. Since 2019, he has been an Equilibrium Young Artist, as part of Canadian soprano and conductor Barbara Hannigan's internationally acclaimed mentorship program for early-career professional musicians.

Born in Montreal, Rivard studied violin performance with Anne Robert and orchestral conducting with Raffi Armenian at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal. He completed an MMus in orchestral conducting at McGill University under Alexis Hauser and Guillaume Bourgoigne.



Trevor Wilson, TSO RBC Resident Conductor

Trevor Wilson is an Ottawa-born conductor and composer who began his position as RBC Resident Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 2022. In this role, he works closely with Music Director Gustavo Gimeno and conducts performances with the TSO and Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra throughout the season. Wilson has also appeared as a guest conductor with orchestras across Canada, including the NAC Orchestra, and upcoming engagements include performances with Symphony Nova Scotia in spring 2024. Under the mentorship of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Wilson was among the inaugural cohort of the Orchestre Métropolitain's

Orchestral Conducting Academy where he covered rehearsals, participated in community outreach programs, and assisted in concerts between the 2021 and 2023 seasons.

Wilson has been active in the Ottawa musical community, having conducted performances with the University of Ottawa Orchestra and other local ensembles. In 2017, Wilson co-founded the Ottawa Pops Orchestra, serving as its Music Director until 2019. He also served as Assistant Conductor of the National Academy Orchestra of Canada under the late Maestro Boris Brott in summer 2019. Having attended numerous master classes and festivals, Wilson has had the opportunity to study under internationally renowned conductors such as Alexander Shelley, David Zinman, Gerard Schwarz, and Neil Varon. Wilson completed his graduate studies in orchestral conducting under Marin Alsop at the Peabody Conservatory, where he also served as Assistant Conductor to the Peabody Choruses.

Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra

Simon Rivard, conductor

FOR 50 SEASONS, since its founding under the direction of Victor Feldbrill in 1974, the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra (TSYO) has been dedicated to providing a high-level orchestral experience for talented young musicians aged 22 and under. The tuition-free TSYO program delivers a unique, powerful, and life-enriching opportunity that encourages significant achievement, regardless of participants' chosen career paths. The TSYO is closely affiliated with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra: TSO musicians serve as coaches through the season, TSO guest artists lead TSYO master classes, and the TSYO performs annually with the TSO in a side-by-side concert.

VIOLINS

Angela Wang
Annika Maja Kho
Belle Lin
Brandon Ling
Edward Wu
Emma Li
Eric Lin
Gloria Verhovsky
Grace Zhao
Hae Ju (Josephine) Kim
Ian Fong
Iris Zhang
Joshua Lin
June-Kyo Kim
Junia Friesen
Merdeka Korunovski
Michael Kolokolkin
Nathan Lau
Richard Xiong
Riverlynn Lee
Siyeon (Sally) Ahn
Sophia Chang
Sophia Wang
Sora Sato-Mound
Tina Sievers
Xinru Lai

VIOLAS

Angelina Sievers
Daniel Hughes
Harrison Yang Meng
Isla Ertl
Ji-A Choi
Lucas Chen
Marija Ivcevic
Mobin Naeini
Omiyo Hossain
Rosalina Pan
Sofia Moniz

CELLOS

Charlotte Montgomery-Seto
Chloe Liang
Claire Chu Wang
Emma Tian
Ethan Hyo Jeon
Fay Wang
Jayden Kwon
Mario Rodriguez McMillan
Matthew Buczkowski
Noah Clarke
Shia Park-Yoo

DOUBLE BASSES

Dean Chen
Emma Chen
Emma Drevnig
Evan Grandage
Evita Lalonde
Julia Li
Saidy Kim
Wang Hin (Marcus) Chan

FLUTES/PICCOLO

Eleanor Song
Lauren Radeschi
Tina Jia
Yelin Yoon

OBOES

Aidan Taylor
Clara Aristanto
Hing Yi Cui

CLARINETS

Niki Tang
Sarah Darragh
Stanly Zhuang

BASSOONS

Abigail Minor
Cian Bryson
Kelton Hopper

HORNS

Finn Parks
Julia Fowell
Megan Storey
Riley Chong
Sarah Bell

TRUMPETS

Andrew Mendis
Elias Doyle
Erik Dubeau
Justin Ko

TROMBONES

Ethan Whitlow
Ian Tong
Ilan Mendel

TUBA

Umberto Quattrococchi

PERCUSSION

Amiel Ang
Elyssa Arde
Kelsey Choi
Matthew Magocsi
Thomas Carli

HARP

WeiQi (Vicky) Chen

STAFF

Matthew Robertson,
TSYO Manager &
Community Assistant
Nicole Balm, Senior
Director of Education &
Community Engagement
Pierre Rivard,
Education Manager
Angela Maria Sanchez,
Education & Community
Engagement Coordinator

FACULTY

Simon Rivard
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TSO Violin
Peter Seminovs
Violin Coach
TSO Violin
Ivan Ivanovich
Viola Coach
TSO Viola
**Emmanuelle Beaulieu
Bergeron**
Cello Coach
TSO Associate
Principal Cello
Tim Dawson
Double Bass Coach
TSO Double Bass
Miles Haskins
Woodwind Coach
TSO Acting Associate
Principal Clarinet
Nicholas Hartman
Brass Coach
TSO Horn
Joseph Kelly
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