

# Themes and Anniversaries

## Proms Themes and Anniversaries

- **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 inspirational cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble, as well as new works by composers from China. East/West also features music by Western composers inspired by Eastern culture and sources such as the Ottoman Empire, Hindu literature, Chinese exoticism, Balinese and Javanese gamelan, the stories of Ancient Egypt, the Noh

plays of Japan and a variety of Eastern folk traditions.

At the heart of the East/West season is a weekend of activity from Yo-Yo Ma (pictured below) and the Silk Road Ensemble in their first Proms visit. The Silk Road Project was set up by Yo-Yo Ma to explore cultural exchanges along the old trade routes between China and the Mediterranean. Yo-Yo Ma himself has learned to play some of the ancestors of the cello – the Persian spike fiddle, the Tuvan horse-head fiddle and the Chinese *erhu* – and the project has brought together musicians from the Silk Road lands and the West who perform new commissions as well as traditional music.



Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble begin with the UK premiere of a work by Bright Sheng (born 1955), a composer who grew up

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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 by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Leonard Slatkin (Prom 6).

Tan Dun (born 1957), most famous for his memorable score for the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, has already made a big impact at the Proms, particularly with his 'Hong Kong' Symphony in 1997. He has much in common with Bright Sheng and Zhou Long besides place and time of birth. Like them, he lived through the Cultural Revolution, was sent to work in the fields, absorbed the rural folk traditions around him (though, uniquely, he worked at Peking Opera for a time) and went to study further in the USA, where he has since made his home. The BBC Symphony Orchestra give a concert, conducted by the composer himself, featuring the world premiere of a new version of his Concerto for water percussion and orchestra (with Evelyn Glennie) and his violin work *Out of Peking Opera*, featuring Taiwanese-American violinist Cho-Liang Lin (Prom 24).

The Proms is not just celebrating music of the East, but music of the West inspired by Eastern themes. Although Western music has been absorbing Eastern influences since Marco Polo travelled to China and the Crusades brought new instruments and ideas to Western music, the Proms starts at the time of Beethoven when the mighty Ottoman Empire was dominant. The instruments of the janissary bands of the Turkish army – cymbals, triangle, Turkish crescent (Jingling Johnny) and bass drum – were being absorbed into many of Europe's own military bands alongside the more traditional wind and brass – both of which can clearly be heard in the finale of Beethoven's 'Choral' Symphony (Prom 67).

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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 *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* (Prom 48). Eastern influence on Britten also went much further following a tour of Asia in the mid-1950s. He often used gamelan-like sounds to evoke a sense of other worldliness and actually quotes and imitates Balinese gamelan music in his exotic 1957 ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas* (excerpts, Prom 62), and the gamelan-inspired sonorities of Ravel's 'Les vallées des cloches' from *Miroirs* are realised in Percy Grainger's extraordinary arrangements in Prom 48.

Other highlights among the Eastern-influenced music promise to be the UK premiere of John Adams's *The Dharma at Big Sur* which draws on Hindu and Buddhist meditative traditions, and Colin McPhee's Pulitzer prize-winning toccata *Tabuh-tabuhan*, inspired by the music of the

gamelan which he studied closely in Bali during the 1930s, both conducted by John Adams (Prom 49). Debussy's little-known but exotic and sensual ballet *Khamma*, in which an ancient Egyptian dancing-girl sacrifices herself to the sun-god Amon-Ra in order to save her city, is another one to listen out for when the BBC Symphony Orchestra gives its first Proms performance under Jukka-Pekka Saraste (Prom 58).

### Back to Bohemia

In the year that the Czech Republic joins the European Union, and inspired by major anniversaries for some of the greatest names in Czech music – Antonín Dvořák, Leoš Janáček and Heinrich Biber – the BBC Proms celebrates Czech music in 2004.



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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 Dvořák highlights include: the Cello Concerto with Truls Mørk (Prom 29); the Mass in D major, originally written for organ and orchestrated for a special London performance, here performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Sir Andrew Davis (Prom 13); the Czech Suite performed by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (Prom 15); and a Proms Chamber concert built around a little-known set of folk-inspired duets performed by BBC New Generation sopranos Sally Matthews and Ailish Tynan, accompanied by Iain Burnside (PCM 3).

Leoš Janáček's anniversary is celebrated at the 2004 Proms with the performance of nine of his most important works. The first tribute in the Royal Albert Hall is the mighty *Glagolitic Mass* with the renowned Czech Philharmonic Chorus from Janáček's adopted hometown of Brno, a starry line-up of soloists and the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kurt Masur (Prom 16). The programme also includes a rare chance to hear this fine Czech chorus sing Janáček's *Hukvaldy Songs*, six folk song arrangements for unaccompanied choir, under their director Petr Fiala.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra performs two of the large-scale orchestral works at the centre of Janáček's output in two further concerts: Sir Andrew Davis conducts the rhapsody for orchestra *Taras Bulba* (Prom 18) and Jiří Bělohlávek conducts the Sinfonietta with its huge brass and percussion sections (Prom 32). Much rarer is *The Eternal Gospel*, a fascinating cantata based on the poet

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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 by Rolf Hind and the Britten Sinfonia is in the final concert. The lunchtime chamber series also includes Llyr Williams, a hotly tipped BBC New Generation Artist, with Janáček's most famous piano work, *In the Mists* (PCM 4).

Three hundred years after his birth, Heinrich Biber's anniversary is marked with performances of some of his most celebrated works including the exotic multichoral *Missa bruxellensis* with soloists including Emma Kirkby, Michael Chance, Rufus Müller and Michael George joining The Academy of Ancient Music Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Paul Goodwin (Prom 35), and the original and colourful *Battalia* which is performed by one of Europe's leading period-instrument ensembles, the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra conducted by Gottfried von der Goltz (Prom 26).

A highlight of the Biber celebrations is a Proms Chamber Music concert in which Andrew Manze, who has built an impeccable reputation for his performances of Biber's notoriously difficult works for violin, plays three of his *Mystery Sonatas*, also known as the *Rosary Sonatas* (PCM 6). In the first, which tells the story of the Annunciation of the Birth of Christ, the sober prelude introduces variations of ever-increasing virtuosity. In the sixth and tenth sonatas, 'The Agony in the Garden' and 'The Crucifixion', the intensity of the works'

sound-worlds is enhanced by retuning the violin's strings.

Other key Czech music is celebrated at the 2004 Proms, including excerpts from Smetana's *Má vlast* (Prom 31) performed by the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain conducted by Sir Roger Norrington, and quirky orchestral works by Zelenka from the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra (Prom 26). The elite Prague Philharmonia conducted by its founder-director Jiří Bělohlávek makes its first UK appearance with a treasure trove of Czech works ranging from the 17th- and 18th-century composers Pavel Vejvanovský and Josef Mysliveček to the work of Dvořák's pupil Vítězslav Novák, and Martinů's Double Concerto of 1951 alongside Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony (Prom 7). Martinů's work features in two other concerts: his miniature symphony *The Frescoes of Piero della Francesca* is played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Andrew Davis (Prom 18) and his *La revue de cuisine* closes the Proms Chamber Music series at the V&A (PCM 8). A leading contemporary figure in Czech music, Petr Eben, is celebrating his 75th birthday in 2004 and the Proms pays tribute with a performance of an organ work (Prom 48).

### England at the Crossroads: 1934

The year 1934 was an extraordinary one for English music. Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst and Frederick Delius, the great patriarchs of the English musical renaissance died, and two of the most important and internationally celebrated composers of today, Sir Harrison Birtwistle and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies were born.

The Proms celebrates these great English composers throughout the season, starting on the First Night with Edward Elgar's heartfelt

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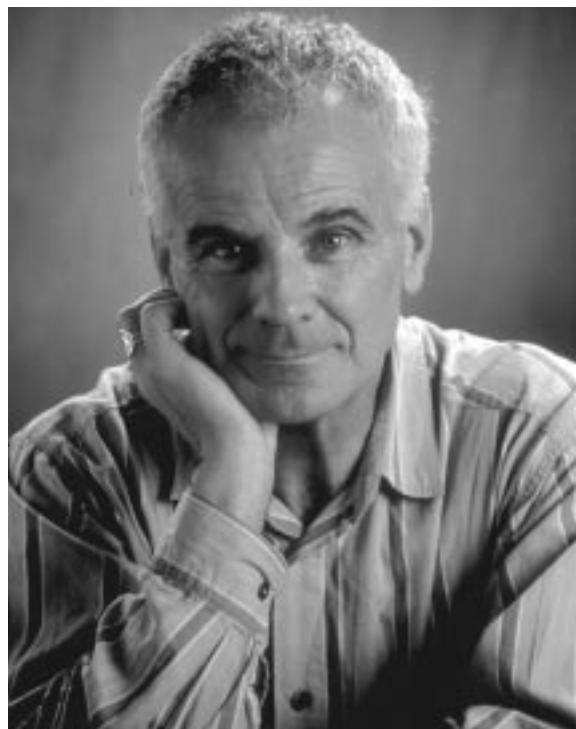
cantata *The Music Makers* with celebrated American mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson in the solo role. Two of Elgar's most popular works follow a few days later when the BBC National Orchestra of Wales performs his *Cockaigne Overture* and the *Enigma Variations* (Prom 4). Other major Elgar highlights 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. *The Planets* is performed on the First Night. It is his most celebrated work and has featured nearly 70 times at the Proms since excerpts were first played in 1921. There are other works by Holst given this season, however, clearly demonstrating that it is time for his 'one-hit wonder' reputation to be dropped. Two key works show Eastern influences: his forward-looking *The Hymn of Jesus* (Prom 4) is becoming recognised as one of the high points of the English choral repertoire, and the highly-original chamber opera *Sāvītri*, based on Sāvītri's triumph over death because of her love for her husband and performed by a glittering trio of English singers, Sarah Connolly, John Mark Ainsley, and Christopher Maltman (Prom 54). *Sāvītri* was a great inspiration to Britten when he began work on his *Curlew River* (Prom 17) and it explains why composers of today including Thomas Adès, Sir John Tavener and Sir Harrison Birtwistle have all cited Holst as an important influence on their work.

Frederick Delius's music is regarded as the most quintessentially English of them all and yet he lived in England for just a fraction of his life.

Nevertheless, his exquisite pastoral miniatures have acquired strong associations with the English countryside and many of his works have remained perennial favourites in the repertoire, including his masterpieces *Sea Drift*, based on Walt Whitman's verses of longing and loss, performed by the great American baritone Thomas Hampson (Prom 4), and 'The Walk to the Paradise Garden' from the opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (Prom 2).

English music did not die with these three greats in 1934, however. Sir Harrison Birtwistle and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies were born and, though taking quite different directions, have helped to keep English music on the world map well into the 21st century.



Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (pictured above), recently appointed Master of The Queen's Music, celebrates his 70th birthday on 8 September and the Proms pays tribute with a special Late Night Prom given by one of the country's leading contemporary music-theatre ensembles Psappha (Prom 71). It includes his

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extraordinary theatrical parody for narrator and ensemble, *Missa super L'homme armé*, the more recent *Linguae ignis* for cello and ensemble, and *Fantasia and a Ground on Two Pavans after Purcell*, alongside Stravinsky's miniature *Ragtime* and theatrical burlesque *Renard*.

Three other Proms feature music by Maxwell Davies. The composer himself conducts the Proms premiere of his 'Antarctic Symphony', a work he has described as his last symphony and his most recent substantial work (Prom 27); and his first-ever BBC commission from 1962, *First Fantasia on an 'In nomine' of John Taverner*, is heard alongside the 16th-century organ work on which it is based (Prom 14). The Proms also pays tribute to this great English master when his *Ojai Festival Overture*, described by *The Times* as a 'six-minute whistle ... fizzing, bright and cheerful', is performed at the Last Night.

Sir Harrison Birtwistle's first BBC commission came in 1965 and his music has been regularly featured since. The BBC Proms marks his 70th birthday with the world premiere of a BBC commission of three new songs to poems by Alfred Brendel, to add to the one he had already composed, which are performed by William Dazeley in a concert which also features Brendel himself playing Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto. Birtwistle celebrations also include the UK premiere of a BBC co-commission, *The Ring Dance of the Nazarene*, written specially with this Prom's soloist, Roderick Williams and the BBC Singers, in mind (Prom 5), and a performance of his highly praised recent work *Theseus Game*, for large ensemble and two conductors, performed by the London Sinfonietta, with Martyn Brabbins and Pierre-André Valade, who conducted its world premiere last year (Prom 30).

## Other anniversaries

**Serge Diaghilev (d. 1929)** The ground-breaking founder and director of the Ballets Russes from 1909 until his death in 1929, commissioned many of the great ballet scores of the 20th century. To mark the 75th anniversary of his death, the BBC Proms is bringing six of the works most strongly associated with him to the Royal Albert Hall. One of the most notorious was Debussy's *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune*. Nijinsky's 1912 choreography emphasised the erotic imagery of the Mallarmé work on which it was based, dividing the audience between mirth and indignation. Diaghilev, seizing the chance of a *succès de scandale*, ordered a repeat performance. André Previn, in a long-awaited welcome return to the Proms, conducts it at the opening of his concert with the Oslo Philharmonic (Prom 60).

The other Diaghilev works featured at the 2004 Proms are all by Stravinsky. Many of them were to help move classical dance and music in a new direction. Stravinsky's first three works for Diaghilev are perhaps his best-known: *The Firebird* (1910), performed complete by the BBC Philharmonic under Gianandrea Noseda (Prom 8); *Petrushka* (1911), given by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Sakari Oramo (Prom 11); and *The Rite of Spring* (1913), which, having caused a riot at its premiere thanks to its modern rhythms and hitherto unheard orchestral effects, is now one of his best-loved works, performed here by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Valery Gergiev (Prom 42).

Two of Stravinsky's later, smaller-scale works for Diaghilev are also featured this season: *Renard*, a highly theatrical burlesque performed

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by Psappha in its Proms debut (Prom 71), and *Les noces*, described by the composer as 'dance-cantata'. Stravinsky started *Les noces* in 1914, but struggled with the orchestration and did not settle on the version that we know today until 1923, with the vocal parts accompanied by two groups of percussion, one tuned (and containing four grand pianos) and the other untuned. It is performed by the BBC Singers and Ensemble Intercontemporain with soloists Catrin Wyn-Davies, Hilary Summers, Toby Spence and Tigran Martirosian under Pierre Boulez (Prom 65).

**Charles Ives (d. 1954)** Two of Charles Ives's most original and inspired works, one calling for dramatically diverse performing forces, are performed at the 2004 Proms to mark the 50th anniversary of his death. The Fourth Symphony, whose scale and technical difficulty prevented its premiere until nearly five decades after it was finished, is performed by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Sakari Oramo (Prom 11). In complete contrast, Ives's piano work, the 'Concord' Sonata (which calls briefly for a flautist in its final bars), is performed by Pierre-Laurent Aimard (and former BBC New Generation Artist Emily Beynon) in the penultimate Proms Chamber Music concert (PCM 7). John Adams conducts new arrangements of songs by Ives in his concert with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (Prom 49).

**Sir John Tavener (b. 1944)** Sir John Tavener has reworked his epic seven-hour vigil *The Veil of the Temple*, hailed by critics as one of this composer's best works to date at its all-night premiere last year, into a 160-minute concert work specially for the BBC Proms and the vast spaces of the Royal Albert Hall, as part of his 60th birthday celebrations (Prom 23).

**Luigi Dallapiccola (b. 1904)** Staying with ground-breaking 20th-century composers, the BBC Proms also pays tribute to Italian Luigi Dallapiccola, who would have been 100 this year. His miniature masterpiece *Piccola musica notturna* for flute, oboe, clarinet, harp, celesta and string trio features in the final Proms Chamber Music Concert (PCM 8). Dallapiccola's 25-minute wartime work, *Canti di prigionia*, which again calls for unusual performing forces including chorus, two pianos, two harps and two percussionists, launches this season's Late Night Proms with the BBC Singers and Endymion, conducted by Stephen Cleobury (Prom 5).

**Engelbert Humperdinck (b. 1854), Johann Strauss I (b. 1804)** Engelbert Humperdinck was born 150 years ago and the BBC Proms pay tribute with a star-studded performance of his best-known opera, *Hansel and Gretel*, with Jennifer Larmore and Rebecca Evans in the title roles, and the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Jane Glover (Prom 46). The BBC Concert Orchestra also pays tribute to Johann Strauss I, born 200 years ago, with a gallop, a polka and his most famous work, *The Radetzky March* (Prom 39).

**Marc-Antoine Charpentier (d. 1704)** Another major anniversary marked by the 2004 Proms is that of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, who died 300 years ago. William Christie and Les Arts Florissants (named after an opera by Charpentier) pay their respects with a concert of his sacred music including the elegiac Requiem *Messe pour les trépassés* (Mass for the Departed) and one of Charpentier's best-known works, the *Te Deum*, the prelude of which has been used as the signature tune for the Eurovision Song Contest for the past 50 years (Prom 72).