

LSO

London Symphony Orchestra
Living Music



London's Symphony Orchestra

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Resident
Orchestra

Sunday 9 July 2017 7pm
Barbican Hall

A TRIP TO THE MOON

Andrew Norman *A Trip to the Moon*
(UK premiere; LSO co-commission)

INTERVAL

Sibelius *Symphony No 2*

Sir Simon Rattle conductor

Robert Murray *Georges*

Iwona Sobotka *Queen*

Sophia Burgos *Eoa*

London Symphony Orchestra

Guildhall School Musicians

LSO Discovery Choirs

LSO Community Choir

Simon Halsey choral director

Lucy Griffiths LSO Discovery Choir conductor

David Lawrence LSO Discovery Choir
and LSO Community Choir conductor

Karen Gillingham stage director

Anna Pool assistant stage director

Sean Turner designer

Concert finishes approx 9.30pm

Supported by The Aaron Copland Fund for Music

A Trip to the Moon is a joint commission by the
London Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic
and Los Angeles Philharmonic

RECOMMENDED BY
CLASSIC *f*M

Andrew Norman *(b 1979)* **A Trip to the Moon (UK premiere)** *(2017)*

PROGRAMME NOTE WRITER
ANNE LANZILOTTI

SYNOPSIS
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SIR SIMON RATTLE CONDUCTOR
LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
GUILDHALL SCHOOL MUSICIANS

ROBERT MURRAY GEORGES
IWONA SOBOTKA QUEEN
SOPHIA BURGOS EOA

LSO DISCOVERY CHOIRS
INJI GALLIET-JAKOBY IOE
LSO COMMUNITY CHOIR
SIMON HALSEY CHORAL DIRECTOR
LUCY GRIFFITHS LSO DISCOVERY CHOIR CONDUCTOR
DAVID LAWRENCE LSO DISCOVERY CHOIR AND
 LSO COMMUNITY CHOIR CONDUCTOR

ELLA DE JONGH PROFESSOR BARBENFOUILLIS
ILAR REES-DAVIES NOSTRADAMUS
ZACHARY WEST ALCOFRISBAS
JAMES EDWARDS OMEGA
REGINA FREIRE MICROMEAS
MATTHEW HEALY PARAFARAGARAMUS
ELINE VANDENHEEDE MOON WOMAN 1
OLIVIA SJÖBERG MOON WOMAN 2
ANDREW HAMILTON MOON MAN 1
ADAM MAXEY MOON MAN 2

KAREN GILLINGHAM STAGE DIRECTOR
ANNA POOL ASSISTANT STAGE DIRECTOR
SEAN TURNER DESIGNER
JAI MORJARIA LIGHTING DESIGNER
DUNCAN MCCLEAN VIDEO PROJECTION DESIGNER

LIZ BURLEY PROJECT RÉPÉTITEUR
BENJAMIN FROST PROJECT RÉPÉTITEUR
JOANNA SMITH PROJECT RÉPÉTITEUR
SHAWN MCCRORY STAGE MANAGER
ELEANOR ARNOT DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER

Andrew Norman's compositions are characterised by their exuberance, use of unusual timbres, and ecstatic lyricism. Norman often uses film editing techniques such as jump cuts as inspiration for musical gestures and formal devices. His latest work, *A Trip to the Moon*, takes that connection to film one step further: the inspiration for the opera comes from Georges Méliès' 1902 silent film of the same name.

Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* was the first science fiction film. Norman said of the film, 'there's a whimsical quality to Méliès' work that transcends time.' Using the whimsy and sense of flair from his experience as a magician, Méliès created brilliant cinematic techniques. His signature special effect was 'substitution splicing', in which an object or person on screen would suddenly disappear or be replaced with a different object or person. Similarly, Norman's music often quickly introduces many important ideas in succession at the beginning of a piece that cut each other off or disappear as soon as they are presented, only to be slowly revealed as the piece progresses.

The Prologue to Norman's *A Trip to the Moon* accompanies the Méliès film in this way, presenting themes and ideas that will return and develop later in the opera. Storytelling unfolds through the various communities on stage. Here, the orchestra itself as a community takes the first turn at telling the story of how our characters got to the Moon. At the end of the Prologue, the audience has been taken with the astronomers by the rocket to the Moon, where the entire action of the opera will take place. Méliès himself tags along as the videographer for the expedition, and his ability to observe and draw out meaning from things that are not what they seem will prove essential to the mission.



THE MAN IN THE MOON is an iconic image from Méliès' film.



GEORGES MÉLIÈS (1861-1938) was born in Paris, studying stage design and puppetry at the École des Beaux Arts. His stage performances revolved around illusions and magic; but after witnessing the cinematic advances of the Lumière brothers in 1895, he turned to cinema and became known as one of the foremost innovators in special effects, directing over 500 films.

On the Moon, the astronomers banter with each other. Throughout the opera, they only speak but do not sing. Soon, they encounter Moon People who only sing in a language that Norman invented for the opera, 'Moonish'. Moonish is built almost entirely out of vowels. These vowels are often presented along the same pitch, changing the timbre of the sound.

The 'call of the Moon People' is a four-note gesture that starts with an open fifth interval. It means both hello and goodbye, and is also used to call the Moon People to gather or disperse. The last note can be altered to inflect meaning, or to show change. Call and response is a central part of communication in Moonish – often one character will sing a gesture that is mirrored or answered by another. Harmonic suspension and idiom are used to express phrasing and differentiate meaning.

When Moon People are afraid, they begin to make unpitched sounds such as 'sha!' 'ha!' and 'fa!'. Again, inflection is important in revealing the nature of these sounds. The audience is placed in the same situation as the travellers: unable to understand this foreign language, they are forced to try to empathise and understand based on other cues. Relying on affect, the audience and the astronomers must listen for how the energy of the community is harnessed to express feelings, especially those of fear and anger. As the audience is immersed in the community of Moon People, they can listen for how shorter, more broken sounds feel more fearful, as opposed to the calm legato singing of Eoa.

Because much of the narration in the opera occurs in Moonish, the astronomers, and the audience, are at the mercy of the Moon People as they try to decipher what is happening. By listening carefully and seeing how Norman uses basic musical gestures such as the scale to set up expectations, the audience can observe how these expectations are fulfilled or denied, and begin to understand the action on stage.

Norman calls *A Trip to the Moon* 'an opera for people of all ages'. He wrote this opera at a time when the political climate around the world, and especially in the US, was fuelled by fear and misunderstanding of the 'other'. He was deeply affected by images of children suddenly filled with rage when swept up by the energy of a mob. Perhaps communities can never fully understand each other when they have such different backgrounds. *A Trip to the Moon* encourages the communities on stage and in the audience to find a way to listen, and to address these fears of the 'other'. Through empathy and careful listening, perhaps they can. ■

A Trip to the Moon was commissioned by the LSO, Berlin Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic, and is used by arrangement with Schott Music Corporation, New York, NY, publisher and copyright owner.

INTERVAL – 30 minutes

There are bars on all levels of the Concert Hall; ice cream can be bought at the stands on Stalls and Circle level.

Andrew Norman *(b 1979)*

A Trip to the Moon (UK premiere): Synopsis *(2017)*

SYNOPSIS ANDREW NORMAN

PROLOGUE

At a meeting of the Astronomic Club, Professor Barbenfouillis proposes a trip to the Moon. He and five other astronomers oversee the construction of a rocket. They climb into the bullet-like capsule and shoot themselves to the Moon.

ACT I

Having just landed their rocket on the Moon, the astronomers and their documentarian, Georges Méliès, attempt to film their first message from the Moon's surface. Parafaragaramus emerges from the rocket to say that a key component of the vessel is broken ('The landing gear! It's a mangled mess! We must fix it if we are to return home.').

Based on the rotations and revolutions of various celestial bodies, Nostradamus and Alcofrisbas calculate that there is only a brief window of time for their return journey ('In one day and six hours, at sunrise, we must launch our rocket, or we will be stuck here forever!'). The astronomers decide to take a nap.

A strange and monstrous cry wakes Georges. Intrigued by the Moon at night, he wanders off alone and stumbles upon a mysterious Moon creature, Eoa. She is frightened, but Georges earns her trust and they start to learn each other's languages. Georges teaches her some pronouns ('I ... you ... us ...') as they leave together.

The astronomers wake up at sunrise and begin exploring the Moon. Professor Barbenfouillis gives a lecture on Moon rocks. Nostradamus leaves a trail of bread so they can find their way back. A group of curious and playful Moon children discovers the

astronomers, who are frightened. More and more Moon people gather, suspicious and wary of the strangers in their midst.

The Queen of The Moon People brings order to the restless crowd and seeks the identity of the strangers. The Moon People, stirred by the Agitator, are fearful of the outsiders. Eoa appears with Georges and attempts to diffuse the tension. Georges introduces himself to everyone ('My name is Georges Méliès. I come from the Earth. These are my friends. We mean no harm. We need your help.'). Against the wishes of the Agitator, the Queen decides to welcome the strangers.

The Moon people throw a celebration in honour of their guests. They sing and dance, and tell the story of a deadly monster threatening their community ('At night. Monster comes. Monster takes.') and present the Earth people with sacred sticks, the ultimate symbol of belonging in Moon society. The celebration is interrupted by the terrifying cry of the monster nearby. The Moon people cower in fear.

ACT II

The Queen calms her people, but a child has gone missing and agitation ensues. Search parties form to look for the child as the monster lurks in the distance. The Queen sings a sad lament for the lost child.

Eoa, long curious about the blue and green orb that hangs in the sky, asks Georges about the Earth. Looking at his distant home, Georges describes it to her ('The Earth is beautiful. The Earth is generous. The Earth is powerful and violent and frightening, and fragile, and needy.')

A pair of astronomers finds the missing child's sacred stick, and a group of Moon people gathers

around them, deeply suspicious. The Agitator stirs up the crowd. Eoa translates for Georges ('They say you are not one of us. They say you make us unsafe. They say you bring the monster here, and the monster comes and the monster takes and it's your fault.').

The crowd's anger grows as they discover and misconstrue Nostradamus' bread trail ('You have left a trail, you have shown the way, and the monster follows it. You have brought the monster here and now a child is dead!'). The angry mob threatens to kill the Earth people, but just as their hate reaches breaking point a scream rings out in the distance; the monster is about to devour the missing child. The Moon people are rendered helpless by the monster's cry, but the earth people use their umbrellas to beat back the monster and return the child safely to its people.

The Queen is grateful. The astronomers give the Moon People their umbrellas for future protection. The sun rises and the Earth people's window to leave is at hand, but their rocket is still broken. The Moon People offer their sacred sticks to help fix it.

Georges asks Eoa to return with them ('Come with us ... The Earth is beautiful.'). but she decides to stay with her people ('Georges, my people ... They are frightened and fragile and needy, and I must help them.'). They say goodbye and the Earth people rush back to their rocket just in time for its launch. The Moon people disperse, returning to their normal lives, leaving Eoa alone to sing a simple phrase ('I ... you ... us ...') as she looks up at the tiny rocket receding into space. ■

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London Symphony Orchestra

LSO DISCOVERY – 2017/18 HIGHLIGHTS



**OPERA IN A DAY:
THE FAUST LEGEND**
Sun 17 Sep 2017 10am–5pm,
LSO St Luke's
Suitable for everyone over 8

THIS IS RATTLE: LSO ON TRACK
Sun 24 Sep 12.15pm, Barbican
Sir Simon Rattle conductor

**CHORAL SINGING DAY:
BERNSTEIN CHICHESTER PSALMS**
Sat 7 Oct 2017 11am–4.30pm,
LSO St Luke's
Simon Halsey conductor

FAMILY CONCERT: BERNSTEIN
Sat 4 Nov 2017 2.30pm, Barbican
Marin Alsop conductor/presenter
Suitable for over 7s

A CHORAL CHRISTMAS
Sun 3 Dec 2017 7pm, Barbican

LSO ON TRACK AT 10
Thu 5 Jul 2018 7.30pm, Barbican
Elim Chan conductor

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