



Philip
GLASS
Heroes Symphony
The Light

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • Marin Alsop



Philip Glass (b. 1937)

Heroes Symphony • The Light

Although he remains best known for the works written for his own ensemble (above all, *Musica in Twelve Parts* of 1974) and works for the stage, not least the trilogy of operas written in collaboration with Robert Wilson, *Einstein on the Beach* (1975), *Satyagraha* (1980) and *Akhmatov* (1984), orchestral music has been at the forefront of activities for Philip Glass for much of the last two decades. Already in 1987 his *Violin Concerto* [Naxos 8.554568] gave notice of a new interest in the forms and procedures of the Classical and Romantic eras, an interest that has led to eight symphonies and a number of independent orchestral works.

The symphonies evince a wide range of approaches to the genre. Only two (*Nos. 2* and *8*) are full-length abstract designs. *No. 3* is a compact work for string orchestra [Naxos 8.559202, *Symphonies Nos. 2* and *3*], *No. 6* a setting of Allan Ginsberg's *Plutonium Ode*, while *Nos. 5* and *7* are large-scale choral works, symphonic in designation only. *Nos. 1* and *4*, though multi-movement orchestral works, are distinguished by having drawn their inspiration from decidedly non-Classical sources.

In 1993, Glass completed his *Low Symphony*, a work taking inspiration from the *Low* album released by David Bowie in 1977. Among the most prolific and influential of rock musicians, Bowie had established an international reputation with such albums as *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972), *Aladdin Sane* (1973) and *Station to Station* (1976), enhancing the individuality of his music with often elaborate stage-shows where he appeared as the character central to each album. After an exhausting 1976 world tour, Bowie decided on a radical change of approach to making music. Relocating to West Berlin, in the then divided city, he began a collaboration with Brian Eno that changed rock music as decisively as any other development in what was a radical and innovative era for the medium.

A former member of rock band Roxy Music, Eno

had gone to make a series of solo albums, but was then about to devote himself to the possibilities of synthesizer technology in what became known as 'ambient composition': abstract and often understated electronic music intended to create an environment for listening rather than being the focus of attention as such. Beginning with *Low*, an album of powerful songs and evocative instrumental pieces, he and Bowie went on to create two further albums in *Heroes* (1977) and *Lodger* (1979), each drawing inspiration from the segregated city, with its tangible resonance of the 'cold war' era, that was then Berlin.

Having selected several tracks from *Low* to create his *Low Symphony*, Glass did the same for *Heroes* in his *Heroes Symphony* of 1996. The immediate incentive came from American choreographer Twyla Tharp, keen for a work for her new dance company. Glass took six of the ten tracks from *Heroes*, reworking them so that they become independent pieces that between them build into a self-sufficient musical work.

Horns sounding out over a tramping rhythm in the bass usher in *Heroes*, which gradually increases in harmonic and rhythmic activity; elements of the song being distributed across the orchestral texture so that the Bowie/Eno original informs the music at all levels without ever dominating it. The initial horns and bass motif, now with a rejoinder from the strings, presently returns to round off the piece.

Against castanets and pulsating strings, *Abdulmajid* (a bonus track on the 1991 re-release of *Heroes* by Rykodisc) unfolds a wistful, Arabic-sounding theme complemented by delicate tags from celesta and percussion. This takes on a notably more ominous quality as the textures gradually thicken out, but the emotional feel of the music remains consistent through to its understated close on flute and pizzicato basses.

Sense of Doubt opens with a stark descending motif for brass against a starkly-held chord on upper strings, contrasted with rising figures for tuned percussion. This

suddenly breaks off to leave solo woodwind and strings musing over a rhythmic bass, the texture becoming more animated in the course of new instrumental entries. The initial motif returns, and plangent woodwind chords effect a poignant close.

Hesitant initial gestures prepare for the wistful theme of *Sons of the Silent Age*, shared between wind instruments over an undulating string backdrop. The accompanying rhythmic pattern migrates across all the strings, bringing a crescendo towards the heightened return of the opening gestures, after which, the main theme returns much as before to take the piece through to its ruminative conclusion.

A carillon-like gesture on tuned percussion opens *Neuköln*, alternating with angular gestures from strings. Rhythmic activity at length picks up, and strings then unfold a tensely expressive theme that gradually winds down, only for the initial motifs to resume their alternating dialogue. The piece presently focusses on a cadential phrase in the lower strings, which itself brings about the questioning close.

V2 *Schneider* opens with animated rhythmic motion in brass and percussion, strings and woodwind excitedly trading motifs as the music gains in incisiveness. The rhythmic motion solidifies into a pulsating ostinato, over which the activity gains both in textural and dynamic intensity, building to a peak of activity which is topped by the forceful closing chord, so rounding off the whole work to decisive effect.

Written to a commission from Case Western Reserve University in 1987, *The Light* has its inspiration in a very different source: the Michelson-Morley experiment confirming the uniform speed of light, so paving the way for its theoretical explanation in Einstein's theory of Relativity two decades on. Seeking a musical corollary, Glass's piece has an expressive introduction followed by an energetic main movement: a 'before' and 'after' mirroring the onset of modern scientific research.

The piece opens with a gently undulating motif in strings, which gradually extends over an intent rhythmic backing from lower brass. Gentle woodwind patterns emerge as the music gains in momentum, further such patterns on strings and brass entering before the tempo picks up markedly. Brass and timpani confirm this increase in activity, as do skirling gestures from woodwind and percussion. A sense of anticipation is central to the music's progress, with motifs expanding and contracting accordingly. At length the accumulated activity brings a transformed version of the strings' initial motif. Textures thin out to leave the motif over a pulsating motion in the bass, the music now losing impetus as tension subsides and fragments of the motif sound out over an accompaniment whose sudden cessation ends the piece.

Richard Whitehouse

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1893 by Sir Dan Godfrey, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has had among its Principal Conductors some of the finest musicians in the world, including Rudolf Schwarz, Constantin Silvestri, Sir Charles Groves and Paavo Berglund. More recently Andrew Litton raised the orchestra's standards to new levels, crowning its centenary season with a triumphant début tour of the United States in April 1994, followed by Yakov Kreizberg and débuts at the Musikverein, Vienna, the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and Carnegie Hall, New York. Marin Alsop took up the position in October 2002 and has already helped raise the profile of the BSO still further including concerts at the Philharmonie, Berlin, and in Madrid, Prague, Bruges and a return trip to Vienna. The name of the orchestra is internationally known through over three hundred recordings, including the award-winning Naxos release of Anthony Payne's sketches for Elgar's *Symphony No. 3* (8.554719) with Paul Daniel, the symphonies of Vaughan Williams with the former Chief Guest Conductor Kees Bakels and Paul Daniel, and recordings of works by Philip Glass, Leonard Bernstein, and John Adams under Marin Alsop for Naxos (8.559031), this last chosen as Editor's Choice in the November 2004 issue of *The Gramophone* Magazine. The Naxos BSO/Serebriy Mussorgsky recording (8.557645) reached No.2 in the top twenty Classical Chart, and was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2006. In addition to its recording and international touring commitments, the BSO is dedicated to providing orchestral music across the South and West of Britain, enhanced by a programme of educational and community projects, and makes regular appearances in major festivals and concert-halls throughout the United Kingdom.

Marin Alsop

Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra since 2002, Marin Alsop has been designated the next Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony. She won the Royal Philharmonic Society Conductor of the Year award in 2002 and was named *The Gramophone* magazine's Artist of the Year in 2003. She regularly conducts the Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Los Angeles Philharmonic, and recent guest engagements include the Boston Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, NDR Hamburg and Munich Philharmonic. Marin Alsop studied at Yale and at the Juilliard School and won the Koussevitzky Conducting Prize at Tanglewood, where she studied with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. Her recordings for Naxos include the Brahms Symphonies and Overtures with the London Philharmonic, the complete orchestral works of Samuel Barber with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony* with the Colorado Symphony. Acclaimed recordings for Naxos with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra include releases of works by Bernstein, John Adams (8.559031), Philip Glass (8.559202) and Bartók (8.557433).

Playing
Time:
70:09

Philip
GLASS
(b. 1937)

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|----------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | The Light (1987) | 23:43 |
| | Heroes Symphony (1996) | 46:26 |
| 2 | Heroes | 7:24 |
| 3 | Abdulmajid | 9:19 |
| 4 | Sense of Doubt | 7:57 |
| 5 | Sons of the Silent Age | 7:36 |
| 6 | Neuköln | 6:48 |
| 7 | V2 Schneider | 7:22 |

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Marin Alsop

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(www.juanhitters.com)

American flag, folk artist, 1880s.



AMERICAN CLASSICS

Although he remains best known for the works he wrote for his own ensemble, orchestral music has been at the forefront of Philip Glass' activities for much of the last two decades. Having achieved success in 1993 with his *Low Symphony*, a reworking of David Bowie and Brian Eno's classic rock album *Low*, three years later Glass repeated the experiment with another Bowie/Eno collaboration, *Heroes*, an album that drew its inspiration from the then-divided city of Berlin. The six movements of *Heroes Symphony* function as independent pieces that between them build into a self-sufficient musical work. *The Light* has its inspiration in a very different source: the Michelson-Morley experiment confirming the uniform speed of light. Seeking a musical corollary, Glass' piece has an expressive introduction followed by an energetic main movement: a 'before' and 'after' mirroring the onset of modern scientific research.

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