

**London Symphony Orchestra: *The Road to Turangalîla***

**Audio Introduction: Transcription**

**Tom:** Welcome to the Edinburgh International Festival's *All You Need to Know* podcast with me Tom Service. This time the London Symphony Orchestra's four concert residency. I'll be telling you more about their third concert, *The Road to Turangalîla* after we've heard from Edinburgh International Festival's Director, Nicola Benedetti.

**Nicola:** We've said about it that they're taking us on a journey through the heart of loss, conflict, radiance and joy. It's important for people to understand how deliberate and personal that choice is because I grew up listening to London Symphony Orchestra. As in, when I was eleven, I was taken to my first real classical concert with a friend of mine Alina Ibragimova, and it was London Symphony Orchestra where her dad played principle double bass.

And I -- from then on have seen hundreds of their performances, and they are one of the most sit-on-the-edge-of-your-seat, risk-taking, unpredictable in the best possible way orchestras I think out there. And so it was important to me that they take us into the extremities, and that's what they're doing in this repertoire. And Simon Rattle and Gianandrea Noseda, you couldn't ask for two conductors to take us there more.

**Tom:** Was it repertoire you came up with together with Gianandrea and with Simon Rattle in this case, to do those things that you wanted it to do, to go there? Because again I think a lot of people have the idea that, oh look this is music that the orchestra's doing already. Not the case here Nicky from what you're saying, like the way that you've made these programs together is because-

**Nicola:** Oh yeah.

**Tom:** -is because of, is because of conversations between you, all right?

**Nicola:** Yeah. I mean there were a lot of really in-depth conversations around what the feel and purpose, and what kind of weight and impact do we want this visit to have. Is also to think about the fact that these are some of the last concerts that Simon is gonna do with London Symphony Orchestra as Music Director. And there's a poignancy to that. He's been out talking a lot you know, recently and will continue to, about the state of where we are going with classical music, and generally arts and culture that requires investment in the UK.

And he has-he has a lot of painful feelings towards it. And I think you want to pull all of these things together, to pull what Simon has given to this country and will continue to give, his feelings towards the power of music for our lives. And my hope for this is that people, that they have an overall feeling in the Usher Hall space over these couple of days. You know, that-that permeates everything everybody experiences. It's not gonna be the same thing but it's all going to be tainted with this certain sort of like powerful explosive, like the feeling of extremes.

**Tom:** Nicola Benedetti and me Tom Service on the London Symphony Orchestra's residency at this year's Edinburgh International Festival. So their third of four concerts now on the 18th of August at six o'clock, an hour-long concert in which Sir Simon Rattle and Nicola Benedetti are gonna be on stage introducing music by Dukas, Milhaud and Debussy. It's called *The Road to Turangalîla*. Messiaen's *Turangalîla* symphony which is coming up in their fourth concert. But these pieces, we're gonna hear the fanfare from Dukas's *La Péri*, then Darius Milhaud’s *La création du monde,* his ballet, and then Claude Debussy's *La Mer*. I mean *La Péri* this fanfare is just a - a fabulous and strange opening for a concert that Simon and Nicky will tell you about. It's a wonderful way to start the concert. Short, absolutely with a kind of an invitation to anything being possible.

But then Milhaud’s ballet, *La création du monde*, the creation of the world, reflects his absolute love and immersion in the jazz that he was hearing, uh, in the 19s and early 20s. This piece is from 1923 in Paris. But the thing is, even though you hear saxophones here and there are, you know, jazz stylings in the harmony, the real question here and this is what I'm gonna be fascinated to hear what Simon Rattle thinks when he tells you about it on stage, is whether this is truly jazz at all. Because there isn't improvisation here and there isn't really swing. I mean, to me this is a picture of jazz. It's a picture of the things that, uh, Milhaud liked. He's also making a connection between the stories from African folk mythology, that this world creation was about as a 15-minute ballet. And what he heard from African-Americans, the great musicians who were in Paris in the 1920s. But I still come back to it, is this really jazz? Well, Simon will have the answers.

There couldn't be really a greater contrast with *La Mer* which isn't swinging jazz at all, but a picture of the sea. I love the fact that Debussy orchestrated some of this piece, uh, in Eastbourne on the south coast. So the channel that he knew, you know, he knew it from both sides. The mistake I think with *La Mer* is imagining that this piece is like a beautiful depiction of the sea. I mean I think this piece is wild and dangerous. The wildness that this piece really releases is a musical wildness. That's what's terrifying about it. You know, when you hear the start of the third movement, it's three symphonic sketches it's called, so it's in three movements. The third movement is, uh, this churning. When you're caught in an undertow by a wave and you're dragged under and you're completely discombobulated about which way is up and which way is down and how long are you gonna be stuck then there, terrifying, frightening.

That's the kind of experience that Debussy wants to give us. And not through the medium of water, but through the medium of sound. So pitch yourselves out there for the coming storm at the end of Debussy's *La Mer*. And enjoy it in the company of Sir Simon Rattle and Nicola Benedetti. The Usher Hall on the 18th of August at six o'clock. No interval in this hour-long concert. And this concert we're grateful to the support of Edinburg Napier University and Susie Thompson.