

[See all Culture](#)

◆ Premium

🏠 > [Culture](#) > [Music](#) > [Classical music](#)

## BSO enlist Sara Kestelman and Jemma Redgrave to bring Liszt's lost work to stirring life, plus the best of October 2019's classical concerts



The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Follow

By **Ivan Hewett**, CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

5 OCTOBER 2019 • 1:22PM

## Liszt's A Hundred Years Ago/BSO, Cadogan Hall ★★★★★

Classical music has a deceptive way of appearing very pure. When we listen to an orchestral concert it's as if the masterpieces float down from Heaven, where they live serene and eternal alongside all the other masterpieces, and then float back again, untouched by the world.

Last night's concert from the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra was very different. We were offered something that didn't pretend to be pure, something that owed its existence to the turbulent politics of mid-19th-century Europe. "Vor Hundert Jahren" (A Hundred Years Ago), a play with music, had been forgotten until Kirill Karabits, enterprising conductor of the BSO, came across it in a library in Weimar. The music is by the most flamboyant genius in classical music Franz Liszt, the play by the Austrian Friedrich Halm. It's basically a stirring call for unity to the German peoples, who at that time were divided into a myriad little states. Britain was already Britain, France was France – Germany had yet to be.

What was needed to make the stirring call effective was a symbolic occasion, and in 1859 the perfect one presented itself. It was the centenary of the birth of Friedrich Schiller, great poet and playwright and author of the Ode to Joy made famous by Beethoven. Halm came up with an allegorical scenario in which the downcast soul of Germania despairs at the small-minded hopelessness of her own people. Poetry appears and says never fear; Schiller's plays of noble resistance to tyranny will inspire them, and Germany will rise. As they converse, Liszt's music supplies the necessary mood, sometimes oppressed and lost, sometimes yearning, sometimes heroic.

It sounds like a recipe for high-flown tosh, the kind of historical curiosity that really should be left to slumber on a library shelf. In fact it was strangely ming, thanks in large part to the stirring performances from Sara Kestelman as Germania and Jemma Redgrave as Poetry. To be at a fever-pitch of exalted intensity for almost an hour is quite a stretch, but they managed it. Gerard McBurney, the brilliant theatrical animateur who's now the go-to man for this sort of project, brought this stiff allegory to life with a few deft touches. There was a projected backdrop of the mysterious German forest, and occasional sounds to take us into the world of Schiller's plays (cowbells for William Tell, of course). Up above in the gallery the Three Fates, stirringly impersonated by Ruby Russell, Laura McKay and Jordan Finding, foresaw the glorious rise of Germany.

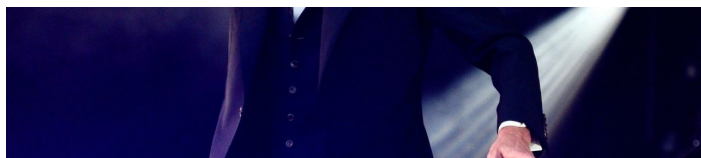
And there was the music. It was no surprise to discover that it was uneven, with passages of mysterious, clairvoyant beauty and fevered yearning next to fairly ordinary fanfares and marches. Franz Liszt was the most uneven of all the great composers, and even his best works have dull patches. But if this isn't among his best ones, it's certainly not negligible. I could see the superb overture taking on an independent life in the concert hall. It was fascinating to hear Liszt's only completed dramatic work, alongside other indubitably Germanic music from Hummel and Richard Strauss, all beautifully played. More than that, it was a moving reminder that German nationalism, a subject which now arouses anxious historical memories of a more recent date, was at its birth a noble and inspiring thing. **IH**

**Hear the performance of this concert given in Poole on 2 October on Radio 3 in Concert via BBC Sounds**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0008w7p>

Recommended from The Telegraph



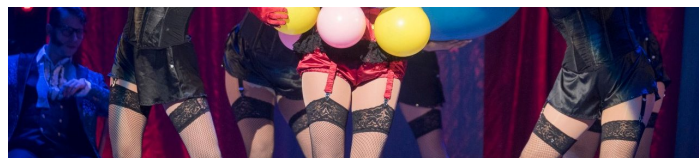


([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/nick-cave-bad-seeds-ghosteen-review-haunting-study-grief-not/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/nick-cave-bad-seeds-ghosteen-review-haunting-study-grief-not/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

◆ PREMIUM

**Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Ghosteen review: this haunting study of grief is not for the faint-hearted** ([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/nick-cave-bad-seeds-ghosteen-review-haunting-study-grief-not/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/nick-cave-bad-seeds-ghosteen-review-haunting-study-grief-not/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/nick-cave-bad-seeds-ghosteen-review-haunting-study-grief-not/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

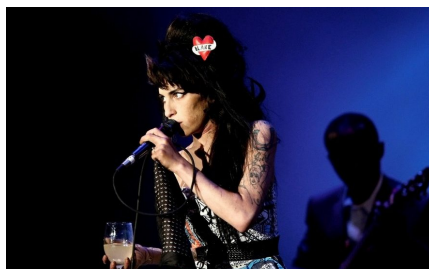


([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opera/what-to-see/orpheus-underworld-eno-london-coliseum-review-emma-rices-clumsy/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opera/what-to-see/orpheus-underworld-eno-london-coliseum-review-emma-rices-clumsy/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

◆ PREMIUM

**Orpheus in the Underworld, ENO, London Coliseum review: Emma Rice's clumsy farce leaves a sour taste** ([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opera/what-to-see/orpheus-underworld-eno-london-coliseum-review-emma-rices-clumsy/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opera/what-to-see/orpheus-underworld-eno-london-coliseum-review-emma-rices-clumsy/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opera/what-to-see/orpheus-underworld-eno-london-coliseum-review-emma-rices-clumsy/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))



([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/pizza-express-problems-could-tragedy-live-music/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/pizza-express-problems-could-tragedy-live-music/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/pizza-express-problems-could-tragedy-live-music/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

◆ PREMIUM

**Why Pizza Express's problems could be a tragedy for live music** ([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/pizza-express-problems-could-tragedy-live-music/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/pizza-express-problems-could-tragedy-live-music/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/pizza-express-problems-could-tragedy-live-music/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))



([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2019/10/06/blackbird-review-thismay-beautifully-complete-film-see-year/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2019/10/06/blackbird-review-thismay-beautifully-complete-film-see-year/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2019/10/06/blackbird-review-thismay-beautifully-complete-film-see-year/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

**Blackbird, review: this may be the most beautifully complete film you'll see all year**

([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2019/10/06/blackbird-review-thismay-beautifully-complete-film-see-year/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2019/10/06/blackbird-review-thismay-beautifully-complete-film-see-year/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2019/10/06/blackbird-review-thismay-beautifully-complete-film-see-year/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))



([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/meghan-please-dont-force-harry-choose-us/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/meghan-please-dont-force-harry-choose-us/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/meghan-please-dont-force-harry-choose-us/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

◆ PREMIUM

**Meghan, please don't force Harry to choose between you and us**

([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/meghan-please-dont-force-harry-choose-us/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/meghan-please-dont-force-harry-choose-us/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/meghan-please-dont-force-harry-choose-us/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))



([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/niall-horan-one-direction-had-split-gonna-end-killing/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/niall-horan-one-direction-had-split-gonna-end-killing/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/niall-horan-one-direction-had-split-gonna-end-killing/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

◆ PREMIUM

**The rock reinvention of Niall Horan: 'I don't see myself as a superstar – I live a normal life'**

([https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/niall-horan-one-direction-had-split-gonna-end-killing/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/niall-horan-one-direction-had-split-gonna-end-killing/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

[li source=LI&li\\_medium=recommended\\_reads&li\\_tr=recommended\\_reads](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/niall-horan-one-direction-had-split-gonna-end-killing/?li_source=LI&li_medium=recommended_reads&li_tr=recommended_reads))

## Most read in Music

◆ PREMIUM

**Bruce Springsteen interview: 'I've spent 35 years trying to let go of my destructive side'**

---

◆ PREMIUM

**Why Pizza Express's problems could be a tragedy for live music**

---

◆ PREMIUM

**Why were so many artistic trailblazers Jewish?**

---

◆ PREMIUM

**The Darkness on fighting Liam Gallagher, their 'superhero Jesus' album, and why hipsters are ruining rock 'n' roll**

---

◆ PREMIUM

**The art of Radiohead: sleeve designer Stanley Donwood on the 'rude topiary' concept too crazy for Thom Yorke**

---

◆ PREMIUM

**The Wildhearts live, somehow: the death-defying adventures of rock's most dysfunctional band**

---

Contact us

[About us \(https://corporate.telegraph.co.uk/\)](https://corporate.telegraph.co.uk/)

Rewards

[Archive \(https://www.telegraph.co.uk/archive/\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/archive/)

[Reader Prints \(http://telegraph.newsprints.co.uk/\)](http://telegraph.newsprints.co.uk/)

Branded Content

Syndication and Commissioning

Guidelines

Privacy

Terms and Conditions

[Advertising terms \(http://spark.telegraph.co.uk/toolkit/advertising/terms-and-conditions/\)](http://spark.telegraph.co.uk/toolkit/advertising/terms-and-conditions/)

[Fantasy Sport \(https://fantasyfootball.telegraph.co.uk\)](https://fantasyfootball.telegraph.co.uk)

[UK Voucher Codes \(https://www.telegraph.co.uk/vouchercodes\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/vouchercodes)

Modern Slavery



**We have updated our privacy policy.**

If you wish to view our current privacy policy please [click here](#).

