

# America's Voice: Barbara Hannigan Conducts Ives, Ruggles and Gershwin

Thursday, April 8, 2027 · 19:00 · Barbican  
Barbara Hannigan, conductor · Barbara Hannigan, soprano

| TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME |                                                                                                       | MIN |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1                   | <b>IVES</b> 1874–1954<br><i>At the River ('Shall We Gather at the River')</i>                         | 4'  |
| 2                   | <b>IVES</b> 1874–1954<br><i>From the Steeples and the Mountains</i>                                   | 5'  |
| 3                   | <b>SEEGER</b> 1901–1953<br><i>Rissolty Rossolty</i>                                                   | 5'  |
| 4                   | <b>RIEGGER</b> 1885–1961<br><i>Study in Sonority, Op. 7</i>                                           | 7'  |
| 5                   | <b>RUGGLES</b> 1876–1971<br><i>Sun-treader</i>                                                        | 15' |
| 6                   | <b>RODGERS</b> 1902–1979<br><i>The Carousel Waltz (orch. Don Walker)</i>                              | 8'  |
| 7                   | <b>GERSHWIN</b> 1898–1937<br><i>Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture (arr. Robert Russell Bennett)</i> | 24' |
| TOTAL MUSIC         |                                                                                                       | 68' |

## Charles Ives

1874–1954

*At the River ('Shall We Gather at the River')*

### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Ives leaves the tune almost intact and changes everything around it. The harmony leans away from the melody, as if the accompanist were half remembering a different key, and the phrases stretch and hesitate the way a congregation's singing does. Listen above all to the ending. Lowry's refrain answers its

4 minutes

own question with a confident ‘Yes, we’ll gather at the river’. Ives lets the question come back once more and leaves it hanging.

## Charles Ives

5 minutes

1874–1954

### *From the Steeples and the Mountains*

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The bells begin almost inaudibly, in pealing patterns that overlap and clash. The trumpet and trombone enter hesitantly with angular lines that copy each other at a distance, and their rhythms grow steadily more intricate as the bells grow louder. The piece is a single crescendo. After three or four minutes it reaches a clangorous peak with everything sounding at once, and then the players stop and leave the bells to ring away into silence.

## Ruth Crawford Seeger

5 minutes

1901–1953

### *Rissolty Rossolty*

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Three tunes are packed into a few minutes. The chattering repeated-note figure at the start comes from ‘Rissolty, Rossolty’, a comic song about a newly married man and his wife’s house-keeping. A second song, ‘Phoebe’, appears in a flute solo and in plucked strings. The last section is driven by a fiddle tune, ‘The Death of Callahan’, which Crawford Seeger had transcribed from a field recording. She does not present the tunes one after another in neat arrangements. She weaves fragments of them together, and at the climax all three are going at once in different parts of the orchestra, a moment that owes something to Ives.

The ending is the best joke. The music simply stops, and then a scrap of the opening starts up again and breaks off. Folk musicians, she observed, do not round off a tune with a formal close; they pause, ready to begin again.

## Wallingford Riegger

1885–1961

### *Study in Sonority, Op. 7*

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The ten parts are layered. One writer on Riegger describes four players carrying the melody, four the harmony and two the lowest line, though the roles shift. The harmony is built from dense, dissonant chords that Riegger holds and re-voices so that they glow instead of grate, and the whole piece grows from a short motif of a few notes that returns in different guises.

Without violas, cellos and basses the sound has no floor, and that is the point: everything happens in the upper half of the orchestra's range. Riegger marks dynamics and tempos with great precision, sometimes giving each note of the motif its own level, so listen for how much light and shade ten identical instruments can produce.

## Carl Ruggles

1876–1971

### *Sun-treader*

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The opening is the image of the title. Timpani pound out heavy, even strokes and the brass stride upward over them in huge intervals. This music returns several times as a pillar holding up the structure, and it invites comparison with the drumbeats at the start of Brahms's First Symphony.

Between the pillars the music moves in waves. A line starts low, climbs through the orchestra to a peak and falls back, and inside each large wave are smaller ones, so that the piece seems always to be straining upward. Quieter passages for strings and woodwind, where the lines turn lyrical, alternate with sudden accelerations. The work is in a single movement of about a quarter of an hour.

## Richard Rodgers

8 minutes

1902–1979

### *The Carousel Waltz (orch. Don Walker)*

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The piece starts with a fairground organ slightly out of tune with itself: woodwind chords that wheeze and slide, a few halting attempts at a rhythm, as if the machinery were being cranked into motion. Then the main waltz arrives, a broad, swinging tune.

It is a chain of waltzes more than a single one, in the Viennese manner, and each new strain is a little louder and faster than the last. Listen for the way Rodgers keeps pulling the harmony sideways when a cadence seems certain. The ending whirls the first waltz round at full tilt, with the whole orchestra and cymbals, as the carousel reaches top speed.

## George Gershwin

24 minutes

1898–1937

### *Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture (arr. Robert Russell Bennett)*

#### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Bennett's sequence runs without a break. It opens on Catfish Row at daybreak, with the street cries of the Strawberry Woman and the Crab Man, almost the only passages in the opera that Gershwin took from what he had heard in Charleston. Clara's music and the bustling introduction to Act One follow, and only then, several minutes in, comes 'Summertime'.

After it the banjo strums in for 'I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'. The hurricane music supplies the one stretch of real violence, with the full brass and percussion. Out of it rises 'Bess, You Is My Woman Now', the love duet. The picnic music 'Oh, I Can't Sit Down' restores the high spirits; Sportin' Life's two numbers, 'There's a Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York' and 'It Ain't Necessarily So', follow; and the piece ends as the opera does, with the spiritual-like 'Oh Lawd, I'm on My Way'.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2027-04-08-hannigan>

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