



Thomas Søndergård Proms 8 & 11

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

‘It’s a lovely way of simply saying thank you for some great years together.’ That might be a rather understated way of referring to Mahler’s gargantuan Eighth Symphony – not without reason nicknamed the ‘Symphony of a Thousand’. But there’s no doubt that for Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, his Proms performance of the symphony (Prom 11) is a fittingly grand, celebratory way to mark his final concert as the BBC National Orchestra of Wales’s Principal Conductor. ‘Our journey together has been like a celebration of music-making – and I’ve been incredibly happy with the constant dialogue we’ve had together to maintain or increase our passions.’

What does he feel the challenges are of conducting such vast forces in such a mammoth symphony? ‘I’ve worked a lot in opera houses, and in some ways a staged opera can be easier! But, if there’s anywhere you’d want to perform Mahler’s Eighth, it’s at the Proms. I really want the audience to let the music’s primal force be in control, rather than trying to intellectualise the piece. Sometimes classical music should just overwhelm you.’

He says of the Proms: ‘It makes me happy that in today’s world, where people are asking if art is even necessary, there’s something that shows people are still screaming for tickets.’