

## Proms 2010: Can the spirit of Haydn survive in a stateside suburb?



By **Barry Millington**

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**With orchestra, soloist and commissioned composer all hailing from Sweden and a conductor from Denmark this was a Nordic night at the Proms. The Swedish Chamber Orchestra brought clarity and litheness to Schumann, deploying their modestly sized forces to excellent effect. Using a relatively small body of strings and natural trumpets to add sinew, Thomas Dausgaard drew a sharply profiled, exhilarating account of the Second Symphony.**

Less often heard is Schumann's earlier Symphony in G minor ("Zwickau"), of which only two movements were completed. Dausgaard, conducting from memory, clearly believes in the first movement and made a strong case for it with a bracing performance.

The commissioned composer, Albert Schnelzer, identifying a putative congruence between the musical personality of Haydn and American film director **Tim Burton**, decided to conflate the two, asking himself the question: "Will the spirit of Haydn survive in an American suburb?" It was possible to detect something Haydnesque in the playful character and transparent textures of this enjoyable piece.

In **Berlioz's** *Les Nuits d'été*, Nina Stemme brought an aptly veiled quality to her singing of *Le Spectre de la Rose*, while the spare contrapuntal textures were beautifully realised. The emptiness of life without the beloved was poignantly evoked in the following songs, both by the lean instrumental forces and by Stemme, whose dark tonal colouring and keen response to the text captured the underlying melancholy to perfection.