

PROGRAMME



Wolverhampton
Symphony
Orchestra



WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONCERT AT
CODSALL COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL,
CODSALL

SATURDAY 20th June 2009

PROGRAMME

Vaughan Williams	<i>Overture – 'The Wasps'</i>
Butterworth	<i>The Banks of Green Willow</i>
Holst	<i>The Perfect Fool</i>

INTERVAL

Elgar	<i>Symphony No. 1 in A flat</i>
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Conductor – Peter Morris
Leader – Ros Rayner

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra is a fully independent amateur orchestra formed in 1973 by a group of keen amateur players. The idea behind the formation of the orchestra was to satisfy a need for local players to prepare to as high a standard as possible, interesting works for public performance, and this is still the primary aim of the orchestra today. Membership of the orchestra when at full strength is of the order of 50 players and is drawn from keen competent amateur musicians, students and teachers of music in Wolverhampton and the surrounding areas.

The orchestra meets on a regular weekly basis throughout the academic year and produces on average four public concerts a year. It has been invited on several occasions to perform major choral works with local choral societies, in 1999 performing Beethoven's Choral Symphony to commemorate its Silver Jubilee. The orchestra regularly engages as soloists professional musicians of national and international reputation, as well as local young players of outstanding promise.

The repertoire of the orchestra extends from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, although a symphony orchestra of this type will tend to concentrate on works from the nineteenth century. The orchestra has performed a large number of symphonies by Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, Mahler, Schubert, Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, etc. Earlier works are represented by Albinoni, Bach, Boyce and Handel, whereas twentieth century composers whose works have been performed include Barber, Copland, Joubert, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Meirion Williams (a former musical director of the orchestra) and Rory Freckleton (a former member of the viola section).

The orchestra is managed by a committee consisting of the Musical Director and leader, plus members elected by the orchestra. It is financed through concert receipts and by an annual subscription paid

by the members. It is also affiliated to Making Music (formerly the National Federation of Music Societies).

Peter Morris – Musical Director

Peter Morris, who has been our Musical Director since 2004, began his career as a cathedral chorister in Chester and Manchester, went to Chetham's School in Manchester and read music at Durham University. He came to the Midlands as Director of Music at Bluecoat School, Walsall from 1969 until 1991 and held the same post at St. Peter's School, Wolverhampton from 1991 until 1997. He left St. Peter's School to look after his young family, but has since accumulated a variety of roles. He has conducted Walsall Choral Society since 1977, is Borough Organist at Walsall Town Hall, Director of Music at St. Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton and the founder conductor of Junction 10 Orchestra. He is also principal examiner for A-level and GCSE General Studies and an A-level Music examiner. In 2000-2001 he was awarded the Medaille d'Honneur of the French National Association of Music and a Master's degree at Keele University. He lives in Wolverhampton.

Ros Rayner – Leader

Ros studied the violin at the Royal Academy of Music. Whilst there she joined the British Youth Symphony Orchestra. Following her PGCE she taught in Bracknell for four years, she moved to Wolverhampton and was appointed leader of the Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra in 1996. She now teaches at the Wolverhampton Girls' High School and tutors the first violins in the Wolverhampton Youth Orchestra.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)
Overture – ‘The Wasps’

Vaughan Williams' music has often been said to be characteristically English, in the same way as that of Gustav Holst, Frederick Delius, George Butterworth, and William Walton. In *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*, Peter Ackroyd writes, "If that Englishness in music can be encapsulated in words at all, those words would probably be: ostensibly familiar and commonplace, yet deep and mystical as well as lyrical, melodic, melancholic, and nostalgic yet timeless." Ackroyd quotes music critic John Alexander Fuller Maitland, whose distinctions included editing the second edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in the years just before 1911, as having observed that in Vaughan Williams's style "one is never quite sure whether one is listening to something very old or very new."

The Wasps is incidental music composed by Vaughan Williams in 1909. It was written for a production of Aristophanes' *The Wasps* at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was Vaughan Williams' first of only two forays into incidental music. It was scored for baritone solo voices, a chorus of tenors and baritones (in two parts each), and orchestra. The complete incidental music is lengthy (about 1 hour and 45 minutes) and is not often performed.

Vaughan Williams later arranged parts of the music into an orchestral suite, in five parts, with the Overture being the piece performed this evening. The year before he wrote *The Wasps*, Vaughan Williams spent three months in Paris studying orchestration with Maurice Ravel. Although *The Wasps* may reflect something of Ravel, it is quintessential Vaughan Williams and except for the opening buzzing, the piece has little to do with wasps or with ancient Greece.

George Sainton Kaye Butterworth, (1885 – 1916)
The Banks of Green Willow

Although Butterworth was born in London, his family moved to Yorkshire not long after his birth. He received his first music lessons from his mother, who was a singer, and began composing at an early age. However, his father intended for him to be a solicitor, and he attended Eton College, from there continuing on to Trinity College, Oxford. While at Trinity he became more focused on music, for there he met the folk song collector Cecil Sharp and composer and folk song enthusiast Ralph Vaughan Williams. Butterworth and Vaughan Williams made several trips into the English countryside to collect folk songs, and both saw their compositions strongly influenced by what they heard. Butterworth was also an expert folk dancer, being particularly fond of Morris dancing.

Vaughan Williams and Butterworth became close friends. It was Butterworth who suggested to Vaughan Williams that he turn a symphonic poem he was working on into his London Symphony. When the manuscript for that piece was lost (having been sent to Fritz Busch in Germany just before the outbreak of war) Butterworth, together with Geoffrey Toye and the critic Edward J. Dent, helped Vaughan Williams reconstruct the work. Vaughan Williams dedicated the piece to Butterworth's memory after his death. Upon leaving Oxford, Butterworth began a career in music, writing criticism for *The Times*, composing, and teaching at Radley College, Oxfordshire. He also briefly studied at the Royal College of Music where he worked with Hubert Parry among others.

The Banks of Green Willow is a short orchestral impressionist piece composed in 1913 and around six minutes long in the key of A major. It is scored for a small chamber orchestra with a harp in the style of a tone poem and is also described as an idyll. Butterworth included two folk song melodies that he found in 1907 as part of the piece.

Gustav Holst (1874 - 1934)
The Perfect Fool

Gustav Holst was born in Cheltenham in 1874. He began composing whilst at Cheltenham Grammar School and spent two months at Oxford learning counterpoint before being sent to London to study composition under Stanford at the Royal College of Music. He met Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1895, the two quickly becoming friends and beginning their lifelong habit of playing sketches of their newest compositions to each other.

Holst's comic opera, *The Perfect Fool*, written in 1918-22, begins with a ballet which is danced by Spirits of Earth, Water and Fire. A wizard, who it is suggested is related to 'Uranus the Magician' in *The Planets*, summons the Earth Spirits with a trombone invocation that rises in energetic fury and descends with ponderous deliberation. From the lowest depths of the orchestra the husky double-basses conjure up an appropriate earthiness. When the clumsy, clod-hopping dance has reached its climax the Earth Spirits scurry underground, leaving the solo viola to call up the Spirits of the Water with the calm notes of a legato invocation. The cool woodwind chords and the dripping fifths of the harp and celesta lead to the second dance, where, with the help of the flute, the Spirits of the Water bring 'the essence of love distilled from Aether'. With the abrupt arrival of the Spirits of Fire the third dance crackles into a sudden spurt of conflagration. The blaze approaches inch by inch, the staccato notes sounding as brittle as burning stubble. The listener has no need for the visual help of stage lighting and gestures, for the vitality of the leaping flames can clearly be heard in the brilliant orchestration.

INTERVAL

Edward William Elgar (1857 - 1934)
Symphony No. 1 in A flat

1. Andante, nobilmente e semplice
2. Allegro molto

3. Adagio
4. Lento - Allegro

Edward Elgar was born in the small village of Lower Broadheath outside Worcester. By the age of eight, he was taking piano and violin lessons, and would often listen to his father playing the organ at St. George's church. His prime interest, however, was the violin, and his first written music was for that instrument. In his spare time, Elgar was an ardent Wolverhampton Wanderers fan and it is said that he travelled to home games from Worcester on his bicycle.

Sir Edward Elgar's *Symphony No. 1 in A flat major, Op. 55* was written in 1907-1908, and dedicated to "Hans Richter, Mus. Doc., true artist and true friend." It was premiered on 3 December 1908 in Free Trade Hall in Manchester, England, with Hans Richter conducting the Hallé Orchestra. It is the only frequently-performed symphony whose main key is A-flat major. While Elgar never explicitly stated a programme for the symphony, it has been suggested that the work was inspired by the death of General Charles George Gordon: its "Eroica" character parallels the similar Beethoven symphony which was, according to the story, originally dedicated to Napoleon. In 1899 Elgar wrote to his friend A. J. Jaeger (widely believed to be the "Nimrod" of the *Enigma Variations*) that he intended someday to write a work dedicated to the military hero: "the thing possesses me, but I cannot write it down yet." The symphony is in a cyclic form: the incomplete "nobilmente" theme from the first movement returns in the finale for a complete grandioso statement after various transformations throughout the work. Unlike thematic transformations in the work of other composers who used cyclic form, such as Mahler and Liszt, Elgar does not use the theme so much as a source of motivic material for the rest of the work, but as a mood; it transforms whatever it touches, and returns triumphantly at the close. The first movement contrasts the "nobilmente" theme in A-flat with anxious "Allegro" music in D minor. A close look at the score will reveal what is not obvious to the ear: that the melodic line of the first eight-bar semiquaver (sixteenth note) passage of the first violin

part in the second movement is the same as the melodic line of the first thirteen bars of the third movement (excepting bar 7 of the third movement where the top A is omitted and the shape is very slightly modified), despite their contrasting tempi and different keys.

Critical reaction to the symphony at first was mixed. Hans Richter, the symphony's dedicatee, extravagantly praised it at a rehearsal in 1908: "[it is] the greatest symphony of modern times, written by the greatest modern composer — and not only in this country." Shostakovich stated that, in his opinion, it was one of the greatest symphonies of the 20th century. On the other hand, some reviewers criticised it for slack structure and an overabundance of themes. In spite of this, it caused a sensation at its first performance and received more than one hundred repeat performances during its first year, and has maintained a place in the standard orchestral repertory ever since. The "nobilmente" theme was used in the movie 'Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit'.

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

Ros Rayner (*Leader*)
Francis Bunch
Barbara Carter
Jon Harper
Jo Jordan
Sarah Wilson
James Hamilton
Zoe Hunter-Grewal

Violin 2

Anne Forster
Hilary Hurd
Catherine Rayner
Rosie Shuttleworth
Jayne Price
Margaret Myatt
Ken Hawkins
Georgina Crane

Viola

David Cope
Elisabeth Barratt
Alain Anderton
Liz Fleetham

Cello

Julie Robertson
Roger Hides
Margaret Bell
Tim Forster
Sheila Moore
Dan Addison
Kenneth Wilson

Double Bass

Sarah Tully
David Charlesworth

Flute

Di Manasseh
Kathryn Russon

Piccolo

Jane Eminson

Oboe

Richard Anderson
Rachel Orotayo
Duncan Speirs

Cor Anglais

Richard Anderson

Clarinet

Di Cotterell
Ros Jacom
Lynn Curtis

Bass Clarinet

Lynn Curtis

Bassoon

Jill Sparke
Jan Riley
Jonas Lovgren

Horns

Sara Shepherd
Robin Hopper
Percy Cotterell
Jill Brittle
Hazel Whitefoot

Trumpets

Jenny Holt
Chris Cumming
Jenny Cresswell

Trombones

Lawrence Hopper
Michael Griffiths
Bernard Moses

Tuba

Leonard Hazlehurst

Timpani

Laura Birch

Percussion

Peter Rayner
Owen Muir
Christopher Jones

Harp

Stephanie Roberts

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

FURTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

26th September 2009 at 7.30pm - St. Andrew's Church, Sedgley

Beethoven - Egmont Overture

Mozart - Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat major - Soloist Mark Bebbington

Haydn - Symphony No. 104 in D major, the "London" Symphony

14th November 2009 - St. Mary's Church, Albrighton

Mendelssohn - Ruy Blas Overture

Prokofiev - Excerpts from the ballet, Romeo and Juliet

Vaughan Williams - Symphony No. 2, the "London" Symphony

6th March 2010 - Cranmer Methodist Church, Newhampton Road West, Wolverhampton

Shostakovich - Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major - Soloist Alastair Moseley

Wagner - Siegfried Idyll

Beethoven - Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, the "Eroica" Symphony

19th June 2010 - Holy Trinity Church, Heathtown, Wolverhampton

Malcolm Arnold - Tam O'Shanter Overture

Saint-Saëns - Danse Macabre

Humperdinck - Excerpts from the opera, Hansel and Gretel

Ravel - Ma Mere L'Oye (Mother Goose Suite)

Mussorgsky - Pictures at an Exhibition



Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra is affiliated to
Making Music

(formerly the National Federation of Music Societies)
which represents and supports
amateur vocal, instrumental and
promoting services throughout the
United Kingdom.

For further details regarding membership or ticket prices,
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or e-mail us at info@wolsymorc.org.uk

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