

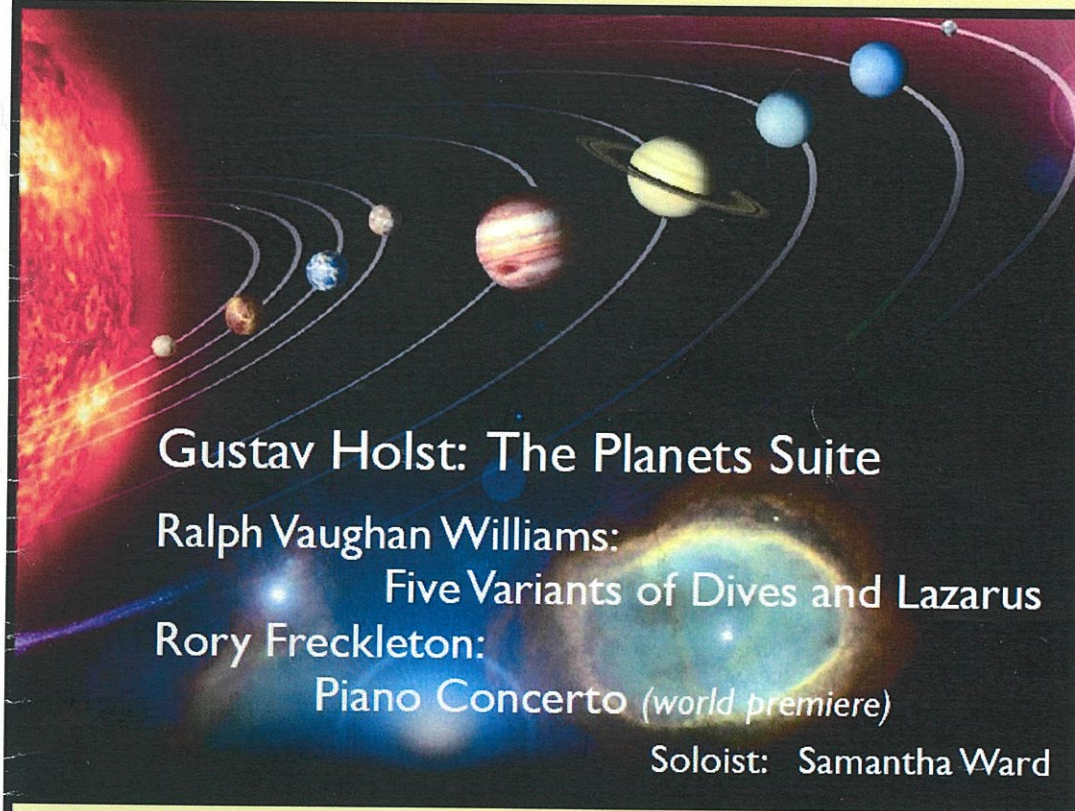


WOLVERHAMPTON
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Saturday 11 March 2017
7.30pm

167

Conductor: Peter Morris
Leader: Ros Rayner



Gustav Holst: The Planets Suite

Ralph Vaughan Williams:

Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus

Rory Freckleton:

Piano Concerto (world premiere)

Soloist: Samantha Ward

St Peter's Collegiate Church

Lich Gates, Wolverhampton, WV1 1TV

TICKETS: £9 FULL, £7 CONCESSIONS | Available on the door

All students in full time education enter free

Email: info@wolsymorc.org.uk Tel: 07977 122768 (Ian Sumner)

For further information visit us on our website: www.wolsymorc.org.uk

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167

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Dives and Lazarus – Ralph Vaughan Williams

Piano Concerto – Rory Freckleton

Soloist: Samantha Ward

INTERVAL

The Planets Suite – Gustav Holst

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

WSO was formed in 1973 by a group of keen amateur players, to satisfy a need for local players to prepare interesting works for public performance, and that aim remains today. Membership is around 50 players and is drawn from keen competent amateur musicians, students and teachers in Wolverhampton and the surrounding areas.

The orchestra meets weekly during term time and produces around 4 concerts a year, as well as an annual playday focussing on a major work and attracting musicians from far and wide. We have also accompanied City of Wolverhampton Choir in recent concerts.

We are financed through subscriptions and are affiliated to *Making Music*, and have a partnership arrangement with the city's Music Education Hub. WSO is very grateful to St Peter's Collegiate Church and to Wolverhampton Grammar School for their help with the use of instruments.

ST. PETER'S COLLEGIATE CHURCH CHOIRS

The first mention of a choir in St Peter's goes back to before the Reformation.

The present choirs (Girls, Boys, Men and Wulfrun Singers) have a very successful and busy life. The last 2 years have seen 3 choral services each week, choir singing weeks in the Cathedrals at Canterbury, Durham, and Edinburgh, concerts in Symphony Hall (Mahler 8), the BBC Proms, and many other events.

This year, Peter Morris has taken a sabbatical year from the church and Harry Castle has taken his place as Director of Music.

Peter Morris – Musical Director

Peter has conducted the orchestra in more than 50 concerts since 2004.

He went to Chetham's School in Manchester and read music at Durham University. He came to the Midlands in 1969 and taught music for many years. He has a Master's degree in History from Keele, a Medaille d'honneur, of the French National Association of Music, is an Associate of the Royal College of Organists, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors and has an Honorary Fellowship of Wolverhampton University.

Peter is taking a year out from being Director of Music at St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, but is still Chair of Wolverhampton Music Education Hub, Organist of Walsall Town Hall, Organist for the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra, Chief Examiner for A-level General Studies, Principal Examiner for GCSE General Studies, Moderator of the A-level Extended Project Qualification, a visiting Examiner for A-level Practical Music and writer of a monthly column in the Express and Star. His 70th birthday concert, held here 2 weeks ago, raised £3000 for the St Peter's Church Organ Restoration fund.

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 Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra in 1996.

Ros teaches at Wolverhampton Girls' High School and tutors the first violins in Wolverhampton Youth Orchestra.

Rory Freckleton

Rory graduated from Oxford with a degree in biochemistry and also has a Diploma in Music from the Open University. His musical life is divided between playing, conducting, and composing. He was deputy conductor, then conductor of Telford Orchestra between 2005 and 2010. He has also been musical director of Bridgnorth Area Youth Orchestra, musical director of the Severn Singers and is currently musical director of Brierley Hill Choral Society.

man." Neither is this the Lazarus mentioned elsewhere as a man raised from the dead by Jesus.

In the parable a rich man and a poor beggar at his gate (Lazarus) died. The rich man called upon Abraham to send Lazarus to fetch water to help his torments as he reaches the fires of Hell. Abraham reminds the rich man that his life was much better than that of Lazarus, but that Lazarus was a holier man and therefore deserved a place in Heaven.

The story appeared in an English folk song whose oldest written documentation dates from 1557. The song was also published as the Child ballad Dives and Lazarus in the 19th century. Ralph Vaughan Williams was renowned for his championing of English folk music and so based his orchestral piece Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus (1939) on this folk song,

Much like *The Lark Ascending* and *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, the Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus contains superbly sumptuous string writing, with sweeping melodies stretching across the orchestra, underpinned by deep and resonant harmonies. It was first performed by the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra in June 1939, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult.

The folk tune was also arranged by Vaughan Williams as a hymn tune "Kingsfold," which is frequently sung in this church. It appears in The English Hymnal, which Vaughan Williams edited, to the words "I Heard the Voice of Jesus say,"

Piano Concerto

Rory Freckleton

The composer writes:

What are the big challenges in writing classical music? Certainly one of them is to write a concerto. The difficulty is to write a solo part beyond the scope of your own playing ability that is challenging enough to interest a good player, then to blend that with orchestral timbres that will produce an integrated, satisfactory whole. Hence part of the inspiration for this piece is the challenge of the form itself. I have also tried to make twists to conventional forms. For example, the concerto begins with a minuet and trio; a form that would normally serve as a

puts his huge ensemble through many spectacular paces, dramatic and grotesquely humorous alike. A mad, merry dance tune repeatedly threatens to careen out of control, as the timpani and low brass cavort like spellbound elephants. A final incantation leads to a hushed, unsettled close.

piece. I am delighted that Samantha Ward has agreed to play the first performance and I am indebted to Peter Morris and the Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra for being brave enough to schedule a new work in their programme.

INTERVAL

The Planets Suite Op 32

Gustav Holst (1874 – 1934)

Together with his friend Vaughan Williams, Holst played a major role in re-energizing English concert music by injecting it with the spirit, and at times the letter, of the country's folk music. Both composers also created music in a more cosmopolitan style, such as this engaging, brilliantly scored suite for orchestra. It has always been Holst's most popular composition.

Shortly after a tour of Spain in 1913, he wrote to a friend, "...recently the character of each planet suggested lots to me, and I have been studying astrology fairly closely."

The large-scale orchestral suite that resulted from this interest depicts the astrological characters of seven planets in our solar system (he didn't include the Earth, and Pluto had yet to be discovered (and later, perhaps fortuitously, downgraded!). These characters differ from their mythological personalities, although Holst's portrait of Venus manages to conjure both her mythological beauty and her astrological peacefulness.

He completed Mars, the opening movement, in a rural cottage during August 1914. He composed the remaining six movements over the next two years. One reason for his not completing it more quickly was his fear that no orchestra big enough to handle his lavish demands would be available during wartime. Sir

Adrian Boult conducted the first performance, given before an invited audience of 300, in London on September 29, 1918.

Mars, the Bringer of War, portrays a world in the grip of cold, implacable brutality. Brass and percussion hold centre stage throughout, pounding out

the Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra gave the first performances of a *Suite for Orchestra*.

In 2012 his *Landscape for viola and string orchestra* was shortlisted for the Oare String Orchestra composition competition, winning both the audience and orchestra's prizes. The piece was performed by Martin Outram with the Oare String Orchestra conducted by Peter Avis.

Rory plays the viola in WSO.

Samantha Ward, tonight's soloist, has recorded some of Rory's piano music with world-renowned producer, Ates Orga and sound engineer Mark Rogers. It is anticipated that this will be available as a commercial recording before too long.

Samantha Ward – Piano

One of the leading British pianists of her generation, Samantha Ward has performed extensively around the UK and Europe, appearing on television and radio numerous times. She made her London debut at the Wigmore Hall in 2007 and has performed in major venues such as St Martin-in-the-Fields, St John's Smith Square, Manchester's Bridgewater Hall and St David's Hall in Cardiff. She has won first prize in a number of competitions, starting in 2004 when she won the *Making Music Philip and Dorothy Green Award for Young Concert Artists*. She has also won the Beethoven Society of Europe's *Intercollegiate Piano Competition*, *The Hastings International Concerto Competition* as well as the Sir Philip Ledger Prize for the best Mozart or Beethoven Concerto and the Worshipful Company of Musicians' *Maisie Lewis Young Concert Artists Fund Award*.

In August 2013, Samantha founded *Piano Week*, her international festival and summer school for pianists of all ages and abilities. At *Piano Week 2015* and 2016, Samantha joined forces to close the festival with one of the most

distinguished pianists in the world, Stephen Kovacevich, performing works for two pianos by Rachmaninoff and Debussy. At the Rugby School residency of *Piano Week* this year, Samantha will once again perform the final recital with Stephen, marking the third consecutive year of their collaboration at the festival. In 2017, *Piano Week* will tour internationally for the first time, having twice been invited to China as well as to Italy and Germany whilst extending to three UK residencies at Moreton Hall and Rugby Schools.

Aside from her performing career, Samantha is also a recording artist for Schott Music publishers and frequently records both solo and duet albums for them. She is also a published author and her recent 'Relax with...' anthologies for piano were released by Schott in the Spring of 2016. Samantha has also recorded the complete piano works of British composer, Rory Freckleton. Other recent engagements include recital and concerto engagements around the UK, as well as the first public performance since the 19th Century and the first ever recording of the Dora Bright Piano Concerto in A minor with the *Morley Chamber Orchestra* under Charles Peebles. Her debut recital at St John's Smith Square was chosen to be recorded by 'Slow Down London', to be featured in their festival. Samantha was also shortlisted for a 'Woman of the Future' Award in Arts and Culture in association with Shell and as a result, she was invited to give an interview for *Stylist Magazine*. Samantha was awarded a fellowship from the Guildhall School of Music for the year 2007/8, where she studied under the Senior Professor Joan Havill. She previously studied with Leslie Riskowitz and at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester with Alicia Fiderkiewicz.

Dives and Lazarus

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (also called Dives and Lazarus) is a well-known parable of Jesus appearing in the Gospel of Luke.

In St Luke's Gospel, there is the story of the relationship, during life and after death, between an unnamed rich man and a poor beggar named Lazarus. The traditional name, Dives, is not actually a name, but instead a word for "rich

Ralph Vaughan Williams 1872 - 1958

Rory has worked widely with amateur groups in the area and orchestral compositions include, *A Song of the Shropshire Hills* (written for Richard White and the Ludlow orchestra), the *Wrekin Suite* and a *Celebratory Overture* (for the Telford Orchestra, the latter to mark the 150th anniversary of the orchestra) and harsh blocks of sound over an implacable, motor like rhythmic tread. After a grindingly dissonant climax, the death machine pauses desolately for a moment, only to power recklessly ahead to a devastating conclusion.

A solo horn summons **Venus, the Bringer of Peace**. Here is total contrast: a calm, tranquil reverie, set far from the scene of any conflict, scored in delicate pastels (only horns for brass, and celesta for percussion), and shot through with gorgeous solo passages.

Two contrasted scherzos follow. **Mercury, the Winged Messenger**, flits by on transparent, gossamer wings. Holst associated this character with the process of human thought. Something of that swift, quicksilver process may be heard in the chuckling woodwinds, darting strings, and tinkling celesta.

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity, on the other hand, has both jovial feet planted firmly on the ground. Robustly scored Falstaffian tunes reflecting Holst's study of English folk dances drive the opening and closing sections. In the central panel, the strings introduce the most famous melody in the whole Suite - the stately, hymn-like theme evoking a more ceremonial type of rejoicing and used for *I vow to thee, my country*.

Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age, Holst's favourite movement, communicates the greatest emotional depth in the suite. This miniature tone poem sets forth his views on the stages of human life: the uncertain beginning (restless activity over slowly alternating chords in flutes and harps); the struggles and heartbreaks of maturation (a solemn march building slowly to a harsh climax); and finally, gratifyingly, the emergence in late years of wisdom, with its serene acceptance of imperfection and mortality.

Next comes the dynamic conjuring act of **Uranus, the Magician**. Brass cast the spell; as in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, the bassoons are the first to respond. Holst

The suite concludes with the diaphanous, disembodied meditations of **Neptune, the Mystic**. Set once again in the unsettling realm of five beats to the bar, they arrive as if having travelled across vast distances of outer and inner space. Mid-way through, the ethereal sound of wordless choristers floats in from offstage. In the final bars, the orchestra falls silent and the voices echo, over and over, until they fade into silent infinity.

1st Violins	Violas	Flutes	Trumpets
Ros Rayner (Leader)	David Cope	Jane Eminson	Chris Cummings
Jonathan Harper (Deputy)	Alain Anderton	Di Manasseh	Cameron Chin See
Sue Bellingham	Sharon Bayley-Kitts	Dave Whatley	Peter Atkins
Francis Bunch	Michael Cooper	Harpreet Sandhu	Charlotte Walters
Dylan Edge	Elizabeth Fleetham	Oboes	Trombones
James Hamilton	Rory Freckleton	Rachel Orotayo	Laurence Hopper
Jo Jordan	Rhiannon Watts-Robinson	Jane Gledhill	Alex Rowbottom
Margaret Mascarenhas	Peter Whitehead	Ellie Frith	Mike Griffiths
Caroline Meads	Cellos	Ella Pearson	Bass Trombone
Sarah Wynne	Sarah Tulley	Clarinets	Bernard Moses
2nd Violins	Sarah Carter	Lynn Curtis	Tuba
Claire Norden	Michael Crockett	Ros Jacom	Joe Barnett
Jenny Bailey	Fiona Daniel	Anton Clarke-Butler	Percussion
Joanne Bircher	Janey Harold	Bassoons	Phil James
Michael Clement	Sheila Moore	Michael Darke	Stephen Plummer
Anne Forster	Natalie Reynolds	Sean Massey	Nathan Smith
Alice Harper	Hilary Summers	Jan Riley (Contra)	Jake Allen
Ken Hawkins	Ian Sumner	Horns	Harp
Hilary Hurd	Jean Waller	Sara Shepherd	Kinga Was
Amy Price	Millie Wiley	Lauren Storey	Natasha Gale
Samantha Spilsbury	Double Basses	Percy Cotterell	Celeste
Philip Ward	Sharleen Jones	Robin Hopper	Steven Giles
	Holly Anderson	Kevin Boyd	Organ
	Matt Farrell	Joe Clarkson	David Rendell
	Mark Goodhew	Hazel Whitefoot	
	John Hyslop		