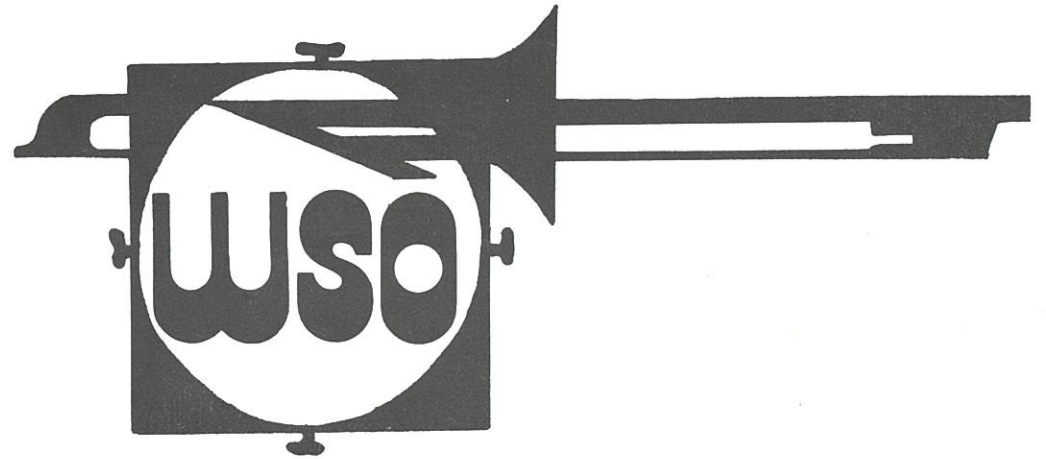


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Wolverhampton
Symphony
Orchestra

Conductors: Meirion Williams
Sheila Freeman

Leader: Cyril Love

CONCERT

26.11.72

The National Federation of Music Societies, to which the orchestra is affiliated, supports this concert with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

PROGRAMME 1

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

C O N C E R T

Saturday, November 26th, 1977, 7.30 p.m.

WOLVERHAMPTON POLYTECHNIC

P R O G R A M M E

- Overture, The Flying Dutchman Wagner
- Petite Suite pour Orchestre Debussy
- A Night on the Bare Mountain Mussorgsky

I N T E R V A L

Symphony in D Minor Franck

OVERTURE, THE FLYING DUTCHMAN.....WAGNER

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) was probably the composer who exerted the greatest influence on the late 19th and early 20th century. His influence was felt not only in the field of music, but also in those of literature and drama. Wagner attempted to unify these art forms under one common heading - music drama. Beethoven, he believed, had begun to move in this direction when he set Schiller's "Ode to Joy" as a choral finale to his Ninth Symphony. To Wagner, the next step in this process was to create an art-form in which music served as a vehicle for both literary and dramatic expression.

The Flying Dutchman does not fall into this category of music drama. First performed at Dresden in 1843, a year after his first triumph "Rienzi", it was written as a one-act opera very much in the tradition of Weber. Unlike the music dramas "Dutchman" is not "through composed", but is divided up into set choruses and arias.

However, many of the hallmarks of mature Wagner

are to be found.

The Libretto - as always written himself - is based on a legend of a Dutch sea captain destined to wander the ocean for eternity and of his longing for death. The drama is resolved with the redemption of the hero through the unselfish love of the heroine Senta.

The overture to the opera is among the most vivid of all musical sea pictures. It opens with the depiction of a stormy sea, above which the horns ring out with the famous theme, often imitated by later "film composers", associated with the Dutchman himself. Against the background of the stormy sea we hear the conflict between the Dutchman's curse and Senta's salvation as well as the rhythmical song of the crew of the phantom ship. Suddenly the storm dies down and the overture ends quietly with an apotheosis of Senta's redeeming love.

M.W.

PETITE SUITE POUR ORCHESTRE.....DEBUSSY

With Debussy (1862-1918), French romanticism moved into a new phase - that of impressionism. The word "impressionism" was originally applied to the school of French painting embodied in such artists as Monet, Manet and Renoir.

Impressionism differs from romantic "programme music" in that it does not attempt to tell a story or to vividly express a particular emotion, but instead evokes an atmosphere or a rather less sharply defined mood. Unlike Wager, Debussy was non-philosophical and his music is less introverted. The deep emotional conflicts of Wagner are replaced by the sounds and colours of nature.

The Petite Suite was originally written for piano duet in 1889. The subsequent orchestral version published in 1907 is not the work of Debussy, but that of his friend Henri Buisser - also a student of Erbest Guiraud at the Paris Conservatoire. The Suite consists of four movements entitled - (1) En Bateau (2) Cortège (3) Menuet (4) Ballet.

M.W.

A NIGHT ON THE BARE MOUNTAIN.....MUSSORGSKY

This is an evocation and exciting picture, full of atmosphere; an allegory of evil finally conquered by good.

A thin mist wreathes around the crags; shapes, evil and threatening, begin to emerge. The witches are gathering on the mountainside to celebrate the Black Mass. The air is heavy with imprecations. Wild dancing and revelry build up until the sound of a church bell dispels the mob and a tune of haunting sweetness on violins and oboes ushers in the dawn. Solo clarinet and flute rise over the harp and light suffuses the former scene of tumult.

Modest Mussorgsky was born in 1839 and died in 1881.

S.C.F.

SYMPHONY IN D MINOR.....FRANCK

Although he was born at Liege, Cesar Franck (1822-1890) spent most of his life in Paris. During his lifetime he was perhaps better known as an organist and teacher than as a composer. Despite the demands made on him by his professional life, he still found time to turn his hand to a great variety of musical forms - chamber music, sonatas, variations, symphonic poems and, eventually, the symphony. Although a Belgian, Franck was a leading figure in the establishment of the National Society for French Music in 1871 - generally regarded as the "renaissance" of French music.

Franck's musical style owed a lot to that of Liszt and Wagner as regards his almost obsessive chromatic harmony, but he did not share their feeling for drama and passion. Like Brahms, Franck was a conservative who attempted to reconcile the achievements of romanticism with the language of classicism.

Franck composed the D Minor Symphony between 1886 and 1888, two years before his death. The work is in three movements, the second of which combines the elements of a slow movement with the spirit of a scherzo.

The work has often been criticised on the grounds of its being an "organists symphony". Franck's fondness for sudden contrasts in tone colour are suggestive of an organist's constant changing of combinations of organ stops. Indeed, the textures of the great climaxes of the symphony are usually organ-like in their great power and often lacking sheer orchestral brilliance.

Franck's pupil Vincent d'Indy described the nature of the work as an "antagonism of tonalities" in which the key of D is finally victorious over that of F. As in much of Franck's chamber music, the structure of the symphony is cyclic - each movement being related thematically. The whole work is characterised by extreme changes in tempo. The first movement begins with a gloomy motive very reminiscent of the opening of Liszt's symphonic poem "Les Preludes". This motive continues to interrupt the flow of the first movement and reappears in the last.

The second movement is dominated by a reservedly melancholy cor anglais melody.

The third movement looks back to much of the material used earlier, and after a few ominous moments brings the symphony to a close in a spirit of jubilation.

M.W.

The next W.S.O. concert will be on Saturday, March 11th, 1978.

The Orchestra rehearses on Thursdays at 7.45 p.m. in the Music Room, Wolverhampton Grammar School. New members, especially string players, are welcome.