

**WOLVERHAMPTON
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

CONCERT

AT

**ST PETER'S COLLEGIATE SCHOOL
WOLVERHAMPTON**

SATURDAY, 27th FEBRUARY, 1999

PROGRAMME

Finlandia

Sibelius

Horn Concerto No. 2

R. Strauss

INTERVAL

Karelia Suite

Sibelius

The Firebird Suite

Stravinsk

Solo Horn

Suzie Walker

Conductor

Michael Darke

WORFIELD CHARITY CONCERT TRUST

We are delighted to welcome members of the Worfield Trust who have offered valuable assistance in the preparations for tonight's concert, not least in their support for our soloist, Suzie Walker.

The Trust is a registered charity which aims to support and promote outstanding young musicians, to widen the scope of music available to regional audiences and to foster musical education. The Trust promotes concerts, commissions new works from young composers, and offers performance opportunities and financial assistance to young musicians at the start of their career.

The work of the Trust is supported by The Friends of Worfield Charity concert Trust, who welcome new members.

During this, its Silver Jubilee season, the Trust will present a number of concerts and in October, Kirsty Whatley, a gifted young harp soloist, will give the first performance of a new work by Andrew Keeling specially commissioned by the Trust to celebrate its first 25 years.

Further information, and concert tickets, may be obtained from Geoffrey Brooks, the Trust's Administrator, on 01902 751633.

SUZIE WALKER

99

Suzie read Music at Manchester University and gained a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music where she is currently studying Horn with Richard Watkins and Derek Taylor. She plays with Welsh National Opera, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and is a regular freelancer with the Halle Orchestra, with whom she went on tour in 1998 to play in the Salzburg summer festival.

Suzie is a winner of several prestigious prizes which include the Dennis Brain Prize from the RAM, for which she played the concerto she is performing tonight.

Suzie is a member of the York Gate Brass Quintet which recently gave a recital at St Martin in the Field, London. She also performed in the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Concert in November 1997 and the banquet for the Emperor of Japan on his recent state visit to Britain.

Suzie is no stranger to the recording studio having recently recorded her first film soundtrack and given a 30 minute solo broadcast on BBC Radio Norfolk.

When Suzie is not Horn playing, her spare time activities include theme parks and telling jokes!

Symphonic Poem: Finlandia, Op. 26
Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)

The Finnish composer Sibelius started his professional life as a teacher and produced his first major work, the tone poem *En Saga*, in 1892, at the age of 27. In 1897, a grant from the Finnish government allowed him to give up teaching and concentrate on composing full-time, although he was to virtually abandon writing any new works while at the height of his powers in 1926.

Much of Sibelius's output has Finnish "national" associations, sometimes relating to the "Kalevala" (the Finnish national epic poem) and "Finlandia" is probably the most famous of such pieces. Written in 1899, it was the first piece to give Sibelius the world-wide recognition he deserved and became an inspirational work for Finnish nationalists during the time of Tsarist-Russian oppression in the country. So successful was it in that regard that it was banned for political reasons and had to be performed under the anonymous-sounding title "Prelude". While all this makes it sound as if the piece is full of heroic folk song and traditional patriotic themes, it is in fact an entirely original work.

Horn Concerto No. 2 in Eb major
Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

- I *Allegro*
- II *Andante con moto*
- III *Rondo. Allegro molto*

Strauss wrote two horn concertos but they are separated by almost sixty years. The second concerto, dating from 1942, has many similarities with the first - the choice of E flat as the key, the tendency to link movements, the same small classical orchestra - but the most important link is Strauss's complete understanding of the solo instrument's true character. Although the use of valves, which became prevalent during the composer's lifetime, allow fully chromatic passages to be played, the best features of Horn writing draw on the characteristics and harmonic series of the natural instrument, evident in many of the fanfare-like passages. Such an understanding is perhaps not surprising in that Strauss's first teacher, his father Franz, was one of the most famous of 19th century Horn players. Indeed the second concerto is dedicated to his memory.

The work marks the return of the composer to his neo-classical origins (He once described Mozart as "the last and finest flowering in the history of our culture") while drawing on his own considerable experience. The opening fanfare leads into a movement of considerable vigour which

nevertheless makes extensive use of the silky smooth legato playing that the horn is capable of. The soloist trades ideas with the violins and with members of the woodwind section, particularly the clarinet. After some more reflective episodes, the mood of the music gradually becomes much more peaceful, leading straight into the *andante*, whose sumptuous theme is announced originally by the oboe and bassoon. The lively and spirited rondo shows off some of the more agile characteristics of the Horn while the coda, in which the orchestral horns join the soloist in the main theme, provides a particularly thrilling climax.

INTERVAL

Karelia Suite, Op.11

Jean Sibelius

- I *Intermezzo. Moderato*
- II *Ballade. Tempo di menuetto*
- III *Alla marcia. Moderato*

This suite, which dates from 1893, consists of three of the several pieces that Sibelius wrote as accompaniments to historical tableaux presented by the students of Viborg University. The two outer movements are among the happiest things that Sibelius ever wrote, perhaps because the people of Karelia, in the east of Finland are by nature more light-hearted than their compatriots in the west. The percussion is used much more extensively than is Sibelius's wont and in the opening *Intermezzo* the section doesn't have a single silent bar. The orchestral forces are considerably reduced for the more relaxed *Ballade*, which features a cor anglais solo in its final section, while the *Alla marcia* brings the work to joyful and rousing conclusion.

The Firebird Suite (1919 version)
Igor Stravinsky
(1882-1971)

- I *Introduction.*
- II *Dance of the Firebird - Variations*
- III *The Princesses' Round*
- IV *Infemal Dance of King Kashchei*
- V *Lullaby*
- VI *Final Hymn*

Such is Stravinsky's massive contribution to twentieth-century music, it is easy to forget that he originally trained in law and may not have become a composer at all, but for a chance encounter with Rimsky-Korsakov. The great composer took this young man under his wing, rekindled his love for music and gave him free lessons in orchestration, the fruits of which are amply evident in tonight's piece.

The first performance of *The Firebird* was given by Diaghalev's Ballets Russes at the Paris Opéra in 1910 and made Stravinsky's international reputation overnight (although the famous ballerina Pavlova had pulled out of the performance, refusing to have anything to do with "such horrible music"). Debussy, who had sat excitedly through the premiere, ran over and embraced the composer and even the usually less than generous Diaghilev was heard enthusing to a friend "Mark that man Stravinsky. He is on the eve of celebrity."

The ballet is based on a Russian fairy-story and this is the second of three versions of the suite drawn from its score. The folk-song nature of many of the melodies, the brilliant orchestration and the rhythmic invention, particularly in the *Infemal Dance of King Kashchei*, clearly look forward to the *Rite of Spring* of 1913, probably Stravinsky's greatest work.

The *Introduction*, with its deceptively simple quaver movement in the lower strings, makes a sinister and atmospheric opening while in the *Dance of the Firebird* and *Variations of the Firebird*, the fluttering and swooping patterns in the woodwind conjure up the movements of this magical bird. *The Princesses' Round* that follows is an example of a traditional Russian *khorovod* (a round dance with singing) and its gentle, innocent character contrasts with the *Infemal Dance* of the demon-king Kashchei, a wizard who holds the princesses captive before they are rescued by a young man, Ivan Tsarevitch, with the help of the Firebird. Bassoons then intone a suitably soporific *Lullaby* before the Horn announces the beginning of the *Final Hymn* which brings in the whole orchestra to provide an exciting and spectacular finale.

OUR NEXT CONCERT:

WSO SILVER JUBILEE CONCERT

Weber: Der Freischütz Overture
Strauss: Emperor Waltzes
Holst: Jupiter (from The Planets)
Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 (Choral)

The King's School
Wolverhampton

7.30 pm, Saturday 17th July 1999

For more details:

Tel: 01283 790319 (Michael Darke, Conductor)
01902 863792 (David Cope, Chairman)

email: wolsymorc@hotmail.com

www: <http://listen.to/wso>

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin

Ros Rayner
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Susan Bellingham
Barbara Bostok
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Michael Clement
Jessica Ford
Ken Gange
Ken Hawkins
Louise Hunt
Caroline Meads
Margaret Myatt
Sarah Purshouse
Louise Rhodes
David Smith
Philip Ward
Jenny Walton

Viola

David Cope
Alain Anderton
Sharon Bayley
Martin Cropper
Rory Freckleton
Sheila Freeman
Philip Turley

Cello

Louise Lawrie
Joanne Bell
Margaret Bell
Glyn Davies
Tim Forster
Sheila Moore
Julie Robertson

Double Bass

Laura Staley
John Mason

Flute

Diana Manasseh
Heather Lancaster

Piccolo

Heather Lancaster

Oboe

Richard Anderson
Rachel Orotayo

Cor Anglais

Richard Anderson

Clarinet

Di Cotterell
Lynn Curtis

Bassoon

Bryan Shepherd
Doug Servant

Horn

Percy Cotterell
Robin Hopper
Sara Robertshaw
Christine Venables

Trumpet

Tony Bayliss
Chris Cumming
Vaughan Smith

Trombone

Laurence Hopper
John Barnett

Bass Trombone

Don Howard

Tuba

Rebecca Burns

Timpani

Malcolm Peters

Percussion

Andrew Chapman
Alistair Cornell
Philippa Cornell

Piano

Ken Gange

Harp

Stephanie Roberts

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and is a member of the National Federation of Music Societies*