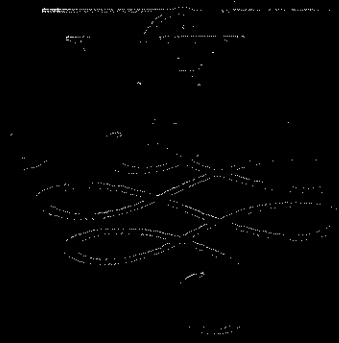
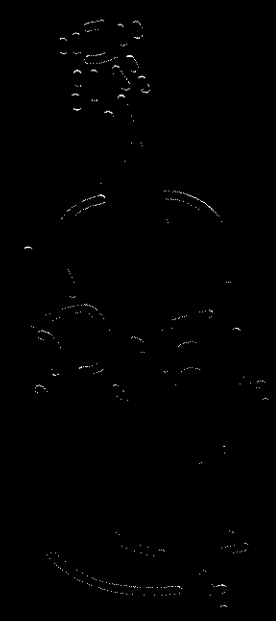


NATIONAL SOCIETY OF AMERICAN SOCIETY



PROGRAM

104



1910

1911

1912

WOLVERHAMPTON
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONCERT
AT
St. MATTHEW'S CHURCH
WILLENHALL ROAD
WOLVERHAMPTON

SATURDAY 1st JULY 2000

PROGRAMME

Mozart.....Marriage of Figaro Overture
Richard Strauss.....Wind Serenade in E flat, Opus 7
Greig.....Holberg Suite
Barber.....Adagio for strings

INTERVAL

Dvořák.....Symphony No. 9 "From the New World"

Conductor Michael Darke
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 musicians 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 six public concerts a year. It has been invited on a number of occasions to perform major choral works with local choral societies, last year performing Beethoven's Choral Symphony in this church 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 spans 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, Stravinsky, Meirion Williams (a former musical director of the orchestra) and Rory Freckleton, a regular member of the viola section and the orchestra's deputy musical director.

The orchestra is managed by a committee consisting of the Musical Director, his Deputy and the Leader plus members elected by the orchestra. It is financed through concert receipts and an annual subscription paid by the members. It is also affiliated to the National Federation of Music Societies.

Tonight sees the last concert with Michael Darke as the orchestra's Musical Director, as he is now ready to hand the baton on and commit more time to his family. Michael joined the orchestra playing bassoon in 1990, and started conducting in 1993, his first concert being a joint concert with Wombourne Choral Society where he conducted Tintagel by Bax and Elgar's Sea Pictures. In the period 1993 to 1995, the conductorship was shared, with Michael taking over as the full time Musical Director in 1995. He has conducted the orchestra in 23 concerts and has raised the standard of playing to the high level it has achieved today. The orchestra has very much enjoyed the directorship and enthusiasm of Michael and wishes him all the best for the future.

Overture : The Marriage of Figaro Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

The "Marriage of Figaro" was first performed at the Burgtheater, Vienna on May 1st 1786 with moderate success, but the performances in Prague of the same year took the city by storm. When Mozart visited Prague in 1787, he said that all over the city he heard nothing but "Figaro" tunes being played, sung and whistled. The opera was the first of Mozart's three collaborations with the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte and was written in Italian rather than German to cater for the taste of the Viennese public.

The story of the opera concerns the characters from the plays of Beaumarchais which centre around Count Almaviva and Figaro. The overture opens with a presto octave passage which leads to another theme for woodwind and horns which in turn leads to a lively tutti. These three ideas are repeated and there are some exciting scale passages for strings before the music quietens for a lyrical theme. There is no development and descending violins lead to the recapitulation, a coda bringing the overture to a close. Although the overture does not quote any themes from the main body of the opera, it sets the scene with its sparkling brilliance and intricacy for the intrigue, blackmail and aristocratic mischief which is to follow.

J Bell

Serenade for Thirteen Wind Instruments Op. 7 Richard Strauss (1864 - 1949)

As a child, Richard Strauss grew up to the sound of wind instruments, his father Franz Joseph being principal horn in the Munich Court Orchestra for nearly fifty years. Although Richard's father knew Wagner well and had played in many of his first performances, he hated Wagner's music, had little sympathy for the modern music that was put on at the opera and venerated the great Viennese classics. So when his son showed musical talent, Franz Joseph insisted that he be brought up on the classics and insulated as far as possible from the excesses of the later romantics.

When the dutiful son started to compose, he produced a large body of work in a respectable, middle-of-the-century idiom, including two symphonies, a violin concerto, a violin sonata and two serenades for wind instruments, of which we will hear the one in Eb for 13 players (double woodwind, four horns and a double bassoon). This Serenade was written in 1881 when Strauss was just 17 years old and was premiered on 27th November 1882 by the Tonkünstlerverein of Dresden (Musician's Association) under the celebrated conductor Hans von Bulow to great acclaim. It follows in the tradition of wind serenades of the Mozart and Beethoven eras, however the harmonic structure gives us an insight into the major works which were to come from this gifted composer.

In 1888 Strauss burst the bounds of his father's influence and the frontiers of orchestral music with his symphonic poem "Don Juan", and the orchestra was never the same again. In 1909, when he was world famous, he looked back on his precocious teenage years and called the Eb Serenade "the respectable work of a music student", but, respectable or not, the music is expertly written, full of melody and a delight to hear.

Programme note by J Bell with edited extracts supplied through the Programme Note Bank of The National Federation of Music Societies.

Holberg Suite for String Orchestra, Op. 40

Edvard Greig
(1843 - 1907)

- I. *Praludium*
- II. *Sarabande*
- III. *Gavotte*
- IV. *Air*
- V. *Rigaudon*

In the Holberg Suite, Greig turned to the music of the 17th century with deliberate intent, as the suite was a work commissioned for the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Ludvig Holberg, a writer born in Bergen who has been called "the Moliere of the North".

Originally entitled Fra Holbergs Tid (from Holberg's time) Greig wrote it as a suite for piano solo and gave the first performance himself in Bergen on 7th December 1884. He later arranged it for string orchestra and this was first performed, also in Bergen on 12th March 1885.

Although Greig dips into the past for his inspiration, the music is unmistakably his, he simply indulges in modest satire by taking a few tricks of older times. The Prelude is very much Greig, but the Sarabande is a tribute to Bach. The Gavotte and Musette which follows start with the same notes but goes off into a merry dance of the period. The Air is probably indebted to the memory of Handel, but the Rigaudon is again entirely Greig. It is scored for solo violin and viola with the rest of the orchestra pizzicato. Thus, as Stravinsky did in Pulcinella, we have a composer expressing himself completely while acknowledging generously his debt to the past. What is more impressive about the work is the wonderfully accomplished, convincing and varied writing for the strings, employing every trick of the trade but ultimately impressing with the rich power of which these instruments are capable, given the right medium for self-expression.

J. Bell

Adagio for Strings

Samuel Barber
(1910 - 1981)

At the age of fourteen, Samuel Barber gained a place at the Curtis Institute of Philadelphia where he was one of the most outstanding scholars, studying under the great conductor Fritz Reiner. He won a number of awards, including the Prix de Rome in 1935. The next spring he rented a cottage outside Salzburg, an idyllic setting which inspired his string quartet in B minor, the slow movement of which almost immediately won separate fame as the Adagio for Strings after Barber arranged it for string orchestra at the request of Arturo Toscanini.

Its wonderfully effective lay-out shows fine understanding of the string medium. The skill with which its gently winding main theme passes from one voice to another, its solemn serenity rising to a pitch of grief before its hushed disappearance displays true mastery. The Adagio remains the composer's most celebrated piece and is one of the best known and frequently played works by any American composer.

J Bell

INTERVAL

Symphony No. 9 in E minor ("From the New World"), Op. 95

Antonin Dvořák
(1841 - 1904)

Adagio - Allegro molto
Largo
Molto vivace
Allegro con fuoco

This last and most popular of Dvořák's symphonies was the outcome of his visit to America at the invitation of Mrs Thurber, the wife of a wealthy New York grocer who had decided that America should have a Conservatory of Music based on the European pattern, and had promptly founded one. She also thought that it should have a European director, and two names were suggested to her. These were Dvořák, who at that time was 50 and had a considerable European reputation, at that time holding the post Professor of Composition at the Prague Conservatory, and Sibelius who was 32 and less well known. She chose to invite Dvořák, who accepted the post and a huge pay rise into the bargain, he and his family arriving in New York in September 1892.

The symphony number 9 was the first of Dvořák's compositions to be written wholly in America, the first themes being sketched in December 1892, completed the following May and premiered by Anton Seidel at a New York Philharmonic Society concert in December 1893. The symphony, Cello concerto and "American" string quartet were all written during his time in America, each work combining the exciting influences of the Negro spirituals of the "New world" and the native Slavonic folk tunes of his home land in Bohemia.

The hesitant Adagio opening of the symphony, briefly hinting at what is to come later precedes the first main allegro molto theme which is one of those which have suggested negroid origin. A later theme, played initially by the flute bears a distinct similarity to "Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home", the familiar spiritual, but this and other themes are developed in a vigorous, exciting and often dramatic fashion that could only be of Slavonic inspiration. The movement ends with a brilliant coda, built mainly on the principal theme.

The largo is a supremely beautiful movement which was described as *Legend* in the original sketch and was inspired by the verses in Longfellow's poem describing Minnehaha's death and her burial in the forest. Some glorious harmonies precede the haunting theme played by the cor anglais, the beauty and pathos of which are enhanced when it reappears at the end of the movement, after a livelier episode in which the woodwind have a passage suggestive of the dancing flight of birds or insects and a menacing reference to a theme of the first movement. This movement is the most pointed in painting a picture of Dvořák's homesickness and loneliness while in America.

Dvořák is said to have returned to Longfellow again for the molto vivace scherzo, and found inspiration from the theme in Hiawatha's Wedding Feast where the Indians dance. There is again a reference to the principal theme of the first movement in the scherzo, this time to introduce the trio.

The finale opens fortissimo with an energetic nine bar subject given to the horns and trumpets. A second theme is first heard on the clarinet and in the development section, both the cor anglais tune of the second movement and the opening phrase of the scherzo are recalled, but it is the nine bar theme which dominates. It is an almost uninterruptedly genial movement which is brought to a positively riotous conclusion with the reinstatement of the nine bar theme combined with the principal melody of the first movement.

Programme note by J Bell with edited extracts supplied through the Programme Note Bank of The National Federation of Music Societies.

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

Ros Rayner
Jessica Barnett
Barbara Bostock
Liz Javlonksi
Richard Lane
Jenny Lewis
David Smith

Violin 2

Jo Jordan
Michael Clements
Margaret Myatt
Rhiannon Taylor
Alison Thomas
Philip Ward
Monica Woodall

Viola

David Cope
Alain Anderton
Rory Freckleton
Philip Turley
Jenny Wyatt

Cello

Louise Lawrie
Jo Bell
Margaret Bell
Gaynor Devereaux
Tim Forster
Rachel Hyde
Sheila Moore
Alain Mumberson
Julie Robertson

Double Bass

Jo Hughes
Robert Crawford
Ron Large

Flutes

Diana Manasseh
Heather Lancaster

Oboes

Richard Anderson
Rachel Orotayo

Cor Anglais

Richard Anderson

Clarinets

Diana Cotterell
Lynn Curtis

Bassoons

Jill Sparke
Doug Servant

Horns

Percy Cotterell
Robin Hopper
Eric Large
Sara Robertshaw

Trumpets

Tony Bayliss
Chris Jordan

Trombones

Laurence Hopper
John Barnett

Bass Trombone

Don Howard

Timpani

Malcolm Peters

Percussion

Rachel Hyde

Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra is a registered charity, number 1040991 and is a member of the National Federation of Music Societies.

OUR NEXT CONCERT

Khachaturian : Masquerade Suite
Arutiunian : Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra
Tchaikovsky : Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36.

Soloist : Trevor Jones

St. Mary's Church, Albrighton

7.30 pm, Saturday 18th November 2000



Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra
is affiliated to the
National Federation of Music Societies
which represents and supports
amateur vocal, instrumental and
promoting services throughout the
United Kingdom.

For more details of the orchestra, visit our website at <http://listen.to/wso>
Tell us your views, e-mail us at wolsymorc@hotmail.com