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PROGRAMME



Wolverhampton
Symphony
Orchestra



WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONCERT
AT
ST. PETER'S CHURCH
WOLVERHAMPTON

SATURDAY 26th JUNE 2004

PROGRAMME

Mozart Overture *The Magic Flute*

Elgar Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma)

INTERVAL

Mahler Symphony No. 1 in D Major

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 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, 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

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by the members. It is also affiliated to the National Federation of Music Societies.

Peter Morris

Peter Morris lives in Wolverhampton and is the founder conductor of Junction 10 Orchestra. He 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 - 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 for 27 years, is Director of the National Schools Symphony Orchestra, Borough Organist for Walsall, Acting Director of Music at St. Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton and Chair of the Lichfield Diocese for the Royal School of Church Music. He is also principal examiner for A-level and GCSE General Studies and an A-level Music examiner. In 2000/1 he was awarded the medaille d'honneur of the French National Association of Music and a Master's degree at Keele University.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Overture - The Magic Flute

The Magic Flute was first performed two months before Mozart's death. Prince Tamino, having fallen in love with a picture of Pamina, daughter of the Queen of Night, attempts to rescue her from Sarastro, High Priest of Isis and Osiris. He is given a magic flute as protection against evil and his companion, Papageno, a bird-catcher, is given a chime of magic bells. Tamino discovers that Sarastro is wise and good, and the Queen of Night is evil. After passing through several ordeals Tamino and Pamina are united, and Papageno is rewarded with a bride, Papagena.

Sir Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934)

Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma)

Elgar was born on 2nd June 1857 at Broadheath near Worcester. His father was a piano tuner who owned a music shop in Worcester. The young Elgar studied the music available in his father's shop and taught himself to play several instruments. He was very largely self-taught as a composer and it was many years before his status as a composer of international repute was recognised.

His experience grew throughout the 1880s and 1890s and his style matured as he composed for and conducted local musical organisations. During this time he also taught violin and played the organ at St. George's Roman Catholic Church in Worcester.

In 1889 he married one of his pupils, Caroline Alice Roberts, who was to play a vital part in the development of Elgar's career. When she died in 1920 much of Elgar's inspiration and will to compose died with her. She had saved him hours of drudgery, preparing manuscript paper for him, walking miles in all weathers to post parcels of manuscripts and proofs, and she never lost faith in him - indeed she had been the driving force behind his genius.

The 'Enigma' Variations were first performed on 19th June, 1899. They were written a year earlier. Elgar was relaxing and improvising at the piano following a strenuous day's teaching when his wife suddenly asked what he was playing. "Nothing," said Elgar, "but something might be made of it!" He improvised a few impromptu 'variations' to suggest the mannerisms of some friends of theirs - a characteristic laugh, a slight stammer, an attempt to play the piano, a way of moving around a room and leaving it with a slam of the door.

The fourteen variations are:

1 C.A.E. (Caroline Alice Elgar - the composer's wife)



The opening Variation is of Elgar's wife Alice, who was possibly the person who most encouraged him throughout his years of musical composition. Certainly she smoothed his path and enabled him to concentrate on his work. At the time of composition of the Enigma Variations she had had faith in him even though success and greatness for which he is now known was still around the corner.



2 H.D.S.-P. (Hew David Stuart-Powell)

Hew Stuart-Powell was a friend at a time when Elgar used to play in small orchestras and ensembles in the Worcester area. Stuart-Powell was a pianist and would 'warm-up' before a performance with a few finger-loosening exercises - a practice which is referred to in this Variation.

3 R.B.T. (Richard Baxter Townsend)

Baxter Townsend was an old friend of the Elgars with rather eccentric habits. He is described as having a brick-red weather-beaten face, bright blue eyes and a shock of grey hair. He was from Oxford where he used to ride around on a tricycle but, being slightly deaf, had invented a device which was attached to his tricycle and which would continuously ring a bell to warn other road-users of his approach.



He had been in his time a classical scholar at Cambridge, cattle rancher and gold prospector in Texas and Colorado, first-class rifle shot and author of a number of books. He also had a very high-pitched speaking voice, parodied in the Variation.

4 W.M.B. (William Meath Baker)



William Meath Baker - nicknamed 'The Squire' by the Elgars - was noted for being an excellent host with a penchant for arranging the timetable for the day. Characteristic - and the feature illustrated in this Variation - is his bustling manner and his way of slamming the door as he left the room.

5 R.P.A. (Richard Penrose Arnold)



Richard Penrose Arnold has been described as 'literary, interesting, and amusing' - like Meath Baker, an excellent host, though altogether of a quieter disposition. His characteristic nervous laugh - 'HA-ha-ha, ha-ha-HA-ha-ha!' - can be heard depicted in the woodwind.

6 **YSOBEL** (Isabel Fitton)



The Fittons were a well-known Worcestershire family who were very interested in the music of the area. Isabel was a keen viola player and had been having some coaching from Elgar. A difficult exercise for beginners is 'crossing the strings' and this Variation makes much play of this.

7 **TROYTE** (Arthur Troyte Griffith)



Troyte Griffith was a Malvern architect who tried - but failed - to play the piano. This was Elgar's explanation for the idea behind this Variation. Other interpreters have suggested that the Variation depicts a set of nine-pins (skittles) being knocked down as 'nine-pin' was Troyte's nickname owing to the outline of his silhouette. Troyte himself was of the opinion that the music relates to the time that he and Elgar were caught out in a thunderstorm and had to run for shelter.

8 **W.N.** (Winifred Norbury)



Winifred Norbury was a close neighbour of Elgar and, being an excellent pianist, would often help him try out new musical ideas, she on the piano and he on the violin.

9 **NIMROD** (August Johannes Jaeger)



Jaeger was a great friend whose faith in Elgar often encouraged the composer to continue at times when he doubted his own talents. Jaeger was a music editor for the publisher, Novello, and his critical mind was invaluable to Elgar whilst sketching out his music. 'Nimrod', the mythical hunter, was chosen because 'Jaeger' is German for hunter.

10 **DORABELLA** (Dora Penny)



Dora Penny - nicknamed 'Dorabella' after the character from Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* was a long and close friend of

Elgar's. Her memories of her friendship with him are recalled in her book 'Edward Elgar, Memories of a Variation' which was published under her married name of Mrs. Richard Powell.

11 **G.R.S.** (George Robertson Sinclair)

Sinclair was organist at Hereford Cathedral and was owner of a bull dog, Dan. The photograph shows Sinclair (seated left) with Dan and Elgar (seated right). Sinclair asked Elgar to set to music the following incident. One day Dan fell down a steep bank into the river Wye (bar 1). He paddled upstream to find a landing place (bars 2 and 3). The second half of bar 5 depicts his rejoicing bark on landing. Also contained in the Variation is a passage which illustrates Sinclair's style of playing a pedal passage on the organ.



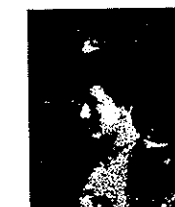
12 **B.G.N.** (Basil G. Nevinson)



In Elgar's younger days, Nevinson was a cellist in the same trio as the pianist H.D. Steuart-Powell (Variation 2) with Elgar as violinist. The Variation is written with a beautiful solo passage for cello.

13 ***** (???)**

No name was ever publicly given to this Variation. The name of Lady Mary Lygon has long been suggested and Elgar himself had supported that idea. But Lady Mary was not a close friend of the Elgars and the nature of the music certainly seems to suggest something more passionate than that of a casual acquaintance! More recently, the name of Helen Weaver has been suggested as a much more likely candidate. Helen Weaver was a former fiancée of Elgar's who broke the engagement (possibly in part due to a difference of religion) and who emigrated to New Zealand.



14 **E.D.U.** (Elgar himself)

The heading 'E.D.U.' refers to Alice's pet name for Elgar - 'Edoo'. This finale completes the Variations and finishes the whole work with style.



Gustav Mahler (1860 - 1911)

Symphony No. 1 in D Major

1. Langsam. Schleppend. *Wie ein Naturalaut*
2. Scherzo. Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell
3. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen
4. Sturmisch Beweget

Born in Bohemia, Mahler was the son of a Jewish publican who, although he was coarse and brutal, recognized and encouraged Gustav's talents. He studied piano and theory at the Vienna Conservatory from the age of fifteen, and after serving his apprenticeship as an opera conductor eventually became director of the Vienna State Opera in 1897. In 1907 he went to the United States and conducted the New York Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. In 1911 he was forced to return to Europe due to failing health and died in Vienna.

Mahler's first symphony, completed in 1888, is autobiographical music. In the first and third movements he uses themes from his song-cycle of 1885, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer). The songs were written following a passionate but unhappy love affair with Johanna Richter, a singer with the Kassel Opera of which Mahler was conductor at the time. Mahler himself is the 'wayfarer' of the title - a jilted lover seeking release from his despair in solitary wandering.

The first symphony falls into two distinct halves. The two opening movements are in optimistic vein. The introduction to the first depicts dawn, and contains the motto of the work, a descending fourth "like a sound from nature". The main theme is taken from the second of Mahler's Wayfarer songs, "*Ging heut morgen übers Feld*".

The second movement depicts a rustic celebration on a village green. The first section has the character of a Ländler, with yodelling figures in

the melody and a stamping bass. This contrasts with the middle section *Trio*, a pastoral idyll in waltz time.

The inspiration for the third movement is reputed to have come from a well-known woodcut, *The Hunter's Funeral Procession*, by the Austrian Moritz von Schwind. It opens with a round in minor on the song *Frère Jacques* and introduces a passage from the last of the *Wayfarer* songs "*Auf der Strasse steht ein Lindenbaum*".

The final movement, in which violent struggle predominates, follows without a break. Mahler likened the dissonant chord at the very beginning to a flash of lightning from a dark cloud. It is the cry of a deeply wounded heart. The movement is predominantly in F minor, but on reaching D major we sense the eventual triumphant outcome. The symphony closes with a glorious apotheosis of the motto theme on the horns.

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

Ros Rayner
Sophie Anderton
Barbara Bostock
David Harvey
Jo Jordan
Rhiannon Taylor
Sarah Wynne

Flute

Diana Manasseh
Kate Baker
Jane Eminson
Louisa Mills

Horn

Nicky Daw
Percy Cotterell
Simon Hall
Edna Harman
Robin Hopper
Christina Venables
Richard Waring
Hazel Whitefoot

Violin 2

Teri Bethel
Jenny Bailey
Ken Hawkins
Fabienne Milhavy
Margaret Myatt
Charlotte Round
Frances Walton
Philip Ward

Oboe

Richard Anderson
Rachel Orotayo
Tony Evans

Trumpet

Frank Stubbs
Chris Cumming
Anthony Pepper
John Saunders

Cor Anglais

Tony Evans

Viola

David Cope
Alain Anderton
Philip Turley

Clarinet

Di Cotterell
Lynn Curtis
Graham Hobbs
Charlotte Round

Trombone

Laurence Hopper
Stuart Woodhams

Bass Trombone

Don Howard

Cello

Jo Stubbs
Margaret Bell
Glyn Davies
Tim Forster
Sheila Moore
Julie Robertson

Bassoon

Jill Sparke
Doug Servant

Tuba

Becky Heywood

Timpani

Debbi Childs

Double Bass

John Mason
Oliver Bouckley
Jenny Morris
David Taylor

Percussion

Tom Peverelle
Vikki Brown
James Souter

Harp

Stephanie Roberts

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA 2004 – 2005

20th November 2004, St. Mary's Church, Albrighton
Berlioz – *Symphonie Fantastique*
Strauss – *Horn Concerto No. 1*
Shostakovich – *Excerpts from "The Gadfly" Suite*

5th March 2005, Centre Stage, Graisleigh, Wolverhampton
Beethoven – *Overture Leonora No. 3*
Beethoven – *Piano Concerto No. 3*
Beethoven – *Symphony No. 6 (Pastoral)*

2nd July 2005, Histons Hill, Codsall
Gershwin – *Rhapsody in Blue*
Bernstein – *Symphonic Dances from "West Side Story"*
Gershwin – *An American in Paris*
Barber – *Adagio for Strings*
Copland – *Clarinet Concerto*

(Please note that the above details are provisional)



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