

PROGRAMME



**Wolverhampton
Symphony
Orchestra**



**Making
Music**
THE NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF MUSIC SOCIETIES

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA 121

CONCERT
AT
ST MARY'S CHURCH,
ALBRIGHTON

SATURDAY 12th November 2005

PROGRAMME

Richard Wagner

*Overture to Die Meistersinger von
Nordberg*

Igor Stravinsky

Punchinello Suite

INTERVAL

Johannes Brahms

Symphony No 4 in E minor

Conductor - Peter Morris
Leader - Ros Rayners

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.

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

Peter Morris

Peter Morris 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 Borough Organist at Walsall Town Hall, Director of Music at St. Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton and the founder conductor of Junction 10 Orchestra. He is also principal examiner for A-level and GCSE General Studies and an A-level Music examiner. In 2000-2001 he was awarded the medaille d'honneur of the French National Association of Music and a Master's degree at Keele University. He lives in Wolverhampton.

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Overture to Die Meistersinger von Nordberg

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Wagner's opera, Die Meistersinger von Nordberg, was written between 1862 and 1867, but it is clear that Wagner had crystallized the themes for the opera well before it was completed. The overture, which contains the main themes from the opera, was finished long before the opera and was played several times by itself in concerts.

Wagner uses short, significant themes in his operas to represent persons or ideas. These are often referred to as 'leitmotifs'. He uses many of them in 'The Mastersingers', often combined with longer themes such as Walther's 'Prize Song'.

The overture opens with a magnificent statement of the 'Mastersingers' main theme. A second theme known as the 'Lyric Motive' is heard next. This leads into two march like tunes. A theme known as the 'Longing Motive' leads on to the other main theme in the work: the 'Prize Song'. After a succession of other motives the 'Prize Song', 'Mastersingers Theme' and one of the 'March' themes combine, and build to a tremendous finale in which all the vast orchestration is exploited. Die Meistersinger was Wagner's penultimate music drama, and his only excursion into the realms of comedy.

Igor Stravinsky (1882 - 1971)

Pulcinella Suite

1. *Sinfonia (Overture)*
2. *Serenata*
3. *Scherzino*
4. *Tarantella*
5. *Toccata*
6. *Gavotta & Variazione*
7. *Vivo*
8. *Minuetto & Finale*

In 1919 Sergei Diaghilev, the impresario of the Ballets Russes whose collaborations with Stravinsky, including *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring*, had brought the composer to international prominence, approached him with a new project: a ballet based on music by the eighteenth-century composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, with set designs by Pablo Picasso. The ballet would be based on the characters of the sixteenth-century commedia dell'arte, then enjoying a considerable vogue. Even if the musical and theatrical materials were themselves separated by a gulf of some two hundred years, the deliberately archaic musical style would nevertheless help audiences appreciate the even older stage tradition.

Picasso's contribution to the project turned out to be minimal in the end, and Stravinsky himself was, in fact, a late arrival to it - Diaghilev had originally contracted Ottorino Respighi to do the re-orchestration. After Respighi's withdrawal, Diaghilev presented Stravinsky with a collection of eighteenth-century pieces attributed to Pergolesi (it has since been discovered that much of this music was actually composed by Pergolesi's contemporary Domenico Gallo). Far from substantially recomposing the music, Stravinsky approached the material with a light hand, scoring the ballet for a scaled-down orchestra that nicely mimics the clarity of the pre-Classical style. Twentieth-century effects emerge from the musical texture largely in the form of witty incongruities, such as a slightly overripe instrumental combination, an unlikely dissonance or a strangely distended harmony. On at least one occasion, the commedia dell'arte atmosphere openly invades the music in the form of a slapstick duet between trombone and double bass.

In 1922 Stravinsky made a suite for chamber orchestra from the ballet which he revised in 1947, and it is this version of *Pulcinella* that we shall perform tonight.

INTERVAL

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

Symphony No 4 in E minor

1. *Allegro non troppo*
2. *Andante moderato*
3. *Allegro giocoso*
4. *Allegro energico e passionato*

We often think of Brahms as a composer of symphonies, but in fact, he had passed the age of forty before he completed a single such work. His First Symphony had been on the drawing board for some twenty years. The delay was not caused by a lack of industry, but rather by well-justified caution. During Brahms' lifetime, anyone who tried to write a symphony would inevitably be compared with Beethoven, and Brahms wanted to ensure that he was quite ready to face that sort of criticism. Even once he felt up to the challenge of symphonies, he was not prolific in the field. He completed only four symphonies in a ten-year period before turning away from the genre forever.

His Fourth Symphony was begun in the summer of 1884 while Brahms was on holiday in the town of Mürzzuschlag in Styria. Although Brahms often spent years working on the manuscripts of his larger works, this new symphony progressed rather quickly, and was completed during the following summer's holiday. Brahms himself conducted the work's premiere on October 25, 1885, in Meiningen, home of one of Germany's finest orchestras. At that time, the work was well received, but its Viennese reception was more mixed. On hearing Brahms and a friend perform a two-piano reduction of the score, the famed critic Eduard Hanslick remarked, "I had the feeling that two enormously clever people were cudgeling one another." Later he softened the blow by saying, "it is like a dark well; the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine back."

Like Hanslick, the Viennese people gradually came to appreciate the work, which would ultimately serve as their farewell to the master composer. The Fourth Symphony was included on a concert given on the 7th May 1897, Brahms' sixty-fourth birthday. The composer was in attendance, but did not conduct, for he was already terminally ill. But he witnessed the magnificent ovation at the concert's conclusion, and managed to emerge from his theatre box long enough to acknowledge the audience's appreciation. Within a month, Brahms had died. His own Fourth Symphony was the last symphony he ever heard.

Brahms' Fourth Symphony had been swiftly recognised as a masterpiece, and it now stands as one of the great bastions of the concert repertoire. A work of massive authority, its opening sets the temper of what is to come: "No one experienced in great music," wrote Donald Tovey of the first movement, "could fail to see that the long, quiet opening sentence is the beginning of a great and tragic work." The heroic gestures of the Allegro non troppo are succeeded by an Andante in Brahms's most tenderly reflective vein, but the third movement comes as a sharp contrast. It was actually written after the first three, and is a forceful and jubilant movement given a brilliant glitter by the addition of piccolo and triangle. The audience at the first performance did their best to get an encore, but Brahms refused. Then, what comes afterwards is unlike any other of Brahms's symphonic movements, a sombre eight-bar Passacaglia, the theme being announced by the wind section, and on which he proceeds to construct 32 variations, with a coda. The movement rises to a passionate climax: as Tovey said, the symphony is "one of the rarest things in classical music, a symphony which ends tragically."

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

Ros Rayner (*Leader*)
 Anthonia Boden
 Jonathan Harper
 David Harvey
 Jo Jordan
 Vanessa Owen
 Rhiannon Taylor
 Sarah Wynne

Violin 2

Jenny Bailey
 Sonia Clough
 Ken Hawkins
 Kate Lorimer
 Fabienne McAlister
 Margaret Myatt
 David Naylor
 Ann Perry
 Charlotte Round
 Philip Ward
 Corinne Wright

Viola

Alain Anderton
 Sharon Bayley
 David Cope
 LaToya Rose
 Philip Turley
 Simon Twyford

Cello

Margaret Bell
 Rosie Evans
 Tim Forster
 Roger Hidés
 Sheila Moore
 Julie Robertson

Double Bass

Oliver Bouckley
 David Charlesworth
 Robert Crawford
 David Taylor

Flute

Di Manasseh
 Kathryn Russon

Oboe

Richard Anderton
 Rachel Orotayo

Clarinet

Di Cotterell
 Lynn Curtis

Bassoon

Jill Sparke
 Douglas Servant

Contrabassoon

Mike Darke

Horns

Percy Cotterell
 Robin Hopper
 Sara Shepherd
 Jill Brittle

Trumpets

Chris Cumming
 Jenny Bourgeois
 Gail Bussey

Trombones

Laurence Hopper
 Joe Cooper

Bass Trombone

Mark Wilkes

Tuba

Joe Barnett

Timpani

Debbie Childs

Percussion

Michael Cotton

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

OUR FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

26th November 2005

New Road Methodist Church, Stourbridge

A chamber concert featuring works by Mozart, Gounod, R. Strauss,
Gustav Holst, Carl Davis and others

18th March 2006,

Cranmer Methodist Church, Newhampton Road, Wolverhampton

Moussorgsky (arr. Rimsky Korsakov) – *Night on a Bare Mountain*

Rachmaninov – *Variations on a Theme of Paganini for Piano and Orchestra*

Shostakovich – *Symphony No. 1*

8th July 2006, St. John's, Wolverhampton

Rimsky Korsakov – *Capriccio Espagnol*

Schumann – *Conzertstück for Four Horns*

Elgar – *Wand of Youth Suite*

John McCabe – *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe Suite*

(Please note that the above details are provisional)



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