

17/11/07.

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PROGRAMME



**Wolverhampton
Symphony
Orchestra**



WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONCERT
AT
SAINT MARY'S CHURCH
ALBRIGHTON

SATURDAY 17th November 2007

PROGRAMME

Mendelssohn

Overture "The Hebrides"

Prokofiev

*Symphony No 1 in D Major, Op. 25
(the "Classical Symphony")*

INTERVAL

Beethoven

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

Conductor - Peter Morris
Leader - Ros Rayner

Solo Violin - Rhys Watkins

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 to 55 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 extends 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). Recently, in addition to its normal programme of full orchestral concerts, the orchestra has performed a number of chamber concerts

where groups of players from the orchestra have performed works in a more informal lighter vein, and most recently, has presented a "Last Night of the Proms" style concert with Walsall Choral Society in Walsall Town Hall.

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 Making Music (formerly the National Federation of Music Societies).

Peter Morris

Peter Morris, who has been our Musical Director since 2004, 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 until 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 since 1977, is Borough Organist at Walsall Town Hall, Director of Music at St. Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton and was the founder conductor of the former 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.

Ros Rayner – Leader

Ros studied the violin at the Royal Academy of Music. Whilst there she joined the British Youth Symphony Orchestra. Following her PGCE she taught in Bracknell for four years. She moved to Wolverhampton and was appointed leader of the Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra ten years ago. She now teaches at the Wolverhampton Girls' High School, and tutors the first violins in the Wolverhampton Youth Orchestra.

Rhys Watkins – Solo Violin

Born in Cardiff, Rhys began playing the violin at the age of 5. At the age of 16, he won a scholarship to study at Chetham's School of Music with Professor When Zhou Li and while there was awarded the Mozart Violin Prize for most promising young violinist. In 2000, he entered the Royal Academy of Music, graduating in 2004 with a First Class Honours degree.

He is currently studying with Mateja Marenkovic in London as well as working regularly with the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Recently he was a semi-finalist in the 4th Paganini International Violin Competition in Moscow and a finalist and laureate of the Jeunesses Musicales International Violin Competition in Belgrade (2006).

Rhys enjoys an active music career in Wales leading several orchestras including the Welsh National Youth Opera, Symphonica Towi, Sinphonia Cymru and the St. David's Chamber Orchestra. He has performed concertos with many orchestras including the Belgrade Radio Symphony Orchestra, English Mozart Ensemble and the St. David's Chamber Orchestra.

Rhys plays on an 18th century violin by Lorenzo Storioni.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Overture "The Hebrides" (Fingal's Cave), Opus 26 (1830)

Mendelssohn's first visit to Britain took him to Scotland, where he visited the Hebrides islands during one stormy night and came to the island of Staffa. It was here that he was inspired by Fingal's Cave, a popular tourist attraction. He immediately wrote down what would become the opening theme of the overture, and wrote to his sister, Fanny Mendelssohn: "In order to make you understand how extraordinary The Hebrides affected me, I send you the following, which came into my head there."

The work was completed on December 16, 1830 and was originally entitled *Die einsame Insel*, or *The Lonely Island*. It was premiered on May 14, 1832 in London. However, he later revised the score, completing it by June 20, 1832, and retitled the music *Die Hebriden*, or *The Hebrides*. Despite this, the title of *Fingal's Cave* was also used.

The music, though labelled as an overture, is intended to stand as a complete work. It does not tell a story and is therefore not programmatic. Instead, the piece depicts a mood and "sets a scene", one of the first such musical pieces to do so. The overture consists of two primary themes; the opening notes state the theme that Mendelssohn wrote while visiting the cave, and is played initially by the violas, cellos, and bassoons. This lyrical theme, suggestive of the power and stunning beauty of the cave, is intended to develop feelings of loneliness and solitude. The second theme, meanwhile, depicts movement at sea and "rolling waves". The overture uses a standard form, and has a coda at the end, where the piece recapitulates to the original theme.

Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Symphony No 1 in D Major, Opus 25 (the "Classical Symphony")

1. *Allegro*
2. *Larghetto*
3. *Gavotta - Non troppo allegro*
4. *Finale - Molto vivace*

Prokofiev's music is often described as mischievous, mocking, sarcastic, satirical, and ironic. At the beginning of his career, his work was widely criticized for these characteristics. His early works, notably *The Gambler* (an opera), and *Scythian Suite*, were labeled as "futuristic," because of their innovative harmonies. Medtner, a respected composer and fellow Russian, said of the *Scythian Suite*: "if that is music then I am not a musician."

The *Classical Symphony*, composed in 1916-1917, while Prokofiev was on holiday in the country, may have been written as a sarcastic response to Medtner. It was the first significant composition Prokofiev wrote without using the piano. (As an accomplished pianist it is understandable that he had developed a habit of composing at the keyboard).

In the *Classical Symphony*, Prokofiev sets out to emulate Joseph Haydn's composing style, an idea partly inspired by Prokofiev's conducting studies at the Conservatory, in which the instructor, Teneev, prepared his students to conduct Haydn. In the words of Prokofiev, the *Classical Symphony* is "as Haydn might have written it, had he lived in our day." The symphony is called "classical" because it was written using the musical idiom and orchestration of an eighteenth-century symphony. Yet it is neither dry nor studied. Indeed, it has become one of Prokofiev's most popular and accessible works,

and several themes have been used as television background music.

There are four short movements: a lively opening *allegro* followed by a very sedate *larghetto* in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The third movement, a *gavotta*, is brisk but stately in style, while the finale is a very lively *vivace*. The symphony is scored for a classical period orchestra consisting of 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

INTERVAL

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Violin Concerto in D Major, Opus 61

1. *Allegro ma non troppo*
2. *Larghetto*
3. *Rondo - Allegro*

Beethoven's Violin Concerto was written in 1806 and premiered on December 23 of that year in Vienna. Beethoven wrote the concerto for his colleague Franz Clement, a leading violinist of the day, who had earlier given him helpful advice on his opera *Fidelio*. The occasion was a benefit concert for Clement. It is believed that Beethoven finished the solo part so late that Clement had to sight-read part of his performance. Perhaps to express his annoyance, or to show what he could do when he had time to prepare, Clement interrupted the concerto between the first and second movements with a solo composition of his own, played on one string of the violin held upside down. The premiere was not a success, and the concerto was little performed in the following decades. The work was revived in the 1840s, well after Beethoven's death, with performances by the violinist Joseph Joachim with the orchestra led by Felix Mendelssohn. Ever since, it has been one of the most important

works of the violin concerto repertoire, and it is frequently performed and recorded today.

The opening of the first movement is immediately arresting: four soft drum beats that serve to introduce a gentle, curving tune played by oboes, clarinets and bassoons - four beats that are to prove as vital to the construction of the movement as they are remarkable in their first context. Separated from the opening theme by an important transitional passage based on an ascending scale, and by a short *tutti*, but still in the tonic key, is the second subject, a tune that is similar to the first in outline as well as in instrumentation (and which is underlined by the same four beats) but which soon breaks off into the minor. The soloist enters with a brief cadenza *in tempo* and continues by elaborating, with the orchestra, the material already presented. A long *tutti* concludes the exposition, after which the solo instrument introduces the development with a cadenza similar to that marking its first entry. The next section is of astonishing originality, for it is not in any sense a development section that (as in several Mozart piano concertos, for instance) gives the soloist an opportunity to show his paces, the prevailing mood is subdued, not to say sombre. The first part is devoted to the two initial bars of the first subject, against which the solo violin plays a counterpoint in triplet arpeggios; the second introduces a beautiful new theme in G minor, high up on the violin, from which a short semiquaver figure is retained and developed by the soloist until it is formed into a link with the recapitulation. Underlying the whole passage, with its dark orchestral colouring of strings reinforced by bassoons, horns, trumpets and drums in turn, is the pervasive four-beat figure of the opening. After the recapitulation the order of events corresponds to that of the exposition, except that the violin takes an active part from the start.

The design of the slow movement (in G major) is extremely simple: in essence it is a series of variations that have a point of repose in a short central episode. The theme itself is stated first by the muted strings, and then repeated three times by woodwinds (in this movement reduced to clarinets, bassoons and horns) and strings in combination, while the violin weaves the most exquisite tracery above it. The "episode" introduces a new theme on the violin (using the two lower strings) that is nevertheless related to - and in a sense the distilled essence of - the principal theme. The latter is then resumed and varied once more before a powerful summons on the orchestral strings, now *senza sordini*, prepares the ground for the last movement, a rondo based on one of the happiest tunes ever written. This jaunty theme is introduced straight away by the soloist, repeated two octaves higher and then taken over by the orchestra. The first episode starts on the dominant, and opens with a humorous staccato passage for horns and woodwinds, and a bold two-bar exclamation from the full orchestra that starts the violin off on a long series of brilliant runs. The second, development, episode introduces a haunting tune in G minor high up on the violin, which is quickly appropriated by the first bassoon and decorated by the soloist. The third episode (recapitulation) presents the material of the first episode in rather different form. The violinist is given an opportunity to insert a cadenza towards the end, but the solo part continues after it until the very last bar of the concerto.

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

Ros Rayner (*Leader*)
Francis Bunch
Barbara Carter
Louise Craig
Anne Forster
Charlotte Greaves
Jonathan Harper
David Harvey
Jo Jordan
Kate Lorimer
Vanessa O'Reilly
Alice Rayner
Sarah Wynne

Violin 2

Jenny Bailey
James Hamilton
Ken Hawkins
Hilary Hurd
Fabienne McAllister
Margaret Myatt
David Naylor
Anne Perry
Ruth Pickles
Philip Ward
Sarah Wilson
Corinne Wright

Violas

Alain Anderton
Elisabeth Barratt
Sharon Bayley
Aimee Bryett
David Cope
Philip Turley

'Cellos

Margaret Bell
Rosie Evans
Tim Forster
Roger Hides
Sheila Moore
Julie Robertson
Kenneth Wilson
Helen Woolley

Double Basses

Dianne Baker
David Charlesworth
Robert Crawford

Flutes

Di Manasseh
Kathryn Russon

Oboes

Richard Anderson
Rachel Orotayo

Clarinets

Di Cotterell
Lynn Curtis

Bassoons

Jill Sparke
Jan Riley

Horns

Sara Shepherd
Robin Hopper
Percy Cotterell
Jill Brittle

Trumpets

Chris Cumming
Jenny Holt

Timpani

Stephanie Jones

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

OUR NEXT TWO CONCERTS

*8th March 2008 at 7.30 pm - St. Peter's Collegiate
Church, Wolverhampton*

Weber - Overture "Der Freischütz"

William Lloyd Webber - Serenade for Strings

*Joe Cooper - "The Wanderer", a Fantasia for
Orchestra (conducted by the composer)*

Dvorak - Symphony No. 7 in D Minor

*21st June 2008 at 7.30 pm - Cranmer Methodist Church,
Newhampton Road West, Wolverhampton*

Schubert - Rosamunde Overture

*Dvorak - Cello Concerto in B Minor (Soloist -
Edward Smith)*

Berwald - Sinfonie Singulière

(All details above are subject to change)