

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONCERT
AT
CRANMER METHODIST CHURCH,
WOLVERHAMPTON

SATURDAY 7th March 2009

PROGRAMME

- Berlioz *Overture -' Le Corsair'*
- Dag Wiren *Serenade for Strings*
- Sibelius *Violin Concerto in D minor*

INTERVAL

- Bizet *Symphony in C*

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 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).

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 - Musical Director

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 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.

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 in 1996. She now teaches at the Wolverhampton Girls' High School and tutors the first violins in the Wolverhampton Youth Orchestra.

Rhys Watkins - 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.

Hector Berlioz (1803 - 1869)
Overture – 'Le Corsair'

Berlioz first composed this work in 1844 during a stay in Nice, the second since his stay of 1831 when he had composed the overture to King Lear. He originally gave to the new overture the title of La Tour de Nice. The work was first performed under Berlioz's direction at a concert at the Cirque Olympique on 19 January 1845.

The work was subsequently revised between 1846 and 1851 and acquired its present name (which has no connection with Byron's *The Corsair*, which Berlioz had read in Italy in 1831). It was published in 1852 and dedicated to his friend James Davison. The work follows the form common to all of Berlioz's overtures from *Benvenuto Cellini* onwards: a brief anticipation of the main allegro, followed by the slow introduction, the reflective stillness of which contrasts with the bustling activity of the allegro. The two parts of the overture are unified by the return of the theme of the slow introduction as the second subject of the allegro, but now modified in character (bars 196-255, with its anticipation in bars 174-195, then again in bars 319-345). The brilliant string writing (bars 1-17, 72-88, 266-282) may owe something to the example of Weber, but the overture has an exuberant vitality that is all Berlioz's own. Surprisingly the work, one of Berlioz's most brilliant and popular orchestral pieces, received only very few performances under Berlioz's direction in his lifetime. It received its first performance in Brunswick in April 1854 under Berlioz's direction; it was never performed in Paris in his lifetime, but was frequently played in Europe.

Dag Ivar Wirén (1905 - 1986)
Serenade for Strings

Wirén studied at the Stockholm conservatory from 1926 - 1931, and in 1932 won the state stipend. He used the award money to continue his

studies in Paris, where he remained until 1934. While there, he studied composition under the exiled Russian composer Leonid Sabaneyev, though he admitted later that his endless attendance of concerts, and not his tutoring with Sabaneyev, had the greater impact on his own work.

Upon his return to Sweden, he took up work as a music critic, and composed his first two symphonies. His most famous work is his *Serenade for Strings* (1937), but he also composed 5 symphonies, string quartets, and numerous orchestral pieces and film scores.

Johan Julius Christian Sibelius (1865 – 1957)

Violin Concerto in D minor

1. Allegro moderato
2. Adagio di molto
3. Allegro ma non tanto

Sibelius was a Finnish composer of the later Romantic period whose music played an important role in the formation of the Finnish national identity. Some of his best-known compositions include *Finlandia*, *Valse Triste*, the *violin concerto*, the *Karelia Suite* and *The Swan of Tuonela* (one of the four movements of the *Lemminkäinen Suite*).

Sibelius originally dedicated the concerto to the noted violinist Willy Burmester, who promised to play the concerto in Berlin. For financial reasons, Sibelius decided to premiere the piece in Helsinki, and since Burmester was unavailable to travel to Finland, Sibelius engaged Victor Novacek, a violin teacher at the Helsinki Conservatory. The initial version of the concerto premiered in 1903, with Sibelius conducting. Novacek played poorly and the premiere performance was a disaster. Sibelius withheld this version from publication and made substantial revisions, he deleted much material he felt did not work. The new version premiered in 1905 with Richard Strauss conducting the Berlin

Philharmonic Orchestra. Sibelius was not in attendance. Willy Burmester was again asked to be the soloist, but he was again unavailable, so the performance went ahead without him, the orchestra's leader Karel Halíř stepping into the soloist's shoes. Burmester was so offended that he refused ever to play the concerto, and Sibelius re-dedicated it to the Hungarian "wunderkind" Ferenc von Vecsey, who was aged only 12 at the time. Vecsey championed the Sibelius concerto, first performing it when he was only 13.

One noteworthy feature of the work is the way in which an extended cadenza for the soloist takes on the role of the development section in the sonata form first movement. Much of the violin writing is purely virtuosic, but even the most showy passages alternate with the melodic. This concerto is generally symphonic in scope, departing completely from the often lighter, "rhythmic" accompaniments of many other concertos. The solo violin and all sections of the orchestra have equal voice in the piece.

Although the work has been described as having "broad and depressing" melodies, several brighter moments appear against what is essentially a dark melodic backdrop. The inexorable force that propels the concerto's direction makes it irresistible.

INTERVAL

Georges Bizet (1838 – 1875)

Symphony in C

1. Allegro Vivo
2. Adagio
3. Allegro Vivace

Bizet entered the Paris Conservatory of Music in 1848, a fortnight before his tenth birthday. His first symphony, the *Symphony in C Major*, was written in November 1855, when he was just seventeen, evidently as a student assignment. It was unknown to the world until 1933, when it

was discovered in the archives of the Paris Conservatory library. Upon its first performance in 1935, it was immediately hailed as a junior masterwork and a welcome addition to the early Romantic period repertoire. The symphony is noteworthy for bearing an amazing stylistic resemblance to the first symphony of Charles Gounod, first played earlier in the same year, and which Bizet had arranged for two pianos. Although, present-day listeners may discern a similarity to music of Franz Schubert, whose work was little known in France at the time the symphony was written.

According to Grove's Dictionary, "In quality and craftsmanship it has few rivals and perhaps no superior among the work of composers of such tender years". The symphony is written for a standard orchestra, without trombones. It seems that Bizet had no interest in having it performed or published, although he did use certain material in later works. Bizet's widow gave the manuscript to Reynaldo Hahn, who deposited it in the archives of the Paris Conservatory library, where it was discovered in 1933 by D. C. (Douglas Charles) Parker (1885-1970), Bizet's first British biographer. There is no mention of the work in Bizet's letters, and it was unknown to his earlier biographers. Parker showed the manuscript to Felix Weingartner, who conducted the first performance in Basel, Switzerland on 26 February 1935. It was immediately hailed as a junior masterwork on a par with Felix Mendelssohn's overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, written at about the same age, and a welcome addition to the Romantic repertoire.

Bizet re-used certain motifs from the symphony in later works. The melodic formula of the main theme of the slow movement, played on the oboe, reappears in *Les pêcheurs de perles* (the introduction to Nadir's air "De mon amie") and in the trio of the Minuet from *L'Arlésienne*, in both cases again played by the oboe. The second theme of the finale was re-used in Act I of *Don Procopio*.

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

Ros Rayner (*Leader*)
Francis Bunch
Barbara Carter
Anne Forster
Jo Jordan
Alice Rayner
Sarah Wilson
James Hamilton
Zoe Hunter-Grewal

Violin 2

Corinne Wright
Jenny Bailey
Lucy Clarke
Ann Perry
Fabienne McAllister
Margaret Myatt
Hilary Hurd
David Naylor
Philip Ward
Hilary Hurd
Corinne Walters
Catherine Rayner
Rosie Shuttleworth

Viola

David Cope
Alain Anderton
Elisabeth Barratt
Liz Fleetham
Sharon Bayley

Cello

Julie Robertson
Roger Hides
Margaret Bell
Tim Forster
Sheila Moore
Dan Addison
K Wilson

Double Bass

David Charlesworth
Sarah Tully

Flute

Di Manasseh
Kathryn Russon

Oboe

Richard Anderson
Rachel Orotayo

Clarinet

Di Cotterell
Lynn Curtis

Bassoon

Jill Sparke
Jan Riley

Horns

Sara Shepherd
Robin Hopper
Percy Cotterell
Jill Brittle

Trombones

Lawrence Hopper
Michael Griffiths
Tony Orbell

Tuba

Leonard Hazlehurst

Percussion

Laura Birch

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FURTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Saturday 20th June 2009 at 7.30pm
Codsall Community High School,
Elliotts Lane, Codsall

Vaughan Williams - Overture "The Wasps"
Butterworth - The Banks of Green Willow
Holst - The Perfect Fool
Elgar - Symphony No. 1 in A flat



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

For further details regarding membership or ticket prices,
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or e-mail us at info@wolsymorc.org.uk

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