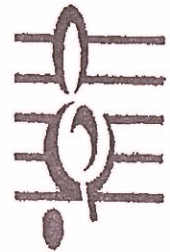


PROGRAMME

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Wolverhampton
Symphony
Orchestra



143.

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**CONCERT AT
CRANMER METHODIST CHURCH,
WOLVERHAMPTON**

Saturday 5th March 2011

PROGRAMME

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| Brahms | Variations on a Theme by Haydn |
| Ravel | Le Tombeau de Couperin |

INTERVAL

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| Beethoven | Symphony No. 4 in B flat major |
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Conductor – Peter Morris

Guest Conductor – Fabian Henning

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 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

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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.

Guest Conductor – Fabian Henning

Fabian Henning, tonight's guest conductor, was born in Berlin, Germany, where he did his Abitur in 2007. Since 2008 he has done teacher training in Halle/Saale, Germany, where he focuses on Music, reading conducting and English. At the moment Fabian is doing his year abroad here in Wolverhampton. He works as a foreign language assistant for the German department at Colton Hills Community School. Apart from his job there, he has become a member of various musical ensembles such as St Peter's Church Choir and Wolverhampton Civic Choir. In his home country Fabian sang in the University of Halle Choir, conducted a women's choir from 2008 to 2010 and led various project choirs at the Institute for Music at Halle University.

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.

Johannes Brahms (7 May 1833 – 3 April 1897)
Variations on a Theme by Haydn
Conducted by Fabian Henning

1. Thema. Chorale St. Antoni. Andante
2. Variation I. Poco più animato (Andante con moto)
3. Variation II. Più vivace (Vivace)
4. Variation III. Con moto
5. Variation IV. Andante con moto (Andante)
6. Variation V. Vivace (Poco presto)
7. Variation VI. Vivace
8. Variation VII. Grazioso
9. Variation VIII. Presto non troppo (Poco presto)
10. Finale. Andante

The Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn, Op. 56a is an orchestral variations work by Johannes Brahms, composed in the summer of 1873. It consists of a theme in B-flat major, eight variations, and a finale. It was published in two versions: for two pianos, written first but designated Op. 56b; and the same piece for orchestra, referred to as Op. 56a. The latter is considered to be "the first set of independent variations for orchestra in the history of music". It is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns (2 in E flat, 2 in B flat), 2 trumpets, timpani, triangle, and the normal string section of first and second violins, violas, cellos and double basses. The first performance of the orchestral version was given on 2 November 1873 by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Brahms' baton.

The theme begins with a repeated ten-bar passage which itself consists of two intriguing five-bar phrases, a quirk that is likely to have caught Brahms' attention. Almost without exception, the eight variations follow the phrasal structure of the theme and, though less strictly, the harmonic structure as well. Each has a distinctive character, several calling to mind the forms and techniques of earlier eras, with some displaying a mastery of counterpoint seldom encountered in Romantic music. The finale is a magnificent passacaglia, itself a theme and variations on a ground bass, five bars in length, derived from the principal theme. Its culmination, a restatement of the chorale, is a moment of such transcendence that the usually austere Brahms permits himself the use of a triangle. Just before the end of the piece, in the coda of the finale, Brahms quotes Haydn. In bars

463-464, the violas and cellos echo the cello line from bar 148 of the second movement of the latter's "Clock" Symphony, one of the finest examples of Haydn's pioneering work in the symphonic variation form.

Joseph-Maurice Ravel (March 7, 1875 – December 28, 1937)
Le Tombeau de Couperin

1. Prelude
2. Forlane
3. Menuet
4. Rigaudon

Le Tombeau de Couperin is a suite for solo piano by Maurice Ravel, composed between 1914 and 1917, in six movements. Each movement is dedicated to the memory of friends of the composer who had died fighting in World War I. Ravel himself was an army driver during the war. While the word-for-word meaning of the title invites the assumption that the suite is a programmatic work, describing what is seen and felt in a visit to the tomb of Couperin, tombeau is actually a musical term popular in the 17th century and meaning "a piece written as a memorial". The specific Couperin (among a family noted as musicians for about two centuries) that Ravel intended to be evoked, along with the friends, would presumably be François Couperin "the Great" (1668-1733). However, Ravel stated that his intention was never to imitate or tribute Couperin himself, but rather was to pay homage to the sensibilities of the Baroque French keyboard suite. This is reflected in the structure which imitates a Baroque dance suite. As a preparatory exercise, Ravel had transcribed a Forlane (an Italian folk dance) from the fourth suite of Couperin's Concerts Royaux, and this piece invokes Ravel's Forlane structurally. However, Ravel's neoclassicism shines through with his pointedly twentieth-century chromatic melody and piquant harmonies.

When criticised for composing a light-hearted, and sometimes reflective work rather than a sombre one, for such a sombre topic, Ravel replied: "The dead are sad enough, in their eternal silence."

In 1919 Ravel orchestrated four movements of the work (Prélude, Forlane, Menuet and Rigaudon), this version was first performed in 1920, and has remained one of his more popular works. Ravel transcribed many of his

piano pieces for orchestra, but here he reaches the height of his orchestration skills, turning a very pianistic piece into a superb orchestral suite with very few hints of its origins. The orchestral version clarifies the harmonic language of the suite and brings sharpness to its classical dance rhythms; among the demands it places on the orchestra is the requirement for an oboe soloist of virtuosic skill. The orchestrated version is scored for two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes (one doubling cor anglais), two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, trumpet, harp, and strings.

INTERVAL

Ludwig van Beethoven (17 December 1770 – 26 March 1827) Symphony No. 4 in B flat major

1. Adagio; Allegro vivace
2. Adagio
3. Allegro molto e vivace; Trio un poco meno allegro
4. Allegro ma non troppo

For today's listener who knows all of Beethoven's symphonies, it takes some historical imagination to appreciate how his contemporaries successively received these new works and how the composer continually challenged their expectations. From our perspective, the legendary brilliance in particular of the Third, Fifth and Ninth symphonies inevitably tends to eclipse the symphonies around them and obscure how novel other works were when they were first performed.

The challenges began with Beethoven's First Symphony, with its "wrong key" opening. The Third, the mighty "Eroica," clearly marked a turning point in Beethoven's compositional development because of its length, complexity, extra-musical program, and aesthetic ambition. People thought: What would — what could — Beethoven do next? One critic from the time offered the following opinion about the Fourth: "That the composer follows an individual path in his works can be seen again in this work; just how far this path is the correct one, and not a deviation, may be decided by others. To me the great master seems here, as in several of his recent works, now and then excessively bizarre, and thus, even for knowledgeable friends of art, easily incomprehensible and forbidding."

Biographical and historical accounts often tend to skip over the Fourth and jump ahead to the famous Fifth. Indeed, Beethoven's Fourth is the least known and performed of all of his symphonies (of course, one of the nine has to be) and would probably turn up even less were it not for the sake of completeness on recordings and in performance cycles.

The relative neglect of the work began in Beethoven's own time. In 1814, when he was at the height of his popular fame and success, a critic for the leading music journal in Europe commented that there were available extended discussions of his works, adding "the master's [Fourth] Symphony in B-flat major has certainly already been briefly and strikingly described several times, but has never been exhaustively reviewed. Does it deserve less than any of the others?" It seems that then, as now, the Fourth was overshadowed. As a perceptive critic remarked in 1811: "On the whole, the work is cheerful, understandable and engaging, and is closer to the composer's justly beloved First and Second symphonies than to the Fifth and Sixth. In the overall inspiration we may place it closer to the Second."

Beethoven wrote the Fourth during the late summer and fall of 1806, while staying in the palace of Count Franz von Oppersdorff in upper Silesia, far away from the bustle of Vienna. The Count employed his own orchestra, which performed the Second Symphony for Beethoven, who soon agreed to write a new symphony for the Count, to whom it was eventually dedicated. The Fourth was premiered at a private concert in the Lobkowitz Palace in Vienna, in March 1807, on a program that also included the first performance of the Fourth Piano Concerto (with the composer at the keyboard) and the Coriolan Overture. There was little published commentary at the time. One of the first reviews, in January 1808, generally praised the Symphony: "The first Allegro is very beautiful, fiery and rich in harmony, and the minuet and trio also have a distinct, original character. In the Adagio, one might sometimes wish that the melody were not so much divided up among the various instruments." By the end of Beethoven's life, once contemporaries were accustomed to how far the composer had expanded the boundaries of music, they viewed the Fourth as classical fare. One critic opined: "There are no words to describe the deep, powerful spirit of this work from his earlier and most beautiful period."

Although Beethoven had not used a slow introduction in the Third Symphony, for the Fourth he returned to one, as he had in his first two symphonies and as were often found in the later symphonies of Haydn, his

former teacher. (The Adagio in this case is particularly similar to Haydn's Symphony No. 102, in the same key.) The kind of feature some critics found "bizarre" was the jabbing dissonances that build up in the introduction before a rousing Allegro vivace, rich with melodies.

The Adagio is an expressive and relaxed rondo in E-flat major. The third movement (Allegro vivace) combines elements of Scherzo and Minuet and has the trio section played twice, which creates a five-part structure instead of the usual three-part form. The Symphony concludes with a dazzling perpetual motion Allegro ma non troppo that nods again to Haydn.

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

Ros Rayner (*Leader*)
Jonathan Harper
Peter Lewis
Jo Jordan
Barbara Carter

Violin 2

Anne Forster
Hilary Hurd
Jenny Bailey
Ken Hawkins
Margaret Myatt
Sam Spilsbury
Zoe Morris
Ella Harold
Philip Ward

Viola

David Cope
Alan Anderton
Liz Fleetham
Anne de Cursay
Sharon Bayley
Rory Freckleton

Cello

Sarah Tulley
Roger Hides
Sheila Moore
Margaret Bell
Tim Forster
Ian Sumner
Jean Waller
Sarah Carter

Double Bass

John Mason
Adam Rouse
Jo Middleton

Flute

Kathryn Russon
Jane Eminson

Oboe

Rachel Orotayo
Richard Anderson

Clarinet

Di Cotterell
Lynn Curtis

Bassoon

Jill Sparke
Jan Riley

Horns

Sara Shepherd
Jill Brittle
Percy Cotterell
Robin Hopper

Trumpets

Chris Cumming
Jenny Holt

Timpani

Peter Rayner

Percussion

Peter Morris (triangle)

Harp

Stephanie Roberts

**WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
FURTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES**

**25th June 2011 – Trinity Methodist Church,
Histons Hill, Codsall, WV8 2ER**

Britten – Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia from Peter
Grimes
Tchaikovsky – Violin Concerto
Respighi – Fountains of Rome

All concerts start at 7.30 pm
Ticket prices for the 2010-2011 season will be £9 and £7 (unwaged),
(All details above are subject to change)



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,
please visit our website at www.wolsymorc.org.uk
or e-mail us at info@wolsymorc.org.uk

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