

Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra

Concert at Cranmer Methodist Church

22nd March

Saturday ~~5th~~ April 2014

Antonin Dvorak American Suite

Johannes Brahms Violin concerto

Interval

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony no 5

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. We have been invited on several occasions to perform major choral works with local choral societies, in 1999 performing Beethoven's Choral Symphony to commemorate our 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, and Rory Freckleton - a 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. We are financed through concert receipts and by an annual subscription paid by the members. We are also affiliated to Making Music (formerly the National Federation of Music Societies).

Recently, in addition to its normal programme of full orchestral concerts, the orchestra has performed a number of smaller concerts in aid of local charities. We are currently exploring, as members of the city's music hub, partnerships with Wolverhampton Music School and the Birmingham Conservatoire.

Peter Morris—Musical director

Peter Morris has conducted the orchestra since 2004. He was a cathedral chorister at Chester and Manchester, went to Chetham's School in Manchester and read music at Durham University.

He was appointed Director of Music at Bluecoat School, Walsall at the age of 22 and subsequently taught at St. Peter's School in Wolverhampton. He conducted Walsall Choral Society for 30 years and in 2000/2001 he was awarded the Medaille d'Honneur of the French National Association of Music and a Master's degree in history at Keele University.

Peter is now Director of Music at St Peter's Collegiate Church, Borough Organist at Walsall Town Hall, Chairman of Wolverhampton's Music Education Hub and has a number of examining roles at GCSE and A-level, including Chief Examiner. 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.

Violin Soloist: Nicole Wilson

A student of Chetham's School of music and the Royal Academy of Music, Nicole joined the first violins of the London Symphony Orchestra in 1999 where she played for 9 years before becoming Principal Second Violin at English National Opera until 2013.

Currently a freelance leader around the UK, Nicole is also the producer of FunKey Rhymes, a series of CDs and Apps for children, which she has made with her husband- Big Band King Colin Skinner.

A presenter for TV and radio, Nicole also fixed orchestras for TV and Film including the 6th Harry Potter film.

Nicole kindly says that she loves collaborating with Peter Morris and over the last 12 years has performed many major concertos with him here in the West Midlands, most notably those of Berg, Sibelius and, with WSO, Tchaikovsky.

American Suite Antonin Dvorak (1841 - 1904)

Dvorak was working in the United States from 1892 to 1895. The American Suite was composed 120 years ago this month (March 1894) while he was in New York and several months after the completion of his Symphony No 9 (From the New World), which the orchestra will be performing next season.

It was originally written for piano but he orchestrated it after he returned to New York after a summer break in his native Bohemia later in the year. The orchestral version wasn't performed until 1910, after the composer's death.

There are five quite short movements:

1. Andante con moto
2. Allegro
3. Moderato (alla Polacca)
4. Andante
5. Allegro

It is quite possible to hear elements of both American influences and Czech folk music in this suite. When teaching in the USA, Dvorak encouraged students to listen to their own folk music. In a nation of great immigration, unsurprisingly there are Eastern European elements here which include the Polonaise themes of the 3rd movement and strong influence from the music of the Czech emigrants which Dvorak particularly enjoyed in his years far from home and family.

Violin Concerto in D Op 77 Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897) Soloist: Nicole Wilson

Brahms' Violin Concerto was written in the summer and early autumn of 1878. The first performance on January 1, 1879, in Leipzig, was conducted by the composer, with the outstanding violinist Joseph Joachim as soloist.

Joachim and Brahms had been firm friends for 25 years. Joachim introduced Brahms to Robert and Clara Schumann, a visit that changed the young composer's life. Brahms offered to write a concerto and it was sketched during a summer holiday at Pörttschach in 1878, just across the lake from the country house where Alban Berg would write his violin concerto nearly sixty years later. Brahms often turned to Joachim for technical advice about the solo.

The work was not a success at first but eventually it gained greater popularity and is now one of the most respected works in the repertoire. It is in classical concerto form. The first movement has the usual orchestral introduction which demonstrates the two main themes before the soloist enters. The first movement has a wealth of melodic material. (Brahms once said that melodies were so abundant in Pörttschach that one had to be careful not to step on them.) As usual there is an unaccompanied solo cadenza towards the end of the movement.

Originally Brahms wrote two central movements instead of the single slow movement we now have. However, he did write to a friend saying, "The middle movements have gone and of course they were the best. But I have written a feeble adagio instead." Most people would disagree with his characteristically modest self-assessment of this wonderful music, with its opening and closing sections sounding like a Wind Serenade.

In the lively final movement we hear some of the typical gypsy music which Brahms frequently used and which is said to be an intentional allusion to Joachim's Hungarian heritage. A biographer said, "For his splendidly vital Finale Brahms dons once more the gypsy's coat, a costume in which he seldom fails to appear at his best."

Symphony No. 5 in C minor

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Deservedly one of the most popular and inspiring of musical works ever.

What is it that impresses so much?

Above all is its sheer vitality and architectural grandeur which stem from ideas of daring simplicity. Everything flows organically from the first 4 notes. For the first time in symphonic music the movements are inter-connected - here by the opening rhythm of three quick notes and a longer one which appear in some guise in every movement (the morse code for the letter V) interpreted in war time as a motif for Victory but characterised by Beethoven as "fate knocking on the door".



In addition, the third and fourth movements are physically connected (though in different keys) and run into each other. For the first time the orchestra has expanded to contain trombones, contrabassoon and a piccolo. For the first time too the opening is overtly dramatic, and in the first and final movements Beethoven seems unwilling to let go - resulting in huge codas.

Beethoven had lifted the symphonic game - legitimising others to go even further, as he himself did in his 9th Choral symphony.

Beethoven began writing this music in 1804. Three years earlier he had discovered that he was going progressively deaf and the frustration he felt that 'that sense which ought, in me, to be more perfect than in others' was failing left him increasingly bitter and isolated. Fate had indeed 'knocked on his door'.

It came from the most amazing creative period of his life. At the same time he was writing the 4th and 6th symphonies, the Violin Concerto, the Rasoumovsky quartets, the fourth piano concerto, the Mass in C and the opera Fidelio. Indeed, the first performance on Vienna on 22nd December 1808 contained this symphony, the 6th, the 4th piano concerto (in which he was the soloist), the Choral Fantasia, two movements of his Mass in C, an aria and a piano improvisation by Beethoven.

One reviewer said: 'Reports indicate that all did not go well in this hugely long concert. Second-rate musicians playing in third-rate conditions after limited rehearsal had to struggle their way through this demanding new music, and things fell apart during the Choral Fantasy. But inadequate performance conditions did not dampen enthusiasm for the Fifth Symphony, which was soon recognized as a masterpiece.'

1. Allegro con brio

After the incredibly familiar opening, the 'V' motif develops and keeps reappearing. Under the softer lyrical 2nd theme it appears in the lower strings at various cadence points - like punctuation. Beethoven builds intensity and suspense throughout the movement by means of these small building blocks - listening to where they keep appearing in various instruments and at various pitches enables the listener to appreciate the architecture of the movement.

2. Andante con moto

This provides a set of variations on two main themes. Here too the last 4 notes of many phrases echo the 'V' motif, (a triplet and quaver) often as a cadence figure ending a phrase, as early as the flute in bar 13.

3. Scherzo (Allegro)

begins with rising arpeggios in the lower strings, but quickly leads on to the 'V' rhythm, hammered out by the horns and taken up by the whole orchestra. After a grimly humorous trio section, where Beethoven breaks up the phrases into short fragments, the Scherzo returns and a mysterious and quiet link leads straight through to the finale....

4. Allegro

A march tune begins this sonata form movement, whose 'V' 2nd subject reflects the triplet phrases of the 2nd movement. That is not the only linking motif - the music unexpectedly brings back the music of the Scherzo before returning to the task in hand and rounding off with an 80 bar coda consisting largely of dominant and tonic chords.

A wise critic said, 'It is difficult to divest this best known of symphonies from all the baggage it has accumulated through more than two centuries and to listen with fresh ears to the shocking power of the work and to the marvels that Beethoven introduced into the world of orchestral music.'

Wolverhampton Symphonty Orchestra

Violin 1

Ros Rayner
Jonathan Harper
Jennie Lewis
Susan Bellingham
Ty Rowley
Sharleen Jones
Claire Shaw
Alice Harper
Jo Jordan
Eleni Siamakkide

Violin 2

Ann Forster
Hilary Hurd
Jenny Bailey
Ken Hawkins
Margaret Myatt
Michael Clement
Zoe Morris
Philip Ward
Ella Harrold
Adria Doggo-Munoz
Maria Siamakkide
Caroline Meads

Viola

David Cope
Alain Anderton
Liz Fleetham
Rory Freckleton
Sharon Bayley
Stephen Matthews

Cello

Sarah Tulley
Jean Waller
Sheila Moore
Margaret Bell
Sarah Carter
Ian Sumner
Tim Forster
Antonio D'Souza

Double Bass

Joanne King
John Davies
David Charlesworth

Flute

Kathryn Russon
Diana Manasseh
Jane Eminson

Oboe

Rachel Orotayo
Richard Anderson

Clarinet

Di Cotterell
Lynn Curtis

Bassoon

Jill Sparke
Jan Riley

Horn

Sara Shepherd
Jill Brittle
Percy Cotterell
Robin Hopper

Trumpet

Chris Cumming
Rose Chandler

Trombone

Laurence Hopper
Mike Griffiths
Bernard Moses

Tuba

Joe Barnett

Timpani

Phil Jones

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.