

Sounds of Autumn



Saturday 23 November 2019

Deddington Church

Programme Free



Concert Dates for Your Diary

Christmas Concert

Saturday 14th December 2019

A programme of Christmas favourites and carols

3:30 pm – St Mary's Church, Banbury



Spring Concert

Saturday 28th March 2020

The Perfect Fool - Holst

Symphonic Metamorphoses - Hindemith

Harold in Italy – Berlioz

Soloist – Luba Tunncliffe

7:30 pm – Deddington Church

Tickets from

banburysymphony.org

Welcome to St. Peter and St. Paul Parish Church, Deddington

It's lovely to have you in the audience for the Banbury Symphony Orchestra's 'Sounds of Autumn' concert. Tonight's programme has three major romantic orchestral works from the 19th century.

We begin with **Carl Maria von Weber's** overture '*Der Freischütz*' ('*The Marksman*'). Premiered in 1821, the opera is based on German folk legend.

The orchestra is delighted to welcome back **Madalina Rusu** as the fabulous piano soloist in our performance of **Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor**. This is one of the most tuneful concertos in the repertoire, with an authentic Norwegian flavour. You'll come away humming these tunes after the concert!

After the interval comes **Anton Bruckner's** powerful **Sixth Symphony**. Although little understood when first performed in the 1880s, Bruckner considered this to be his "boldest symphony" and critics have commented on its "plethora of tender, memorable themes". Listen for the beautiful slow movement!

We'd be grateful if you could take a few minutes of your time to give us some feedback in our concert survey.

Ian McCubbin
Chair, BSO

Programme

Overture – Der Freischütz– Weber

Piano Concerto in A minor – Grieg

Allegro molto moderato

Adagio

Allegro moderato molto e marcato – Quasi presto – Andante maestoso

Interval

Symphony No. 6 – Bruckner

Maestoso

Adagio: Sehr feierlich

Scherzo: Nicht schnell — Trio: Langsam

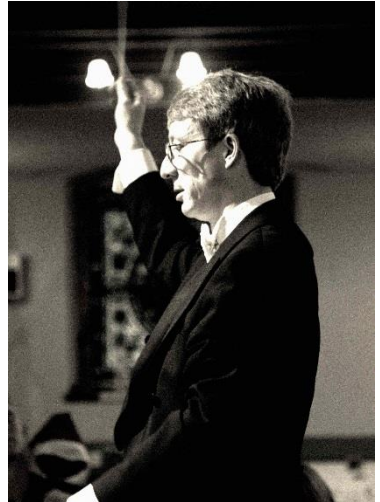
Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell

Paul Willett – Conductor

Paul Willett is our Conductor and Musical Director. Paul studied violin, singing and piano as a student but his main instrument was the French horn on which he gained his Performance Diploma from The Royal College of Music at the age of 16. He then went on to read music on scholarship at The Queen's College, Oxford, and studied for his teaching certificate in Music and Physical Education at Reading University.

For several years Paul combined teaching and freelance playing. He has given solo recitals and performed concertos throughout the country. He was a member of The Five Winds, a group that performed both at home and abroad, and also on BBC radio. Paul worked as a brass teacher for Oxfordshire Music Service and was director of a Saturday Music School of 200 students.

Paul was, until recently, the Director of Didcot Sixth Form. He is now retired to concentrate on his music making and being a 'stay-at-home' dad to his son Alfie.



Anna Fleming - Leader



Anna was born in South Africa where she started playing the violin at the age of ten. While studying music at secondary school, Anna became a member of the South African National Youth Orchestra. After successfully completing her music degree, majoring in orchestral studies, Anna joined the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra in 1992.

Anna moved to England in late 1996. Keen to continue her orchestral playing, Anna joined the Banbury Symphony Orchestra in 1997 and became the leader of the orchestra in 2000, a post that she has held ever since. As a committed Christian, Anna plays an active role in church music. Focusing primarily on private violin tuition, Anna particularly enjoys helping adults to learn to play and she can be contacted on 01295 780017.

Madalina Rusu

Madalina Rusu has enjoyed performing from a very early age, and is quickly establishing a successful career as a soloist and chamber musician. She has performed to critical acclaim in Romania, and throughout Europe in Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Since her arrival in London, Madalina has appeared as a soloist at Barbican Hall, Cadogan Hall, LSO St Luke's, St Martin's in the Fields, St Margaret's Church, Chappell's of Bond Street, Fairfield Halls, and elsewhere throughout the UK.

Madalina Rusu is a recipient of scholarship awards by the Martin Musical Fund/Philarmonia Orchestra



(2005 - 2009), Ratiu Family Foundation (2005 - 2008), winner of the Brancusi Award given by the Prodan Romanian Cultural Centre (2008), winner of a Boise Foundation scholarship (2009), winner of the Ian Flemming MBF award (2009), and winner of the Edith Vogel Bursary (2009). Madalina's list of prizes include 1st prize at the International Piano Competition PRO - PIANO, Bucharest (2002), winner of the Croydon Concerto Competition (2007), and winner of all internal Piano Competitions at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London (2005, 2008). Madalina is also a major prize winner in the International Piano Competition 'Konzerteum' (Athens, 2000), Oxford Professional Recital Prize (2005, 2007, 2008), Tunbridge Wells International Young Artists Competition (2008), and the Hastings International Piano Concerto Competition (2009).

During her studies, Madalina has played in numerous masterclasses held at the Dartington Summer School and at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where her talent has been recognised by distinguished musicians such as Richard Goode, Paul Lewis, John Lill, Imogen Cooper, Simon Trpceski, Stephen Kovacevich, Pascal Rogé, Bryce Morrison, Alfredo Perl, Joanna MacGregor, Douglas Finch, Daniel Adni, and Andrew Zolinsky.

Born in 1985 in Constanta, Romania, Madalina Rusu began her musical

studies at the Music High School in Constanta with professors Iuliana Carlig, Cristian Dumitrescu and Constantin Ionescu - Vovu. Since September 2004, she has been studying piano with Professor Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London, where she gained a First class BMus Honours degree, and has graduated the MMus course (Guildhall Artist - Performance) with distinction. Madalina has been awarded the prestigious Guildhall Artist Fellowship, and she currently holds a piano teaching post at Orchard House School, London, and she also has her own teaching studio in her home in Biggleswade, Bedfordshire.

Overture - *Der Freischütz*

Carl Maria von Weber

Weber began his opera *Der Freischütz* in 1817 and completed the work in 1821. The first performance was given on June 18, 1821, in Berlin.

Related by marriage to Mozart—his cousin Constanze married Wolfgang after her sister Aloysia rejected him—Carl Maria von Weber was pushed from an early age to follow in Mozart's footsteps. (He was born the year of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and trained in Salzburg and Vienna not long after Mozart's death.) He immediately showed great promise—he studied composition with Michael Haydn (Joseph's brother) and wrote his first opera at the age of fourteen. Like Mozart, he excelled both as a composer and as a performer—he was one of the most brilliant pianists of his day and a fine conductor. But he earned his place in history as the composer of a single work, *Der Freischütz*, which was an overnight sensation and quickly became the best-loved opera in all Germany, forever changing the course of the German art form. Shortly after its triumphant premiere in Berlin in 1821, *Der Freischütz* took the world by storm; by 1830 it had been presented in nine languages and before 1850 it had been staged in Cape Town, Sydney, and Rio de Janeiro.



Der Freischütz was the work that pointed German opera away from the values of Italian entertainment—Rossini, not Beethoven, was the most popular composer alive at the time—and led it toward loftier subjects. *Der Freischütz* is one of the cornerstones of romantic opera, and a precursor of German nationalism in music—hardly surprising since it was inspired by German folk song, based on a German legend, and set in a German forest. Weber's influence on later German composers, particularly Wagner, was incalculable (although Wagner inevitably downplayed the debt).

Der Freischütz (The free-shooter) is a convoluted tale of magic bullets, invisible spirits, and pacts with the devil. Its hair-raising Wolf Glen scene (the finale to act 2)—a landmark in orchestral tone painting—contains

supernatural effects that are nearly impossible to realize. Today the opera is rarely staged except in Germany, but its overture remains one of Weber's most popular orchestral works. Although the overture quotes music from the opera itself, it is not simply a hit-tune potpourri, but a foreshadowing, in symphonic terms, of the drama to come. The main material is based on the tenor's act 1 aria, filled with foreboding, and the soprano's joyous music from act 2.

Piano Concerto in A minor

Edvard Grieg

Edvard Grieg had beginner's luck with his A Minor Piano Concerto. Written when the composer was 25, it is one of the most performed piano concertos in the repertoire, and, along with the *Peer Gynt* suites, Grieg's most popular work. Grieg's concerto is often compared with Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto in A Minor, and the similarities between them are not coincidental. Both concertos share the same key and open with a grand orchestral chord, followed immediately by virtuosic flourishes up and down the keyboard. Grieg, a fine pianist, was an admirer of Schumann's music, and was familiar with Schumann's concerto, having heard Clara Schumann play it in Leipzig. Grieg always remembered this performance as a major highlight of his Leipzig student days.

Appreciation for Schumann's music notwithstanding, Grieg's Piano Concerto is his own. In describing his style of composition, Grieg wrote, "Composers with the stature of a Bach or Beethoven have erected grand churches and temples. I have always wished to build villages: places where people can feel happy and comfortable . . . the music of my own country has been my model." To that end, Grieg deliberately tapped into the flavours and colours of Norwegian folk songs, although, like

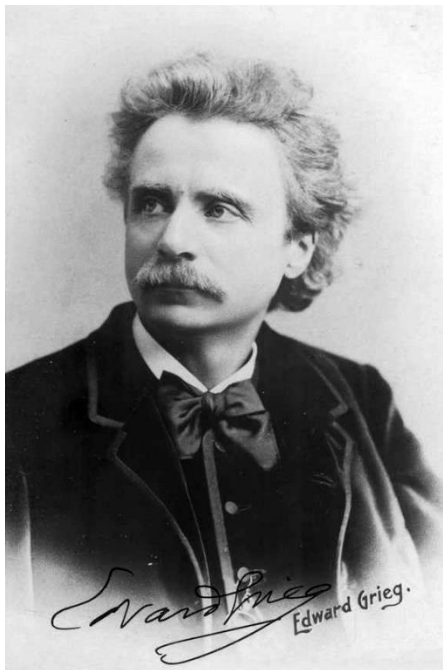
Antonín Dvořák, Grieg preferred creating his own folk-inspired melodies, rather than using actual songs.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky wrote, “In Grieg’s music, there prevails that fascinating melancholy which seems to reflect in itself all the beauty of Norwegian scenery, now grandiose and sublime in its vast expanse, now gray and dull, but always full of charm . . . and quickly finds its way into our hearts to evoke a warm and sympathetic response . . . What warmth and passion in his melodic phrases, what teeming vitality in his harmony, what originality and beauty in the turn of his piquant and ingenious modulations and rhythms, and in all the rest what interest, novelty, and independence! If we add to this that rarest of qualities, a

perfect simplicity, far removed from affectation and pretense . . . it is not surprising that everyone should delight in Grieg.”

Grieg was unable to attend the premiere in Copenhagen, due to prior obligations with the Oslo orchestra, but he was gratified when pianist Edmund Neupert reported several eminent music critics had “applauded with all their might.” Three days later, Neupert also told Grieg that Anton Rubenstein, the famed Russian composer, virtuoso pianist, and founder of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, had attended the premiere and said he was “astounded to have heard a composition of such genius.”

The soloist tosses off brilliant flashes of colour, like a sonic aurora borealis, in the *Allegro moderato*. A solo flute introduces a graceful melody that later returns in a different key, ushering in the majestic finale.



Symphony No. 6

Anton Bruckner

Bruckner's life was filled with dichotomies. He was a bumpkin from a village in rural Upper Austria, yet his musical training and craft were of the utmost refinement and sophistication. In the polarized aesthetic camps of 19th-century Vienna he walked a careful line down the middle of the Wagner-versus-Brahms debate, assimilating the liquid, restless harmonies of the former but remaining a formal "Classicist" in the tradition of the latter. And he was a true genius who, on some level, grasped the full nature of his gifts yet continually listened to the misguided and not-always-well-meaning opinions of those around him — and who during fits of insecurity went running to his composing-desk to revise his symphonies accordingly.

One of the symphonies that remained virtually unscathed by such doubts was the Sixth, which to the end of his life Bruckner said was a favourite among his works. The others went through multiple revisions, as he responded to criticisms of both friends and foes. One of the latter was the influential music critic Eduard Hanslick, whose tirades in the press made it clear that 19th-century Vienna was not ready for Bruckner's out-of-scale symphonic essays. "In Vienna it is the old story all

over again," Bruckner wrote in the late 1870s to Hermann Levi. "I almost prefer them not to perform my works here. Old friends have become hostile again, etc. In a word: the same old atmosphere and treatment. Without Hanslick's approval nothing is possible in Vienna." Yet the acerbic Hanslick, whose criticisms of Wagner and Richard Strauss have today made him the quintessential example of resistance to the new, was right about one thing: that the nature of Bruckner's art lay in "applying Wagner's dramatic style to the symphony," in the critic's words. If anyone was prepared to make a case for this synthesis, it was Bruckner.

Bruckner was perhaps the last of the line of major Austro-Germanic composers who received training in the manner of the ancients: He began his musical life as a choirboy at the cathedral at St. Florian, learned music theory in the old way of strict counterpoint and "figured bass," and studied organ and composition with the St. Florian choirmaster. His first career, then, was as church organist and schoolmaster. Through assiduous private lessons with Simon Sechter in Vienna and Otto Kitzler in Linz he gained an astonishing mastery of learned polyphony and instrumental craft. But the event that activated Bruckner's imagination, after he had become fully versed in techniques of the past, was his first exposure to the brand-new music of Richard Wagner. In 1862 he heard

Tannhäuser in Linz for the first time, and its effect on him was immediate and profound. It was his subsequent acquaintance with Wagner's other operas that set him off on an almost spiritual quest that led him to compose 11 symphonies (nine with numbers, two without) as well as masses and other sacred works — which tried to assimilate Wagner's innovations in harmony.

By the time that Bruckner took up the Sixth Symphony in 1879, he was already a semi-established part of Viennese musical life: His first four symphonies had been both praised and damned. The 1870s were decisive years. In 1875 he was appointed instructor of harmony at the University of Vienna, which placed him on the court chapel payroll. The following year he heard the premiere of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* at Bayreuth, and it affected him deeply. Most important, during the years 1877-79 he was occupied almost solely with revisions of his first symphonies. The Sixth Symphony, begun shortly after this period of revision, is one of the composer's most economical, clearly-defined symphonic structures. It is the work in which we always have a sense of where we are in the formal design. And yet the Sixth, which the composer finished in 1881, did not attain a complete performance during Bruckner's lifetime — though the middle two movements were performed in 1883 in Vienna — and the

work has remained the least accepted of his mature symphonies. Mahler conducted a trimmed version after Bruckner's death, and an uncut version of the work was not performed until 1901.

Instead of the string tremolos with which Bruckner usually begins his symphonies, he begins the first movement (*Maestoso*) with a rhythmic triplet in the strings, providing a dynamic texture for the vaulting first theme in the cellos and basses. Bruckner follows the example of Brahms (and indeed of Beethoven and Haydn), employing three themes rather than the usual two. The second subject is heard as a haunting, urgent violin melody. The themes are developed in an unusually concise middle section, followed by a straightforward recapitulation.

The slow movement *Adagio:Sehr feierlich*, flows between F major and minor, developing its somber first subject with some of Bruckner's most richly complex orchestral polyphony. At the movement's climax, as many as six real melodic lines can be perceived, a real challenge to aural perception. The *Scherzo:Nicht schnell* dispenses both with the liveliness and with the humor that is usually associated with scherzos. The dominant pedal in the cellos and basses that opens the movement recalls another great scherzo from the period, that of Brahms's F-minor Piano Quintet, Op. 34.

The *Finale:Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell* again presents three themes, which are articulated at a leisurely pace. Bruckner ties the final bars of the work to the opening of the first movement,

returning to the rhythmic triplets of the first measures and quoting the first theme in the finale's closing measures.



What did you think of the concert?

Tell us what you thought of this evening's concert by completing our very quick survey.

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Thank you!



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If you play an instrument to a standard of Grade 7 or above and would like to play with the orchestra, find out more by contacting Anna Fleming on 01295 780017.

All rehearsals take place in Banbury in term time on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30pm.

