



# Sunday Afternoon May Masterworks

Sunday 20 May 2018

St Peter's Church, Hook Norton



**Fingal's Cave**

**Programme Free**



# **Concert Dates for Your Diary**

## **Banbury Symphony Orchestra**

### **Summer Showpieces**

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2018**

Pictures at an Exhibition – Mussorgsky, arr. Ravel

Violin Concerto – Sibelius

Soloist – Maria Kouznetsova

Symphony No 5½ - Gillis

Overture de Fete - Ibert

**7:30 pm – St Mary's Church, Banbury**

## **Banbury Symphony Orchestra**

### **Autumn Concert**

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

Viola Concerto – Walton

Symphony No 3 – Bruch

Overture in G minor – Bruckner

**7:30 pm - Deddington Church**

**Tickets from**

**[banburysymphony.org](http://banburysymphony.org)**

## **Welcome to St. Peter's, Hook Norton**

Thank you for coming to our Spring Chamber Orchestra concert of May Masterworks!

This afternoon we will play pieces by three master composers, the evocative Hebrides overture by Felix Mendelssohn, an orchestral suite by Camille Saint-Saëns and the witty and dynamic Eighth Symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven. Our orchestral forces are slimmed down slightly to suit the repertoire, but there's no shortage of tonal or dynamic contrast in these works!

There will be a short (20 minute) interval after the Saint-Saëns to stretch the legs and to refresh ourselves in the church's delightful surroundings.

Please also join us if you can at our Summer Concert in St. Mary's, Banbury on June 23<sup>rd</sup>

Ian McCubbin  
Chair, BSO

## **Programme**

### **Overture, 'The Hebrides' – Mendelssohn**

#### **Suite in D major (Op 49)– Saint-Saëns**

1. Prélude
2. Sarabande
3. Gavotte
4. Romance
5. Finale

### **Interval**

#### **Symphony No 8 – Beethoven**

1. Allegro vivace e con brio
2. Allegretto scherzando
3. Tempo di menuetto
4. Allegro vivace

## **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 is currently the Director of Didcot Sixth Form and he continues his music making conducting various ensembles, both adult and youth.



## **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.

## Overture, 'The Hebrides'

### Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn once stated, "It is in pictures, ruins, and natural surroundings that I find the most music." Perhaps no work and no surrounding were as equally matched for compositional success as Mendelssohn's trip to Scotland and the writing of his Hebrides Overture. Mendelssohn was a child prodigy who came from a well-off family, thereby enabling him to travel often. He greatly enjoyed his various sojourns throughout Europe, and the 1829 walking tour of Scotland with his friend, Karl Klingemann, was no exception. Mendelssohn was only twenty years old when he and Klingemann traveled to the Hebrides Islands, off the west coast of Scotland, and later to Fingal's Cave, on the Island of Staffa.

After seeing the stunning scenery in the Hebrides, he composed the opening bars of his overture, sending it to his sister Fanny with the following note, "In order to make you understand how extraordinarily The Hebrides affected me, I send you the following, which came into my head there."

The following day he and Klingemann ventured to Fingal's Cave (named after the character Fingal, from a third-

century Gaelic tale), having to row there in a skiff, and sat at the mouth of the awe-inspiring, sea-level, basalt-rock formation and marveled. Mendelssohn was dreadfully seasick on his trip to the cave, but was able to appreciate the magnitude of the formation nonetheless. Klingemann wrote that Mendelssohn "[got] along better with the sea as an artist than as a human being with a stomach."



Mendelssohn completed the first draft of his Hebrides Overture in Rome, toward the end of 1830. He was unhappy with his first attempt and continued to revise the work for the next three years. Of particular distress to Mendelssohn was the middle section about which he said, "The forte, D Major middle section is very silly and the entire so-called development tastes more of counterpoint than of whale oil, seagulls and salted cod."

Whale oil notwithstanding, the work premiered on May 14, 1832, by the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Mendelssohn was still not happy with the work, and revised it further until it was finally published in 1833. The two titles (Hebrides and Fingal's Cave) provide an interesting dilemma – it is believed that a publisher added the Fingal's Cave title, thinking it would be a more recognizable name than The Hebrides. Further complicating matters, it seems the score and orchestral parts contain differing names, some indicating Fingal and some Hebrides.

Mendelssohn's work was a new type of overture which emerged during the nineteenth-century, referred to as the concert overture. Concert overtures are not drawn from a stage work or opera, but rather, are stand-alone works to be programmed as an overture in a concert hall. Other composers of famous concert overtures include Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, and Brahms.

Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture is not programmatic, in the sense that it does not follow a narrative or tell a story; but it is thoroughly evocative of the sea and the scenery Mendelssohn experienced during his time in the Hebrides and Fingal's Cave. The opening motive that Mendelssohn sketched and sent to his

sister after viewing the Hebrides, is a mysterious, arpeggiated fragment outlining the key of B minor. The motive is repeated several times, rising higher and higher. It begins in the lower depths of the orchestra for maximum drama, with the bassoon, viola, and cello receiving the melodic material. As the theme rises, the violins take over, while the lower voices begin an undulating pattern of semiquavers that is present throughout most of the work, representing the ebb and flow of the sea, while dramatic crescendos and sforzandi allude to crashing sea waves upon rocks.

The second theme is a more sprawling and soaring melody in the major mode, and as the always quotable Sir Donald Francis Tovey stated, is "the greatest melody Mendelssohn ever wrote." This second theme is again introduced by the lower instruments (bassoons and cello), maintaining the mysterious nautical tone of the overture. The opening motive is later transformed to a martial rhythm in the orchestra before beginning a somewhat jauntier section filled with dotted rhythms and staccato statements. This section begins with very soft iterations of the opening fragment answered by militaristic figures from the winds. It then modifies and truncates the opening motive into short staccato statements passed throughout the orchestra before the

clarinet returns the peaceful ambiance with its statement of the expansive second theme, leading directly into the extended coda. The work ends with a repeated, haunting statement of the opening motive in the clarinet, passed onto the flute that has the last word with its ascending B minor arpeggio, accompanied by pizzicato strings.

## Suite in D major (Op 49)

### Saint-Saëns

Charles Camille Saint-Saëns was a French composer and performer, best known for his orchestral work *The Carnival of the Animals*. Camille Saint-Saëns' long life spanned nearly the entire duration of the Romantic period of music. He was part of the heyday of the movement and witnessed its death and the dawn of 20th-century music.



The Suite in D major's origins as a work for solo harmonium are clear in the drone bass and the simple canonic writing of the first movement – even clothed in delicate orchestral colours, you can still picture the poor player pedalling away furiously to keep the bellows filled and maintain some stability of tone in these long held notes. The second movement again

deals in thin, often polyphonic textures, with delicately placed chords and a slightly hymn-like theme – the sort of theme which in a more dramatic manifestation provided the great climactic moments of Saint-Saëns' more famous orchestral works. Using dances from the keyboard suites of Rameau and other French 18th century composers, and with his almost classical love of order and restraint, Saint-Saëns imbues them with great individuality. The third movement "Gavotte" is a typical example with its gently rustic central section, but the next movement, "Romance" takes us out of the 18th century and into the world of rich, 19th century expressiveness in a movement of great beauty, which Märkl paces to perfection – it simply oozes unhurried elegance. The final is an invigorating toccata-like movement which breezes along cheerfully

## Symphony No 8

### Beethoven

In early October 1812, the Linzer Musikzeitung carried the following announcement: "We have had the long-wished-for pleasure of having in our metropolis for several days the Orpheus and greatest musical poet of our time...." This "Orpheus" was Beethoven, and he had descended on Linz as the last stop in a summer spent taking the waters at Karlsbad, Franzensbrunn and Töplitz in an attempt to relieve various physical ailments. His interest in Linz, however, extended beyond the mineral baths into the private life of his younger brother, Johann. It seems that Johann had acquired a housekeeper, one Therese Obermeyer, and that her duties extended to, as the composer's biographer Thayer put it, "something more." Perhaps as much from jealousy as from moral indignation, the bachelor Beethoven did not approve of either the situation or this particular female (he later dubbed her "Queen of the Night"), and he took it upon himself, Thayer continued, "to meddle in the private concerns of his brother, which he had no more right to do than any stranger." He stirred up a terrific row over this matter, and, after taking his concern to the local authorities, actually was awarded a decision to have Therese thrown out of town. Johann had had about enough by this time, and the



upshot of all of Ludwig's intrusions was that his younger brother married the housekeeper after all.

(As an interesting aside about the relationship between the brothers Beethoven, Olin Downes recounted the following anecdote: "It was Johann who, having acquired a handsome property, called on his brother leaving a card which was inscribed, 'Johann van Beethoven, Gutsbesitzer ['land proprietor'],' which card Beethoven quickly returned, after writing on the back, 'Ludwig van Beethoven, Hirnbesitzer ['brain proprietor].'"

Beethoven had been installed in an attractive room in Johann's house overlooking the Danube and the surrounding countryside upon his arrival, and he worked on the Eighth Symphony throughout all this unnecessary domestic kerfuffle. Not the slightest hint of the turmoil crept into the music, however. It is actually the most humorous and "unbuttoned," in the composer's own description, of all the symphonies. At that time in his life (he was 42), Beethoven was immensely fond of a certain rough fun and practical jokes, and Sir George Grove believed that "the Eighth Symphony, perhaps more than any other of the nine, is a portrait of the author in his daily life, in his habit as he lived; the more it is studied and heard, the more will he be found there in his

most natural and characteristic personality." Certainly this work presents a different view of Beethoven than do its immediate neighbors, and it is this very contrast that helps to bring the man and his creations more fully into focus.



The lighthearted quality of the music is reinforced by another bit of biographical miscellany that attaches to the second movement of the Eighth Symphony. Beethoven had befriended Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, best known as the inventor of the metronome, but famous in his own day as a creator of all sorts of mechanical curiosities. (It was for Mälzel's clangorous "Panharmonicon" that Beethoven wrote the meretricious Wellington's Victory.) Mälzel and Beethoven had appeared at the same dinner party in Vienna some time before the composition of the Eighth Symphony, and Beethoven had

scratched out a little vocal canon that evening to parody the tick-tock of the inventor's immortal creation. All the guests joined in a rendition of the round during that soirée using the silly text: "Ta, ta, ta [referring to the tick of the metronome], my dear Mälzel, fare thee well, very well...." The Gemütlichkeit of that evening carried over into the Eighth Symphony, and lies at the heart of the spirit of the second movement, the shortest in all of Beethoven's symphonies.

Beethoven referred to this work as his "little Symphony" in F major. As regards the elapsed time, he was right - only the

First Symphony is of comparable brevity in his symphonic output. In effect, however, the work is rather more concentrated than simply short, and it has a greater impact than its duration would seem to allow. Part of the effectual size of the Symphony is achieved by the multiplicity of musical events that it contains, and John N. Burk observed that the quick changes from one idea to another carry with them the underlying current of humor that characterizes the work. "Moods in music," Burk wrote, "are never to be matched by moods outside of it, and humor is no exception. It seems to consist in this Symphony of sudden turns in the course of an even and



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lyrical flow, breaking in upon formal, almost archaic periods. It is a sudden irregularity showing its head where all is regular - an altered rhythm, an explosion of fortissimo, a foreign note or an unrelated tonality.... Each incongruity becomes right and logical with use; indeed here lies the true individuality and charm of the Symphony." Pitts Sanborn saw a more universal quality in Beethoven's style in the Eighth Symphony: "It is the laughter of a man who has lived and suffered and, scaling the heights, achieved the summit.... Only here and there does a note of rebellion momentarily intrude itself; and here and there, in brief lyrical repose we have ... an intimation of Divinity more than the ear discovers."

The compact sonata form of the opening movement begins without preamble. The opening theme (F major), dance-like if a bit heavy-footed, appears immediately in a vigorous triple meter. The second theme, built on short sequentially rising figures, enters in the surprising tonality of D major, but quickly rights itself into the expected key of C major. The closing group consists of a strong two-beat figure alternating with a swaying, legato line for the woodwinds. The development is concerned with a quick, octave-skip motive and a rather stormy treatment of the main theme. This central section ends with one of the longest passages

of sustained fortissimo in the entire Classical literature to herald the recapitulation with a great wave of sound. The long coda comes close to being a second development section in its mood and thematic manipulation.

The second movement is a sonatina - a sonata form without a development section. The imitation of Mälzel's metronome is initiated by the woodwinds, which spend most of the movement pecking away at their single-minded rhythm. The violins present an impeccable music-box melody that has as much charm as it does humor. Charles Rosen, the noted pianist and an excellent commentator on the music of Beethoven's time, observed the passing of an era with this music. "The civilized gaiety of the classical period," he wrote in *The Classical Style*, "perhaps already somewhat coarsened, makes its last appearances here and in some of the last quartets. After that, wit was swamped by sentiment."

The third movement abandons the scherzo of Beethoven's other symphonies and returns to the archaic dance form of the minuet. Its central trio features horns and clarinets over an arpeggiated accompaniment in the cellos to produce a sonority much admired by Stravinsky for its clear texture and adventurous timbre.

"One of Beethoven's most gigantic creations," is the eminent English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey's estimation of the finale. Its length is almost equal to that of the preceding three movements combined, and it does carry a great relative importance in the work's total structure because of the diminutive size of the internal movements. In mood it is joyous, almost boisterous; in form, it is sonata-allegro, with enough repetitions of the main theme thrown in to bring it close to a rondo. The extensive coda actually occupies more time than the development, and maintains the Symphony's bustling energy and high spirits to the end.

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## Joining the Orchestra

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.

