



Spring Concert

Saturday 19th March 2016

Church of St Peter and St Paul,
Deddington

Programme £1



Concert Dates for Your Diary

Banbury Chamber Orchestra

Sunday 8th May 2016

Farewell Symphony – Haydn

Clarinet Concerto – Mozart

Masques et Bergamasques – Faure

Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis – Vaughan Williams

4:00 pm – St Peter's Church, Hook Norton

Banbury Symphony Orchestra

Summer Charity Concert

Saturday 25th June 2016

Overture "*Cockaigne*" – Elgar

Symphony No.5 – Arnold

"*A London Symphony*" (No.2) – Vaughan Williams

7:30 pm – St Mary's Church, Banbury

BanburyOrchestraTickets@gmail.com

Welcome and thank you for joining us for our spring concert.

We have a terrific programme of music from three of the great composers of the 19th century. We welcome our brilliant soloist, Chris Windass, for a performance of Brahms' violin concerto; considered to be one of the four great German violin concerti. The concerto follows a sparkling Mendelssohn overture which was written in just two days. After the interval we have a symphony from one of the "Mighty Five" of composers dedicated to producing music that was uniquely Russian; Alexander Borodin.

We hope you enjoy our performance as much as we have enjoyed preparing it for you.

Our next event is our chamber orchestra concert – see above for details – featuring some delightful music for an early summer's Sunday afternoon in a beautiful location. It would be great to see you there.

We would also like to draw your attention to our new email address for obtaining tickets – email your requirements to BanburyOrchestraTickets@gmail.com

Peter Button
Chairman, BSO

Programme

Overture 'Ruy Blas' – Mendelssohn

Violin Concerto in D – Brahms

Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegro giacoso, ma non troppo vivace – Poco più presto

Interval

Symphony No.2 – Borodin

Allegro moderato

Scherzo – Molto vivo

Andante

Finale - Allegro

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 College 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.

Chris Windass - Violin



Chris Windass has spent much of his life based in Oxfordshire and formed the Adderbury Ensemble in 1986. He also established the Music in Adderbury series and the famous Oxford Coffee Concert Series in the same year.

Chris studied at the Birmingham School of Music where he formed part of the first ever quartet in residence at the college. After Birmingham Chris went on to study privately with Emmanuel Hurwitz and David Takeno. His professional playing career has covered working with a wide range of ensembles from large scale symphony orchestras, chamber orchestras and Opera Companies such as The London Philharmonic Orchestra, The

Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, London Chamber Orchestra, Glyndebourne and English Touring Opera, down to chamber groups such as Medici String Quartet, Brodsky String Quartet and Guildhall Strings.

His love of chamber music has always been a driving force in his teaching and playing. He also organises the Adderbury Ensemble which gives many concerts in the UK and Europe as a chamber group and chamber orchestra.

Overture 'Ruy Blas' – Mendelssohn

In 1839 Mendelssohn¹ was commissioned to compose an overture for Victor Hugo's play Ruy Blas, a socio-political commentary with elements of love, revenge, and death, set in 18th century Spain. A Spanish grandee tries to disgrace the Queen of Spain by involving her in a love affair with his valet, Ruy Blas. Disguised as a Spanish nobleman, Ruy Blas does in fact become her lover, but when his master tries to blackmail the Queen into abdicating, Ruy Blas kills him, takes poison



¹ Programme notes – by kind permission The Brandon Hill Chamber Orchestra.

himself, confesses his guilt to the Queen and dies with her forgiveness.

Unfortunately, the Leipzig Theatre, who commissioned the piece, left things rather late, to say the least, informing the composer just six days before the opening night. Fortunately, Mendelssohn treated this as a bit of a challenge and just two days later presented the theatre with the complete score of the overture.

The result is a fine example of the concert overture; varied in its moods, close-knit in its structure, and inventive in its melodic and harmonic sonorities. The opening brass chorale may perhaps be a depiction of the court, whilst the remainder of the piece brings to mind the tempestuous and romantic aspects of the play. Mendelssohn's ending strays somewhat from Victor Hugo's version, choosing a heroic finale rather than the hostile conclusion of the original.

"There is a sweep and spontaneity in the melodic flow, an urgency in the march of simple harmonies, a freshness and brilliance in the orchestration," wrote the conductor Edward Downes, "which have made this one of Mendelssohn's most popular works."

Violin Concerto in D – Brahms



"One enjoys getting hot fingers playing it, because it is worth it!" - Joseph Joachim

In the summer of 1878, Brahms retired to the town of Pörtschach in southern Austria to complete the composition of his violin concerto. The work was dedicated to his friend and colleague, Joseph Joachim, and was in many ways a collaboration between composer and soloist. When he had completed a first draft, Brahms sent a copy of the solo violin part to Joachim with a letter: "After copying it, I am not sure what you can do with a mere solo part. Of course, I would like you to make corrections; I had intended to leave you no excuse whatsoever – neither that the music is too good, nor that it isn't worth the trouble. Now I would be satisfied if you would write a letter to me, or perhaps mark the music: difficult, awkward, impossible etc."

Joachim promptly replied with a marked copy of the part, and a letter of his own in which he was generally complimentary about the new composition. Brahms incorporated several of Joachim's suggestions into the final version of the score, and rather than providing a cadenza for the first movement, used the one that Joachim had suggested.

The concerto stands as one of the largest and most challenging works in the solo violin repertoire, yet it is also the work which shows in the highest degree of perfection the reconciling of the two opposite sides of the composer's creative mind – the lyrical and the constructive; Brahms the song writer and Brahms the symphonist. For this concerto is a song for the violin on a symphonic scale – a lyrical outpouring which nevertheless exercises to the full the composer's great powers of inventive development.

The orchestral introduction to the first movement reveals the concerto's underlying lyricism from the very outset. First a dark eight-bar phrase, a simple ascending and descending sequence based on the notes of the major triad, then an oboe continuation and finally a strident forte. One subject, but for the purposes of later development, effectively three. The soloist's entry, fiery and wide ranging, is a cadenza-like minor key commentary on the work's opening theme, which Brahms gives in turn to the full orchestra at the start of the development. Throughout the movement, Brahms restlessly develops his themes, even in the short coda that follows the cadenza.

The beautiful Adagio is a tender and moving intermezzo, deceptively simple in form. It opens with a long-breathed lullaby for solo oboe, beautifully supported by woodwinds and horns. When the violinist enters, with a dreamy variant of the theme, the predominant wind textures are replaced by strings as the music grows more impassioned, eventually evolving into a contrasting middle section with its own rhapsodic, highly embellished melody. With a brief but lovely transition back to the main key, F major, Brahms brings together the violin, the solo oboe, and the remainder of the orchestra in a memorable meditation on the opening theme.

The finale is a rousing and rhythmically striking rondo, with something of a Hungarian flavour, affording the soloist ample opportunity to display his virtuosity, the music being in turn fiery and relaxed. Brahms originally titled this movement "Allegro giocoso" but Joachim significantly added the words "ma non troppo vivace?" to the part that Brahms had sent him, adding the terse comment "otherwise difficult"!

Joachim gave the inaugural performance in Leipzig on New Years Day 1879, with the composer himself conducting.

Symphony No.2 – Borodin

Alexander Porfirevich Borodin (1833-1887) was the least doctrinaire among the group of Russian composers known as the Mighty Five. This group tasked itself to producing a national Russian music, divorced as much as possible from the dominant Western music of the day, which was primarily German in origin. They sought themes in Russian history and culture, and, ironically, looked to the Hungarian pianist and composer Franz Liszt for technical guidance and compositional inspiration. The other four of the five composers -

Mily Balakirev, Caesar Cui, Modeste Mussorgsky, and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov - eventually left their initial occupations and took to composing and teaching full time. Borodin, alone, stayed with his primary occupations in medicine and chemistry.



As the illegitimate son of a Russian noble, Borodin was raised within a comfortable environment with a broad education in the manner of the European gentry. He was expected to take up a musical instrument as well as a profession. Borodin did both with aplomb, becoming quite a talented pianist and a noted chemical researcher. He did not receive any formal composition instruction until 1863 when he studied with Mily Balakirev, who, noting Borodin's innate musical gifts, invited him to join the group of five.

Of his two callings - research and music, music clearly took second place, and consequently, Borodin has only a few works in his catalog.

Those that do exist show Borodin as a master of melody so approachable as to be used as the basis for the American musical *Kismet* (1953). While his catalog of compositions is small, Borodin nevertheless produced large-scale works that have endured, most notably his *Symphony No 2 in B minor* and his opera *Prince Igor* (completed by Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov). Unlike the other members of *The Five*, Borodin ventured into the realm of absolute music and small ensemble pieces. His two string quartets are noted for their melodic grace and mastery of form. He also composed a string sextet and a piano quintet of notable merit.

Immediately after beginning his studies with Balakirev, Borodin set to work on a symphony in E-flat. By December 1863, the composer-chemist had knocked out the first movement. The next three movements of the symphony, however, progressed slowly, and it was not until three years later that the work was completed. Revisions and touch-ups took another year, then his mentor Balakirev staged a closed rehearsal with the orchestra of the Russian Musical Society in March 1868. The rehearsal was not a successful one, but Balakirev, nevertheless, scheduled the work's premiere for the following year. Borodin's *Symphony No 1 in E-flat major* was first performed before the public in January 1869. The symphony proved a modest success.

The following years were spent, as his time would allow, on ideas for major compositions, including operas and additional symphonies. He began an opera, *The*

Tsar's Bride, but discarded the project, but he reused the material in later works. He began work on another symphony in 1869, this time in B minor, then set it aside to concentrate on another opera based on a twelfth-century epic, Prince Igor. In 1870, frustrated in his efforts to generate an effective libretto for Igor, he returned to his symphony with the intent to incorporate some of the Prince Igor music into it. He laboured off and on with the symphony for the next two years, while still keeping his regular chemical research work going, writing papers, attending conferences and seminars abroad, and caring for his fragile wife. By early 1872 he had the framework for the symphony drafted; by May 1873 he had the symphony in piano score form.

Another abortive project took Borodin away from the symphony and by 1874, he told a friend he had returned to Prince Igor and, a year later, he announced he had completed almost all of the Polovetzian music, including the Polovetzian Dances. At some point in 1875 he finished the orchestration for the Symphony No 2 in B minor. There the symphony rested until the early autumn of 1876 when Borodin was informed that the Russian Musical Society was interested in performing the new work. The hapless composer was forced to rework the first and last movements of the symphony when the orchestrated score came up missing, but he finished the work when a minor illness calmed his busy schedule.

Eduard Nápravník conducted the premiere of the Symphony No 2 in B minor on March 10, 1877. The critics and public reception of the symphony was moderate at best, possibly, according to Rimsky-Korsakov, because the work overemphasized the brass. Whatever the case may be, the B minor Symphony is one of the few large works that Borodin completed on his own. He continued to refine the symphony up to the time of its publication in 1886.

Among the Mighty Five of Russian music, Borodin was probably the most original in that he steered his own course, unfettered by the nationalist chains that hampered the others. As Liszt said to the composer after hearing Borodin play the piano scores of his first two symphonies: "You are always lucid, intelligent, and perfectly original. Work in your own way and pay no attention to anyone."

Banbury Symphony Orchestra

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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.

