



Spring Concert

Saturday 18 March 2017

Deddington Church

Programme Free



Concert Dates for Your Diary

Banbury Chamber Orchestra

Classical Concert: The Toy Symphony

Sunday 21st May 2017

Classical Symphony – Prokofiev

Overture, The Marriage of Figaro – Mozart

Toy Symphony – Haydn

German Dances – Schubert arr. Webern

4:40 pm - Hook Norton Church

Banbury Symphony Orchestra

Last Night of the Proms

Saturday 1st July 2017

Programme including Elgar's Cello Concerto

7:30 pm – St Mary's Church, Banbury

Tickets from

banburysymphony.org

Hello and welcome to Deddington Church,

After performing Carl Nielsen's stunning second symphony in our previous concert we open tonight's concert with the sparkling overture to his comedic opera 'Maskarade'. Having warmed up, we perform Tchaikovsky's tone poem, describing a tragic tale of adulterous lovers; Francesca and Paolo from Rimini in Northern Italy.

To conclude our concert we have Mahler's huge Symphony No.1. There is much to listen out for, including: a dawn chorus, a marching band, a village festival, a ship under full sail, and a furious passing storm. Throw in a funeral procession composed entirely of animals and you begin to understand the title of the symphony; 'The Titan'.

Thanks for coming to hear (and see!) our concert tonight and we hope that you enjoy the evening as much as the members of the orchestra!

Don't forget that you can be sure of a seat for all our other concerts this season, by obtaining tickets from our website: banburysymphony.org

Peter Button
Chairman, BSO

Programme

Maskarade – Nielsen

Francesca da Rimini – Tchaikovsky

Interval

Symphony No.1 – Mahler

- 1 - Langsam - Schleppend – Immer sehr gemächlich
(Slowly - Dragging – Very restrained throughout)
- 2 - Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell
(Moving strongly, but not too quickly)
- 3 - Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen
(Solemnly and measured, without dragging)
- 4 - Stürmisch bewegt – Energrisch
(Stormily agitated – Energetic)

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.

Maskarade – Nielsen

Carl Nielsen is one of the most important composers from the late 19th to early 20th centuries. His free-spirited compositions cover a wide range of styles that breathe a fresh air into the concert hall. He is best known for his six symphonies and the overture to his comic opera *Maskarade*, which is considered the Danish national opera.

Nielsen's opera, *Maskarade*, is his setting of a libretto by Vilhelm Andersen (1864-1953) based on a work by Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754), the poet and playwright best known outside of Scandinavia from Edvard Grieg's *Holberg Suite*. The story is a light comedy filled with intrigue, high-jinks and mistaken identity that leads two young people to meet and fall in love at a masked ball. Nielsen felt that the play was too wordy for use as an opera and approached Andersen, a leading Holberg scholar, to write the libretto.

Nielsen began work on the opera during the Christmas season of 1904 and by the late autumn of 1905 a premiere in the spring of 1906 was planned. Various delays pushed it back until November and Nielsen finished the overture only eight days before the November 11 premiere! The opera was an instant success and remains immensely popular in Denmark.

Originally the overture led directly into the first act of the opera, but in 1907 Nielsen revised it so it could be performed as a concert piece. It is performed around the world and has helped to establish the composer's reputation.

The overture is the perfect vehicle to reflect the spirit and joy of a carnival. The opera takes place during that time before Lent when people let their hair down and do some hard partying; think of Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Carnival in Rio. Suited well for either place, the overture to *Maskarade* is an excellent opener for tonight's concert.



Francesca da Rimini – Tchaikovsky

Tales of doomed love attracted Tchaikovsky in all musical forms – for example, the Manfred Symphony, the ballet Swan Lake, the opera Eugene Onegin, the fantasy overture Romeo and Juliet. In 1876 he listened with interest to proposals for an opera on the story of the adulterous lovers Francesca and Paolo as recounted in the “Inferno” section of Dante’s Divine Comedy. Nothing came of the opera, but Tchaikovsky’s brother Modest persuaded him to depict the tragedy in a symphonic poem. (Modest himself later wrote an opera libretto on the subject, set by Sergei Rachmaninoff.)

The story, based on an historical incident, concerns the fraudulent courtship and marriage of young Francesca of the north Italian town of Rimini. For political reasons, her marriage to Giovanni Malatesta is arranged when she is tricked into believing that Giovanni’s handsome younger brother Paolo is her intended husband. Tragedy is consummated almost as swiftly as the marriage: the unhappy Francesca and Paolo become lovers, Giovanni catches them in the act, and kills them. Dante found their souls left twisting in the winds of the second circle of hell as moral lessons.

Tchaikovsky’s virtuosic orchestral collage opens with the poet’s lugubrious



trudge in search of hellish edification. He soon encounters gale-force wind, gusting fiercely to the tune of a truly devilish tarantella. The music is more gestural than melodic, but then Francesca begins her narration with one of Tchaikovsky’s most gorgeous tunes, deeply felt and richly characterized. “A melody never stands alone, but invariably with the harmonies which belong to it,” the composer wrote. “These two elements, together with the rhythm, must never be separated; every melodic idea brings its own inevitable harmony and its suitable rhythm.” Tchaikovsky certainly delivered the full package here. The first half of the melody is infinitely sorrowing in downward sighs, first heard in a

plaintive clarinet solo. The second half of this thematic yin and yang turns minor mode to major and the descending droops to upward yearning in the strings.

These elements are developed at length into passionate outpourings, cut off with the abrupt blows of the murder. The howling winds return, and ten hammered chords end the work with the finality of damnation.



Symphony No.1 - Mahler

Gustav Mahler (see picture on previous page) was born in Kalište, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the second of twelve children. In 1875 he was admitted to the Vienna Conservatoire where he studied piano under Julius Epstein, harmony with Robert Fuchs, and composition with Franz Krenn. He later attended Vienna University at which time he worked as a music teacher and wrote his first surviving compositions including the cantata *Das Klagende Lied*. In 1880, Mahler began his career as a conductor with a job at a summer theatre at the Bad Hall (thermal baths) near Vienna. From this humble beginning his reputation grew and in the following years he enjoyed a series of increasingly prestigious appointments: Ljubljana (1881), Olomouc (1882), Vienna (1883), Kassel (1884), Prague (1885) Leipzig (1886) and Budapest (1888). His first long-term appointment was at the Hamburg Opera in 1891, where he stayed until 1897.

It is believed that he began the composition of his first symphony in 1885, and that prior to that he had composed several symphonic works which he destroyed. The first symphony itself went through a significant metamorphosis before reaching its final form. On 20th

November 1889, in Budapest, he conducted the première of a work he called "Symphonic poem in two parts". This was a five movement work, containing versions of the final four movements. However, it did not meet with great success. On October 27th 1893 Mahler conducted a substantially reworked version entitled "Titan, a tone poem in symphonic form". The name Titan refers to the novel by Jean Paul Richter (1763-1825), and was intended to convey the image of a passionate young man moving between extremes of hope and despair. The work was performed unchanged in Weimar the following year. However, at the next performance in Berlin on 16th March 1896, Mahler revised it again, dropping the name Titan and removing the second movement, which now is sometimes played as a standalone piece called *Blumine*. This was the version that was finally published as his first symphony in 1899.

The symphony is strongly characteristic of Mahler's style, which can best be described as "outdoors". It is coloured by the sounds of the countryside, whether natural or man made. Throughout the mist that opens the first movement we hear, at a distance, the military band marching on the parade ground mixed with the calling of the

birds as the dawn breaks. The opening of the second movement evokes the band at the village festival, and the final movement starts with a furious storm. Like most of Mahler's symphonies the melodic material is developed from his earlier songs.

Mahler unusually provided some programmatic notes for the first version of the symphony. The first movement he describes as "nature's awakening from a long winter sleep". The second (originally third) movement he enigmatically tags with the phrase "the sails are fully set". It is a scherzo and trio made out of two dances: a landler and a gentle slow waltz. The third movement, the most famous of the symphony, he describes as a funeral march. "The animals in the forest escort the dead poet's coffin; hares carry the banner, in front there is a band of Bohemian musicians accompanied by cats making music, toads, crows etc. while stags, deer, foxes and other four-legged and feathered animals in funny positions accompany the funeral procession. The piece should be the expression of a cheerful and ironic but eerie and gloomy atmosphere." It is followed directly by "the sudden burst of desperation of a deeply wounded heart." Finally though the passion that begins the final movement gives way to triumph.

The work owes much to the German symphonic tradition, especially Beethoven and Brahms. Like the Eroica symphony it makes extensive use of motivic development of small and simple melodic fragments. In its overall architecture it adopts the falling thirds of Brahms. The first melodic idea we hear is made up of falling fourths which step downwards from A to F to D. The falling fourth seems to act as a seed from which other melodic ideas grow, whereas the downward movement in thirds (A to F to D) is the harmonic foundation on which the work stands.

The first movement, opens with the single note A, then moves through a troubled development climaxing in a mood of uncertainty on the note F before the movement finally falls to D for its exuberant conclusion. From a more distant perspective the same pattern characterises the whole symphony. The note A which opens the first movement becomes the key of the second movement. After the doubt and uncertainty of the funeral march the symphony explodes passionately in the key of F minor before finally finding certainty and triumph the home key of D. To end the symphony the mysterious falling fourths of the opening return in a blaze of glory from the huge orchestra.

Banbury Symphony Orchestra

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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.

