

Chamber Concert



Sunday 22 May 2022

Hook Norton Church

Programme Free



Concert Dates for Your Diary

Banbury Symphony Orchestra

Summer Nights Concert

Saturday 9th July 2022

Concierto de Aranjuez – Rodrigo

Soloist – Craig Ogden

Summer Evening – Delius

Symphony No. 9 ('From the New World') – Dvořák

7:30 pm – St Mary's Church, Banbury

Banbury Symphony Orchestra

Autumn Concert

Saturday 26th November 2022

Overture In Autumn – Grieg

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini – Rachmaninoff

Soloist – Madalina Rusu

Symphony No 1 – Kalinnikov

7:30 pm – Deddington Church

Tickets from

banburysymphony.com

Welcome to St. Peter's, Hook Norton

Thank you for coming to see Banbury Chamber Orchestra's May concert.

Our concert celebrates music from three masters that together bridge the Classical and Romantic musical periods.

Beethoven's turbulent *Coriolan Overture* was written in 1807 for von Collin's tragedy 'Coriolan'. The striking chords that open the work lead us immediately into the story of the semi-legendary Roman general, tormented by his decision to lead an army of Rome's former enemies against his countrymen. Next, we will play the early *Suite for Winds* written by the 20-year-old Richard Strauss in 1884. It is a delightful, characterful four movement work.

After a short interval we will conclude with Schubert's charming *Symphony No 6*, written in late 1817. The symphony's nickname (the 'Little C Major') distinguishes it from Schubert's later Ninth Symphony (the so-called 'Great C Major'), the Sixth Symphony being of smaller 'classical' proportions.

Ian McCubbin
Chair, BSO

Programme

Coriolan Overture – Beethoven

Suite for 13 Wind Instruments – Strauss

Praeludium, Romanza, Gavotte, Introduction and Fuge

Interval

Symphony No. 6 – Schubert

Adagio – Allegro, Andante, Scherzo: Presto, Allegro moderato

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.

Coriolan Overture

Ludwig van Beethoven

Completed early in 1807, Ludwig van Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* is a tragic overture. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the three-movement overture genre had been replaced by the one-movement overture, which, was often only tenuously linked to the opera it preceded. This musical ambiguity made it possible for composers to swap them out, a practice still popular during Beethoven's lifetime. However, almost a century earlier, during composer Gluck's life, it was deemed pointless to write an overture that had almost no connection to the opera it was meant to introduce. Gluck stated in his dedication to *Alceste*, written in 1769, "I have felt that the overture ought to apprise the spectators of the nature of the action that is to be represented and to form, so to speak, its argument." Gradually, mainstream composers began to quote material from the opera in their overtures in order to form an indisputable link between the two, although a number of these overtures got a bit esoteric, which of course defeated the purpose of trying to make the connection.

Beethoven's *Coriolan* is unique among these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century opera overtures in that it didn't precede an opera but stood alone. It is



not, as many of us would assume, based on Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*; rather, it is inspired by Heinrich Joseph Collin's drama *Coriolan*, first performed in 1804 and then revived in 1807. Although the play was brought back three years following its premiere, it was not especially successful either time. There is also no evidence that Beethoven ever intended his overture to be performed in the theater.

As a theatrical overture meant to precede a text-based art form rather than a musical one, it is descriptive rather than motivically driven, and Beethoven depicts the main conflicts in a larger plot rather than as a succession of incidents as he might have in larger-scale works.

In Collin's drama, Roman aristocrat Coriolanus has recently been banned from entering Rome because he has failed to show proper concern for its

people. Determined to avenge this wrong, Coriolanus joins the Volscians, enemies of Rome, and prepares to lead their armies against his native city. However, when he reaches the city's outskirts, representatives of the officials who first refused him entry appear, begging him to desist. He refuses and continues his war preparations. In a more personal bid for mercy, his mother, Volumnia, arrives along with his wife to plead with him. Seeing his mother he realizes that he no longer wants revenge, and to restore his honour he falls on his sword.

Beethoven chose the key of C minor for his *Coriolan* – the key of “passionate rebellion.” The Overture opens in darkness as the strings play three unison Cs, each answered by the orchestra with a single resounding chord, with each rising higher than the last. This opening portrays our hero, Coriolanus, full of aggression and controlled anger. The strings follow with a restless, rhythmic motive, to depict Coriolanus's pride, defiance, and the tension of the circumstances. The second part of this theme is Volumnia's and is softer-edged. The pitch of her phrases rise as she pleads with increasing urgency.

The second theme is really beautiful, displaying great lyricism but also, as musicologist Roger Fiske notes, twining through it is “an unmistakably heroic element – a trait nearly ubiquitous in Beethoven's middle-period works.” The

“development” that follows is short, mainly expounding on the last notes of Volumnia's theme. The recapitulation, also, is not quite a recapitulation, as the descriptive elements of the overture were of higher priority for Beethoven than how correctly he used adhered to sonata form. Instead, this section can almost be classified as a second development; the material from the “exposition” is presented differently here, and in a different key.

The coda, or “tail” of the piece, depicts Volumnia's last pleas to her son, and her despair seems to deepen with the turn into a minor key. As the final theme moves back to the C minor of the opening, *Coriolan* gives in, and the antagonism so clear in the opening material dissolves “into a dark haze, fading to uneasy silence.”

It is widely believed that Beethoven's ending represents the actual death of Coriolanus, but as Fiske points out, the quietly null ending could be referencing his realization that his situation can only be resolved by suicide.

Richard Wagner was probably the first to point out how easily Beethoven's *Coriolan* could be adapted to fit Shakespeare's Coriolanus. Although it wasn't officially inspired by Shakespeare's play, Beethoven certainly knew that play well and is reported to have kept a translation of Shakespeare's complete works beside his bed. There are a few discrepancies between the

versions of the story presented, but essentially, they are similar.

In this first decade of the nineteenth century, Beethoven was, as noted by Fiske, at his most dynamic and exploratory, producing such works as his other tragic overture, *Egmont*, the *Leonore* overtures, his fourth piano concerto, his violin concerto, and the dazzling *Razumovsky Quartets*. Although *Coriolan* wasn't published until 1808, the newspapers announced a performance of it as early as March of 1807, where it was played at the house of "Prince L." Prince L. is most likely one of two patrons of Beethoven, either Prince Lobkowitz or Prince Lichnowsky. *Coriolan* was eminently successful and has become one of Beethoven's most often-performed orchestral works.

Suite for 13 Wind Instruments

Richard Strauss

Richard Strauss was born into a musical family (his father was a professional horn player) and was extremely precocious; he started to compose at the age of six. By his late teens, his compositions were being performed professionally and receiving excellent reviews. In fact, Hans von Bülow, one of the foremost conductors of his time, played Strauss' *Serenade for Wind Instruments* on tour

in 1881. The *Serenade* impressed von, Bülow so much that he commissioned Strauss to write a similar piece for the Meiningen Court Orchestra. The result was the *Suite in B flat*, which Strauss completed in 1864 before he had turned 20 years old. Von Bülow asked Strauss to conduct the premiere of the work but said there would be no time for rehearsals. Nevertheless, Strauss, having very little conducting experience, led the Meiningen Court Orchestra in the first performance of the *Suite in B flat* on November 11, 1884. Apparently, it came off quite well, since von Bülow hired Strauss as the assistant conductor the following year. Von Bülow's outspoken adulation and support for Strauss helped launch his career as an internationally



known composer and conductor.

The *Suite* is rooted firmly in the tradition of Mozart and Brahms, without the influences of Nietzsche and Wagner that would come in later works. The music is quite tonal and lyrical, almost conservative in feel, with only hints of what is to come in Strauss' later compositions. The first movement is somewhat bouncy without being too exuberant and has a definite gaiety in its step. The second movement is extremely lyrical with just a hint of melancholy; listen for the wonderful horn solo in the middle. The third movement is extraordinarily energetic with touches of the "Oriental" flavor that was popular at the time. The last movement starts with a dark, slow introduction, then gradually works its way up to a fugue, which contains a theme reminiscent of *Till Eulenspiegel* and foreshadows the Strauss that is yet to come.

Symphony No. 6

Franz Schubert

The numbering of Schubert symphonies is good for the first six, but there has always been confusion and doubt about the ordering of the remainder, or even about how many he wrote. The "Unfinished" is not the only unfinished one, indeed many Schubert works appear to be unfinished simply because movements became displaced or lost in

the limbo that followed his early death at the age of 31. None of his symphonies was published in his short lifetime and none was publicly performed. The first five symphonies, composed between the ages of 16 and 19, may have been played at the school where Schubert studied and taught, but it was the Sixth that was first played to the Viennese public, on December 14, 1828, just four weeks after his death. It was heard again in Leipzig, with the Fourth, in 1849, but the others had to wait until the 1870s when they were done as a complete series in the Crystal Palace in London under August Manns, with help from George Grove (the founder of the famous dictionary), who had travelled to Vienna to unearth unknown works by Schubert. When Brahms was invited to conduct a Schubert concert in 1873, he declined on the grounds that there were few works by Schubert suitable for performance in the grand style.

Schubert was not yet aiming at the grand style when he wrote these youthful symphonies. It is true that he originally headed the first movement of his Sixth Symphony "Grosse Sinfonie in C," but he later dropped the "Grosse," and once the "Great C-major" Symphony of 1825-26 became known, the Sixth was inevitably labelled the "Little C-major" Symphony. His model in the Fifth Symphony was Mozart, but the Sixth rather suggests Haydn and Beethoven, and he was also touched by the craze for Rossini's music that had recently swept



Vienna. He even broke off composition of the symphony to write two overtures “in the Italian style.”

While the solemn chords at the beginning recall Beethoven, the opening of the Allegro in the winds suggests Haydn. Everywhere we recognize Schubert’s inimitable melodic gift and his fondness for slipping harmonically into distant keys and then painlessly back to where he started from. He also inserts a charming tune in canon (clarinet and bassoon leading off, oboe and flute replying) just before the end of the exposition. The first movement concludes with a coda that truly suggests the grand style.

The slow movement might be seen as a contest between the mild-mannered main theme and the heavy, emphatic

passage that follows, full of triplets. Haydn again seems to be the model. Triplets infuse the return of the mild theme, but the heavy theme is tamed, and the movement ends in perfect tranquility.

After a Beethovenian Scherzo that looks forward to the “Great C-major” Symphony in its grand design, the finale is light and jocular, displaying a delightful skill in orchestration. Scampering violins as accompaniment to wind dialog, dotted phrases passed back and forth, and an unstoppable momentum bear the marks of Schubert’s ebullient style. If not grand, then certainly great.

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.

