

Saturday 20 July 8.00pm Sadwrn 20 Gorffennaf

OPENING CONCERT

HANDEL	Overture, Queen of Sheba
GLUCK	Dance of the Blessed Spirits for flute and orchestra
HOLST	St. Pauls Suite
TELEMANN	Horn Concerto
HOROVITZ	Clarinet Concertino
FAURE	Apres un Reve for cello and orchestra
ELGAR	Serenade for Strings
BARTOK	Romanian Dances

Performers

Judith Hall - flute, Anthony Halstead - horn, Nicholas Jones - cello & director
Featured Young Soloist - Emyllt Lloyd Jones - Clarinet
Musicfest Artists Orchestra

RUMANIAN DANCES Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

The advent of post-war border redefinitions has had many unusual ramifications for Europeans, not least of which is the situation in which people born in one country find some years later that politics has given them a new nationality. Béla Bartók was one such person, born in a small town which at the time was part of Hungary, but which subsequently became part of Rumania. Bartók's early music education was given by his mother, followed by four years at the Budapest Conservatory, where subsequently he was made a professor. Bartók's relationship with Europe in general and his home country in particular was never easy, and his compositions met with great opposition in Budapest. Disillusioned, Bartók emigrated to the USA in 1940 and found a temporary post at Columbia University and also lectured for a time at Harvard. Unfortunately his health deteriorated rapidly, and after a year in hospital Bartók died in his sleep on September 26th, 1945, having lived just long enough to hear of the end of the war.

It was during Bartók's first year as a resident in the USA that this set of seven dances was compiled and orchestrated. Throughout his life Bartók had studied Eastern European folk music, working closely with his friend and colleague Zoltán Kodály, and much of his work is based on Magyar folk tunes with their strange harmonies, although Bartók generally developed new harmonies for his own works. The Rumanian Dances are based on traditional Rumanian folk tunes and dances, taking traditional folk dance forms. The dances have been orchestrated many ways, for piano alone, for full orchestra, and Bartók's original for string ensemble.

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SERENADE FOR STRINGS IN E MINOR OPUS 20
Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Allegro piacevole
Larghetto
Allegretto

This work, composed in the spring of 1892, may well have been a reworking of the three Sketches for Strings (Spring Song, Elegy, Finale) which had been performed in May 1888 by the Worcester Musical Union. This was shortly before Elgar's engagement to Caroline Alice Roberts; on the manuscript of the Serenade Elgar was to write "Braut (i.e. Alice) helped a great deal to make these little tunes". In the intervening years they had married, attempted to make their way in London, failed, and returned to Malvern to resume the tiresome round of teaching and playing which he had hoped to abandon. Novello's refusal to publish the work in July 1892 must have been a disappointment, but Breitkopf and Härtel accepted it the following year. This may account for the fact that its first complete professional performance took place in Europe, at Antwerp on 3rd July 1896.

The first movement is ternary in design, the reprise inventively varied, and the central section in the tonic major with a broader melodic arch. The slow movement is framed by an introduction and coda, the principal theme given two statements, the second gloriously enriched. They are separated by an episode, derived from the main theme by reversing the order of its two opening bars. The finale is in two sections, the first developing a theme in Elgar's characteristic trochaic metre, the second recalling the material of the first movement.

The Serenade remained, deservedly, one of Elgar's favourite works, and he recorded it at his last session for the Gramophone Company on 9th August 1933.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA
Georg Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

One of the greatest composers of the Baroque age, Handel was in his element when writing large vocal works. During his extensive years travelling, he assimilated a variety of styles, including the counterpoint and formalism of JS Bach, the great spectacle of Italian Opera, the expressive use of the French Chorus and the tradition of the English Oratorio. Of these traditions, it was Italian Opera that was Handel's great love, however, this form did not prove as popular in Britain, due in part to the expanding middle classes with their variety of evangelism, puritanism, methodism and distrust of 'decadent' art forms, and partly due to the reaction of the Bishop of London against the stage performance of biblical stories. The sacred oratorio was not considered a suitable form of entertainment for the theatre, and thus when the Messiah was first performed in London, despite its title as a "New and Sacred Oratorio" it was not well received.

Deidamia was the composer's last attempt at Italian Opera, and following the public's indifference to its reception, Handel turned exclusively to oratorio, subsequently agreeing to stage a series of oratorios at Covent Garden during the lent season of 1741, and it is these oratorios for which he is most remembered. The form does not relate to the corresponding form on the Continent, but was specific to the British love of choral textures, combined with the composer's very personal imprint; Handel loved drama and the dramatic context is the most implicit aspect of the sixteen such works which followed. The twelfth was *Solomon*, composed by Handel in just twenty days in May-June 1748, following a bout of serious ill health, and first performed at Covent Garden on 17th March 1749.

The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba is the introductory sinfonia to Act III. The Queen is the illustrious guest of Solomon "from Arabia's spicy shores, bounded by the heavy main". It is the oboes, rather than the more usual regal trumpets, which give the Queen's gentle radiant character a fanfare announcement.

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GLUCK - Dance of Blessed Spirits

Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck (1714-1787) was born in Bohemia, but spent most of his life in Vienna. His interests originally lay in operas comiques, ballet-pantomimes and dramatic works for court entertainment, but later he began to compose what he termed 'reform operas'.

In order to avoid interrupting the dramatic flow with conventional orchestral ritornellos and florid ornamental singing, he favoured a more continuous texture, with recitative, aria, dance and choral music fully integrated. This dance comes from the first of these operas, 'Orphee' as it was renamed for its appearance in Paris in 1774, and comes at the moment where Orphee is in Hades pleading for the return of Euridice, while the Shades dance around him.

ST. PAUL'S SUITE
Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Jig
Ostinato
Intermezzo
Finale

Holst went up to the Royal College of Music at the age of eighteen, in 1893, to study composition with Stanford; he had behind him the valuable tradition of three generations of professional music making as well as useful experience as village organist and choirmaster, and as conductor of village choral societies. Practical experience as a trombonist and teacher, particularly at St. Paul's Girls' School and at Goldsmith's College, remained an important force throughout Holst's life and he had the happy knack of communicating his love of good music to all he met. Experimentation with composition began early in Holst's life, but he seemed to have difficulty in finding his own natural musical language and freeing himself from the overwhelming power of Wagner. Stanford's teaching was salutary in fostering craftsmanship, clarity and technique but Holst's exercises were often greeted with the exclamation "It won't do, me boy, it won't do!" It was Holst's life-long friendship with Vaughan Williams, whom he met in 1895, that eventually pointed the way; in 1903 Vaughan Williams began collecting folk-songs in Essex, and in these songs Holst found the inspiration he needed.

The St. Paul's Suite for strings was written for the orchestra of St. Paul's Girls' School in 1912-13 and, as the orchestra contained wind instruments by the time it was completed, Holst added *ad lib* wind parts and the influence of folk-song is apparent throughout the work. The Jig is a cheerful movement beginning vigorously in unison, moving on to explore a whole array of different textures. The second movement is fleet of foot, the *Ostinato* figure, a group of four fast quavers, entrusted almost entirely to the second violins. Two themes are the basis of the *Intermezzo*, the first a plaintive solo for violin is suddenly and violently interrupted by the second. The *Finale* was written some three years before the rest of the suite and is almost identical with a movement from the second suite for military band. In it is heard the well-known tune Greensleeves but Holst invited all the girls who were not in the orchestra to join in the performance by singing the tune of *The Dargason* to the traditional words "It was a maid of my country, as she came by a hawthorn tree". The St. Paul's suite is a perfectly balanced work of detailed proportions with delightful interludes of folk melodies and, despite its origins as a composition for students, is remarkably difficult to play well!

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TELEMANN Horn Concerto

George Philipp Telemann was born in 1681 in Magdsburg, the son of a clergyman. He attended Leipzig University where he studied science and languages but also taught himself the art of musical composition, a remarkable feat.

As a composer, he was prolific in all musical genres: opera, oratorio, sonatas, suites and concertos. Although he himself declared that the concerto form was of little interest, he nevertheless composed a great many, including this D major horn concerto, his only known example for a single horn (he also wrote concertos for 2 and 3 horns).

It is a short, spirited work in three movements. The slow movement is particularly notable for its high "cantilena" horn writing. The concerto is scored for strings and a single oboe which only plays with the "Tutti" group, and is sometimes omitted in performance.

JOSEPH HOROVITZ - Concertante for clarinet and strings
(born 1926)

This work was written in 1948 while the composer was studying at the Royal College of Music in London, under Gordon Jacob. It is his Opus 1 and the first of his compositions to be published. Like his later, larger Concerto it was composed for his fellow student Gervase de Peyer. The shape and form of the piece is closely modelled on Weber's well known Concertino, though the melodic content is entirely original. The piece is in one continuous movement, although three main sections become obvious. A slow introduction, followed by a theme and variations, and a short rondo-finale.

FAURE - *Après un reve* (for cello and orchestra)

Gabriel Faure (1845 - 1924) was the most important French composer of his generation, and was a leading figure in development of a truly French style of music and for the dominance of the Romantic Austrian and Germanic school.

He wrote songs throughout his creative lifetime, creating a style wonderfully suited to the French language. This song "Après un Rive" was one of his most popular and was first transcribed for the cello by Casals. The juxtaposition of a floating melody with beautifully sensuous harmonies is quite remarkable. This arrangement for cello and strings was made by Tony Merritt-Jones and edited by Nicholas Jones.