

HELIX
ENSEMBLE
www.helixensemble.co.uk

Innovative Concerts
Inspiring Directors
Exceptional Musicians

Symphonic Strings

Musical Director and leader:

Clare Bhabra

St Wystan's, Repton
Saturday 14th May 2016

Helix Ensemble would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard Finch for his enthusiasm and kind assistance with tonight's concert. We also welcome Oliver to our viola section.

Clare Bhabra studied music at Birmingham University where she graduated in 1984 with a B.Mus and a 1st in performance. She continued her studies at the Royal Northern College of Music under the direction of Lydia Mordkovitch.



At the age of twenty-two Clare joined the first violins of Opera North. For the next ten years she combined a busy orchestral schedule with co-founding the Mirage String Quartet and the Janacek Piano Trio. With these ensembles she gave numerous concerts around the country.

Since moving to Nottinghamshire in 2002 Clare has continued to perform as an orchestral and chamber musician with various groups including Sinfonia Viva. In 2010 she was appointed leader of the Nottingham Philharmonic Orchestra and also finds time to teach and coach pupils aged from eight to eighty.

Mendelssohn String Symphony no 1.

Finzi

Romance

Holst

St Paul's Suite

Interval

Shostakovich

Chamber Symphony

Grieg

Holberg Suite

String Symphony no. 1

Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

I. Allegro II. Andante III. Allegro

Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg in 1809 but, due to the French invasion, was soon evacuated to Berlin, later moving to Paris to study piano and Mozart's music.

He studied composition and piano from a very early age. Between ages twelve and fourteen, whilst studying with Carl Zelter, he wrote a series of twelve string symphonies. The first seven have been considered rather academic in style and it is the first of these which is being performed tonight. All the symphonies have just three movements, this common baroque symphonic structure is sometimes referred to as 'low', as opposed to later aristocratic four-movement symphonies, which were referred to as 'high'. It was originally intended for just five players.

In String Symphony no. 1, the movements are a pounding Allegro, a charming Andante and an exciting Allegro. The start is as vibrant as Handel or Haydn. The minor domain in the Andante soon moves into the major in line with his generally happy temperament. The last movement is plain but includes a sturdy dominant pedal on bass. With Zelter's encouragement Mendelssohn emulated Bach, Handel, Haydn and Mozart's styles. This explains the use of learned counterpoint, complex chromatic part writing, the generation of fugues and canons - when other composers were avoiding the rigour of strict counterpoint. Schumann said he was the "Mozart" of the 19th century.

The foregoing is not to say that he was not touched by the music of Beethoven, Weber and the emerging romantic music. The culmination of this early life was the famous music for *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the age of seventeen.

George Fletcher

Romance for String Orchestra Op11.

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Gerald Finzi was born in London and studied in Harrogate and in York with Edward Bairstow. From 1930 he taught at the Royal Academy of Music in London before settling in Wiltshire where he grew rare apples and collected 18th century English music. He subsequently founded the Newbury String players, an amateur string orchestra mixing revivals of old music with contemporary premieres. Helix Ensemble with Clive Pollard has given numerous local performances of his single-movement, reflective and solemn Eclogue for piano and strings.

In similar but more optimistic vein, paying due homage to Elgar and Vaughan Williams, Finzi's Romance in Eb major was composed in 1928 but only published in the 1950's. It was first performed by the Reading String players in 1951. This was one of a number of early works that Finzi revised and issued after learning that he was suffering from Hodgkins disease and probably had fewer than ten years to live. He died in 1956 in Oxford.

According to the official Gerald Finzi website operated by his family, this short, single-movement work is 'highly passionate in character and rich in its melodic invention.

Finzi's writing here is characteristically open-hearted and approachable. From the stillness of the opening, the music unfolds, reaching a peak of intensity before returning to its roots. ' It features eloquent solos for our leader.

Andrew Chadwick

St Paul's Suite

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

I. Jig, II. Ostinato, III. Intermezzo, IV. Finale (The Dargason)

From 1905 (until his death) Holst was head music teacher at St Paul's Girls' School, West London, where they had recently build a new music wing. The new sound-proofed facilities provided him with the perfect conditions in which to compose. And so it was that the *St Paul's Suite* was written in a happy frame of mind, and by way of thanks to the school. Images of morris dancing capers emerge, reminding us of the earlier suites for military band, and perhaps glimpses of *Mars* and *Mercury* from *The Planets* (which was to follow).

Helix Programmes

Chamber Symphony Op.110a in C minor Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

I. Largo - II. Allegro molto - III. Allegretto - IV. Largo - V. Largo

Shostakovich is primarily remembered for his fifteen symphonies but most of his energies in later life were put into quartet writing.

With Shostakovich's approval, this work is a string orchestra arrangement, made by the conductor and violinist Rudolf Barshai, of his eighth quartet composed in 1960,. It makes the work more accessible, but no less intense. It is dedicated to "The victims of fascism and war" and was inspired by a visit to Dresden while it was still under reconstruction. There are quotations from earlier works, including his first symphony, the cello concerto, the opera *Lady Macbeth*, a piano trio, and his musical monogram D-S-C-H (D-Eb-C-B in German musical notation) - suggesting that he regarded himself as a victim.

The monogram permeates the entire work and is crucial to understanding its structure. The first movement introduces it from the outset, imitatively in C minor, so that one is in no doubt about the primary motif of the whole work. Chromatic lines develop above it and an insistent two-bar phrase transforms itself (*attacca*) into the whirlwind, harsh and percussive second movement like a menacing fairground. Movement three has a scherzo-like version buzzing with trills. The central trio section distorts a simple haunting melody with more chromatic runs before the scherzo returns. It runs straight into the next movement, alternating tense hammering with another sustained, thin variation of the monogram and leading directly to the final movement version, closing the circle of searing introversion with the echoes of the first.

Helix Programmes

Holberg Suite Op.40

Edvard Grieg (1843 - 1907)

I. Praeludium: *allegro vivace* II. Sarabande: *andante* III. Gavotte: *allegretto*
IV Air: *andante religioso* V. Rigaudon: *allegro con brio*

Edvard Grieg, born in Bergen, was the first Norwegian composer to gain an international reputation. He is now best known for his piano concerto and the suites of music for Ibsen's play Peer Gynt, but his smaller works – lyric pieces for piano and his many songs – better display his unique strengths.

The Holberg Suite dates from 1884, and is sub-titled “From Holberg's Time – Suite in Olden Style”. He wrote it to mark the bi-centenary of Ludwig Holberg (1684 - 1774), a Norwegian writer, historian, philosopher and playwright, also born in Bergen. In the 1700s Norway and Denmark were a single political unit, so Holberg was educated mostly in Copenhagen. He travelled widely in Europe and even spent a couple of years in Oxford. He wrote extensively on many subjects and because of his 30-plus plays, all comedies, he was known as the “Moliere of the North”. He was a real man of the Enlightenment, and had he not been from such an out-of-the-way corner of Europe would surely be better known to history. As part of the bi-centenary celebrations a memorial was erected to him in central Bergen. There are also statues to him in Oslo and Copenhagen and his most unlikely memorial is the tiny settlement of Holberg on the northern tip of Vancouver Island in Canada, an area settled by Danish emigres in the late 19th century.

Grieg actually wrote two works for the Holberg bi-centenary; this suite and a cantata for male chorus and baritone soloist, which was performed at the unveiling of the statue in Bergen. The cantata was a commission and, being specific to the occasion, was soon forgotten. However the piano suite, which Grieg had written at the same time for his own amusement, was received enthusiastically. He arranged it for string orchestra a few months later, in which form it gained much wider success, becoming one of the composer's most popular works.

The suite has five movements. I should point out that the music is merely in the style of the early 18th century: it is not a reworking of genuine 18th century music. The opening Praeludium corresponds to the prelude in a Bach suite: it sets the tone for the rest of the work without being a dance form itself. Constant running semiquavers form a backdrop to the singing melody. A gentle Sarabande follows, a slow dance in triple time. The Gavotte is a stately dance in 4/4 time, with a central section entitled musette; this charmingly imitates bagpipes or hurdy-gurdy. The Air is very slow, marked *religioso*, and is the longest movement. The Rigaudon is a lively finale which has a slower central section in the minor key.

Pete Brien

Violin

Clare Bhabra
Alison Axton
Jill Barker
Jane Benson
Sarah Cresswell
Karen Eveson
Catharine Lester
Claire Seedhouse
Freya Stokoe
George Sutcliff
Pauline Toone
Morag Thomson

Viola

Andrew Chadwick
Sally Smith
Juliet Ward
Oliver Whittingham

Cello

Margaret Chadwick
Andrew Milledge
Clym Stock-Williams

Double Bass

Matt Barks
Naomi Turner



The award-winning Helix Ensemble is an experienced group of musicians based in the East Midlands who enjoy performing chamber or small orchestral music.

The Helix Ensemble aims to introduce a variety of contemporary works by composers in the region performed alongside more familiar pieces, and has given the first performances of more than 20 new compositions since its foundation in 1992.



Our next concert will be at St Mary and All Saints, Bingham:

on 17th September 2016

See website for details, or leave your details with a member of Helix for the mailing list

www.helixensemble.co.uk

If you would like to advertise here, or if you would like to sponsor Helix, be it from concert refreshments to a full concert, please email Karen.eveson@btinternet.com or speak to a member of the orchestra.

Swann Cottage



A two bedroom holiday cottage in south Derbyshire overlooking the River Derwent.

For photographs, details, prices and availability go to
www.swanncottage.co.uk

20% of booking fee goes to The Helix Ensemble if you mention this advertisement at time of booking (conditions apply)