

**HELIX**  
**ENSEMBLE**  
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*Innovative Concerts*  
*Inspiring Directors*  
*Exceptional Musicians*

Musical Director  
**Clare Bhabra**

CLIFTON  
**MUSIC  
FESTIVAL**  
2017

**ST. MARY'S CHURCH**  
Clifton Village, Nottingham NG11 8NH

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2017**



Clare Bhabra studied Music at Birmingham University and then at the Royal Northern College of Music under the guidance of Lydia Mordkovitch. Whilst still studying there she joined Opera North where she enjoyed ten very happy years wallowing in the beautiful music of Opera! She also found time within a busy schedule to become a founder member of the Mirage String Quartet and the Janacek Piano Trio.

Now living in Nottingham, Clare continues to perform as both an orchestral and chamber musician including Sinfonia Viva with whom, as well as giving concerts, she is a regular contributor to their outreach education team. In 2010 she was appointed leader of the Nottingham Philharmonic Orchestra and recently performed the Lark ascending with them at the Royal Concert Hall. In 2012 she was invited to join the Tedesca string quartet. As well as performing all over the country they have recently been invited to become quartet in residence for the Midland Sinfonia and directors of regular courses at Benslow Music School. In her spare time you will find her watching cricket or waiting for her bread to rise!

**Wagner: Siegfried Idyll**

**Finzi: Romance**

**Raff: Sinfonietta in F major Op. 188**

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**Clive Pollard: Southwell Suite**

**Romero: Fuga con Pajarillo**

**Malcolm Arnold: Sinfonietta No 1. Op 48**



## Siegfried Idyll

Richard Wagner (1830-1883)

In most books about chamber music, Wagner appears, in some cases somewhat dismissively, as a reference point and influence on others, rather than a subject of study. Siegfried Idyll was written to be played on Christmas day 1870 in the most domestic of situations, to give his waking wife a joint 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday and Christmas present in gratitude for their baby who shared the opera hero's name and it was performed on the stairs of their home. It must have been a very large staircase as it was performed by 16 players on that occasion, now commonly performed by a Mozart sized chamber orchestra. Siegfried Idyll is Wagner's only masterpiece of 'absolute' music. It is a single piece of non-programmatic music, subtly coloured, often contrapuntal and full of delicate nuances. Much of the thematic music is taken from the opera 'Siegfried' plus a German cradle song and some material from an earlier unpublished string quartet.

*Helix programmes*

## Romance for String Orchestra, Op.11

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 18<sup>th</sup> century English music. He 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 1950s. It was first performed by the Reading String players in 1951 and 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. 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*

## Sinfonietta in Fmajor, Op 188

Joachim Raff (1822-1882)

**1. Allegro; 2. Allegro molto; 3. Larghetto; 4. Vivace.**

The "Complete Method for French Horn" by Oscar Franz (1843-1886) has a short section of orchestral excerpts which includes a quotation from Raff's third symphony (*Im Wald*). When I first started learning the horn (aged 11) I knew only a few of the composers represented in this section of the study but over the years all the excerpts have become familiar to me apart from this one. Forty-six years later, and for the first time, I get to hear a work by this composer and volunteer to offer this programme note.

Raff was born in Lachen in Switzerland to German parents. He was mentored by Franz Liszt and Felix Mendelssohn and became a prolific composer, producing eleven Symphonies, six Operas and eight String Quartets as well as other works.

His *Sinfonietta* was written in Wiesbaden in Spring 1873 when he was at the peak of his compositional powers. There was an earlier, shorter, piece for wind band but tonight's work was his last composition for a "wind only" ensemble. He also produced his own arrangement of the work for Piano, four hands. Dvořák's much more well-known wind serenade came five years after Raff's piece.

It seems as if Raff was the very first composer to use the term "Sinfonietta" to describe a work. The popularity of the piece was such that other composers adopted this name for works that they might consider a "little" symphony. In fact Raff's own composition is conceived on a symphonic scale (lasting around 25 minutes, there is nothing "little" about it) and uses the double woodwind (including two horns) ensemble very much as a source of orchestral colour rather than as individual lines in a chamber work.

Throughout, Raff employs his trademarks of counterpoint and classic musical forms but these never interfere with the work's pervading atmosphere of *joi de vivre*. The influences of Mendelssohn can be heard and his love of the sound of two flutes playing as a duet may remind some listeners of some of the Tchaikovsky ballets.

Very popular in his day (popular enough to be included as a representative work in a horn study book), Raff's music seems to have disappeared completely from modern concert programmes. It is one of the trademarks of the Helix Ensemble to perform works that, through no fault of their own, have fallen into neglect.

Roger Swann

## Southwell Suite

Clive Pollard

The Southwell Suite was composed as an affectionate expression of the composer's love for Southwell, the place, the Minster and the surrounding countryside. The pastoral quality of the music is unashamedly light and airy, with a few romantic moments and a rather dark and mysterious fourth movement. The work was first performed by Helix in 2010 in Southwell Minster.

1. *Prelude*: A journey to Southwell through the countryside, on a bright, sunny morning.
2. *The Minster*: A portrait of stately, graceful architecture.
3. *The Burgage*: A breath of fresh air! Freshly-cut grass, trees and bird song.
4. *Medieval Carvings*: A tour of medieval faces and grotesques in the Minster, all frozen in time.
5. *The Market Town*: A busy market day, picturesque buildings nestling within idyllic countryside.
6. *Postlude*: Contemplation and reflection at the end of an eventful day in Southwell

Clive Pollard

## Fuga con Pajarillo

Aldemaro Romero (1928-2007)

Aldemaro Romero was a self-taught Venezuelan pianist, composer, arranger and conductor working in a wide range of musical styles. These included Caribbean, Jazz, Venezuelan dances, and various classical genres: works for large orchestral, solo and chorus and orchestra, and chamber music. He is credited with the creation of a new form of Venezuelan music *Onda Nueva* (New Wave) which was derived from the traditional dance Joropo and influenced by Brazilian Bossa Nova style. During the 50s and 60s he collaborated with various artists such as Charlie Byrd, Dean Martin, Stan Kenton and Tito Puente, touring, recording and promoting Latin American music abroad. He was awarded the Moscow Cinema Festival's Peace Prize in 1969 for his film score, *Simón Bolívar*. In 1979 he acquired government funding to found a second major orchestra in the Venezuelan capital, the Caracas Philharmonic Orchestra, to promote the music of Romero and other Latin American composers as well as classical repertoire. The *Fuga con Pajarillo para Cuerdas* (Fugue on a Pajarillo for String Orchestra) is built on the popular Venezuelan/Columbian dance *pajarillo* (a dance in 3/4 time), contrasting the dance with a classical fugue. Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel describes the piece: "The pajarillo pervading the melody gives a sense of improvisation and contrast with the predetermined fugal form." The version of the *Fuga* that will be heard tonight is the original version for strings. Later versions have been made for larger orchestral forces, and improvised sections with folk instruments are inserted in some performances.

*Helix programmes*

## Sinfonietta No 1. Op 48

Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006)

Born in Northampton, Malcolm Arnold was one of five siblings in a prosperous shoe making family, the industry that made Northampton both world famous and an important railway centre. He became a professional trumpeter during World War 2, becoming principal trumpet with the London Philharmonic orchestra. During a career break for war military service he shot himself in the foot.

In 1948 he won a music scholarship, which enabled him to move over to musical composition. His bread and butter work was film music and produced scores for up to six films a year. Most films were forgotten over time, but two that are still in public consciousness are the railway themed films "Bridge over the River Kwai" and "The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery".

He composed countless short pieces many aimed at amateur and child musicians and, at the opposite end of the scale, nine symphonies. His musical idiom was essentially conservative including unadventurous harmonies. Because much of his work was intended to be banal and jolly, many critics were sceptical about his serious work. The *Symphonietta* No. 1 was written around the same time as the second symphony. Commissioned by the Boyd Neel orchestra, originally formed to revive baroque string music, it is a three movement work in the spirit of an 18th century divertimento. The finale is a blast for the horns, leading towards a jubilant conclusion, some suggested it was inspired by nostalgia for being a trumpet player.

George Fletcher

<b>Violin</b>	Jill Barker Andrew Chadwick Sarah Cresswell Attila Domokos Karen Eveson George Fletcher Claire Seedhouse Freya Stokoe George Sutcliff	<b>Flute</b>	Jo Conquest Alison Madin
		<b>Oboe</b>	Molly Bright Alison Slater
		<b>Clarinet</b>	Kate Fox Susan Lansdale
		<b>Bassoon</b>	Sarah Brookman Poppy Wheeler
<b>Viola</b>	Elspeth Brien Merri Knight Mark Lansdale Sally Smith	<b>Horn</b>	Julian Haslam Roger Swann
<b>'Cello</b>	Margaret Chadwick Steven Halls Andrew Milledge Esther Turner	<b>Trumpet</b>	Martin Cresswell
		<b>Trombone</b>	Dominic Blackwell
<b>Bass</b>	Matt Barks Naomi Turner		

The Helix Ensemble is an experienced group of musicians based in the East Midlands who enjoy performing chamber or small orchestral music. The group aims to introduce a variety of contemporary works, to be performed alongside more familiar pieces, and has given the first performances of more than 20 new compositions since its foundation in 1992.

Helix is delighted to be returning to this Clifton and would like to thank Clare Ashton for her continuing support.

Find out more about the Helix Ensemble, and future concerts, on our website [www.helixensemble.co.uk](http://www.helixensemble.co.uk) and join our mailing list by leaving your details with any of the members of the Helix Ensemble.

Come and join Helix at St Mary's Church, Clifton on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2017

A visit by Helix and their good friend, David Greed alongside his colleague David Aspin, both from Opera North, to perform works including Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante*, Mozart's Symphony No. 29 and Haydn's Symphony No. 22 (*The Philosopher*).

### Friends of Helix Ensemble

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If you would like to become a Friend of Helix please complete a form which is available at the concert or email [friends@helixensemble.co.uk](mailto:friends@helixensemble.co.uk).

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Have you got a favourite piece that you would like to sponsor Helix to perform for you in a future concert? Maybe it is a work that you have never heard live or it is special for other reasons. Thinking along those lines, perhaps you would like to offer suggestions for a whole concert and create a concert with us? Either way, we would love to hear your suggestions. Please email Helix at [helixensemble@btinternet.com](mailto:helixensemble@btinternet.com) or contact Anne on 0115 972 6377. Alternately, you are welcome to talk to any of the players during the interval or after the concert

