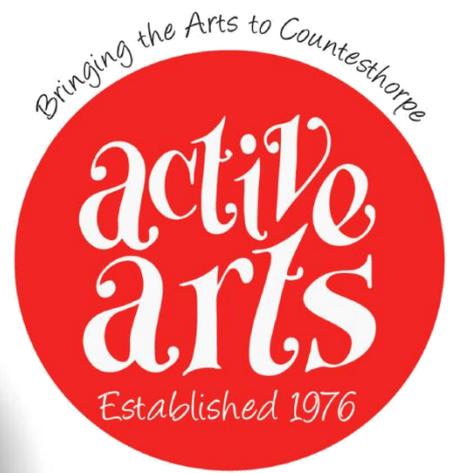


**HELIX**  
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# ***A Winter Warmer***

**St. Andrew's Church  
Countesthorpe  
Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

***Musical Director:  
Toby Purser***

## **Dvořák: Czech Suite**

## **Delius: On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring**

## **Ibert: Hommage à Mozart**

-----*Interval*-----

## **Beethoven: Symphony No. 4**

The Helix Ensemble is grateful to Active Arts for for their support for this concert.

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## Toby Purser



Toby Purser first came to prominence following recognition in the 2002 Leeds Conducting Competition, and was appointed Assistant Conductor of L'Ensemble Orchestral de Paris for 2007 following his participation in the Vendôme Academy with János Fűrst and John Nelson.

Orchestras he has conducted include the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, London Concert Orchestra, L'Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Kotorart Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestra of Opera North, the Orpheus Sinfonia, Oxford University Orchestra, Sinfonia Viva, Kammerphilharmonie Graz, St Petersburg Camerata and the St Petersburg Festival Orchestra. From 2002 until 2011 he was principal conductor of the London International Orchestra. A CD of Bel Canto arias recorded with Mexican tenor Jesús León and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic has just been released.

In November 2014, he made his company debut at ENO, conducting two performances of *The Marriage of Figaro*. From September 2016, he has been appointed joint recipient of the ENO Mackerras Fellowship. He is a regular guest at Grange Park Opera where he has conducted *Madama Butterfly*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Rigoletto* and *Fortunio*, which was also performed at the Buxton Festival. Recent engagements also include Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment* for Opera Della Luna at Iford Arts, Haydn's *La Canterina* for Bampton Classical Opera, *Sister Act* for Pimlico Opera, and concerts at Cadogan Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and Symphony Hall, Birmingham.

Working for Pimlico Opera each winter since 2008, he has conducted productions in various prisons, with a cast of inmates performing alongside professionals in repertoire include *Carmen the Musical*, *Les Misérables*, *Sugar*, *Sweeney Todd* and *West Side Story*.

Having studied with George Hurst, Ilya Musin, and at the Royal Academy of Music with Colin Metters, he was invited in 2010 by the Aberystwyth International MusicFest to direct its first conductors' class, following which the class is now established as an annual event. He was assistant to the late George Hurst at the Canford Summer School of Music, where he remains a tutor, and was co-director of the Graz Conductors' Summer School 2008-9.

[www.tobypurser.co.uk](http://www.tobypurser.co.uk)

## Czech Suite (Op.39)

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

- I Preludium (Pastorale)
- II Polka
- III Sousedská (Minuetto)
- IV Romance (Romanza)
- V Finale (Furiant)

The opus number (Op.39) for this work is misleading, as it was actually written after the well-known Slavonic Dances (Op.46). Dvořák had a first option agreement with the German publisher Simrock for all his new works, however he was offered better terms by another publisher, Schlesinger. So, in a canny, if underhand way, Dvořák gave this work a fictitious early opus number so as to avoid detection by Simrock. It is for similar publishing shenanigans that his *New World Symphony* was first published as No.5, later known as No. 8 and finally No. 9!

The suite has five movements of varying tempi and is unmistakably Czech in both mood and character. The first movement and the Romance are in the style of Czech folk songs whilst the other movements recall popular Czech dances including a Polka and a waltz-like Sousedská.

Julian Haslam

## On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring

Frederick Delius (1862-1934)

Frederick Delius composed this short 'tone poem' in 1912, at the age of 50. At this point in his life, he had spent 15 years as a full-time resident in France, but was not yet at the point where he was so disabled by syphilis that he needed to dictate his compositions to an amanuensis. *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* (and its less well-known companion, *Summer Night on the River*) was reportedly written at the suggestion of the Australian pianist and composer, Percy Grainger, who believed he needed to write something which could be performed by smaller ensembles.

Stylistically, this piece fits fully into his reputation as an impressionistic musical portrait-painter of nature – the slow waltz rhythm gently drives a peaceful melody, which is occasionally punctuated by the cuckoo's recognisable call, particularly in the clarinet. The melody is taken from the Norwegian folk tune *I Ola-dalom, i Ola-kjønn* ("In Ola Valley, at Ola Lake"),

published by Delius' friend, Edvard Grieg (as number 14 in his *Norwegian Folk Songs, Op. 66*).

The piece was first performed by the Gewandhaus orchestra in Leipzig (where Delius had studied music) in 1913, under the baton of Artur Nikisch. Having roots already in three European countries, it soon found strong support also among British musicians - particularly Peter Warlock and Thomas Beecham - and remains popular to this day.

Clym Stock-Williams

## **Hommage à Mozart**

## **Jacques Ibert (1890 – 1962)**

Written in 1956, the *Hommage à Mozart* was Ibert's final work for orchestra. Ibert originally planned to become an actor and entered the Paris Conservatoire to study drama, but he was drawn into the institution's musical branch and studied composition. Among his teachers was Gabriel Fauré. After returning to his studies following an interruption for war service, he won the Conservatoire's prestigious Prix de Rome composing competition in 1919. He spent three years in the Italian capital before returning to Paris to launch a highly successful career as a composer.

Ibert first made his mark by combining his twin loves, music and drama, as a writer of incidental music for theatre and film, but eventually worked in virtually all forms of music except oratorio. He belonged to a generation of French composers, including Milhaud and Poulenc, who are best known for their light, humorous pieces of music but was also capable of creating more serious works.

In 1956, French Radio decided to commission a new work to honour the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mozart's birth and Ibert was the natural choice to provide it, having composed for radio previously, and being well-known for his love of Mozart, including having provided cadenzas for Mozart's clarinet and bassoon concertos.

*Hommage* is a short, one-movement work using a small orchestra such as Mozart would have known and adopting the rondo form that was popular for 18<sup>th</sup> century finales. Titled *Allegro giocoso*, it is a lively collection of contrasting episodes, resulting in a French-sounding tribute to Mozart.

Elspeth Brien

## Symphony no. 4 in Bb major

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1. Adagio – Allegro vivace
2. Adagio
3. Allegro vivace
4. Allegro ma non troppo

In the summer of 1806, Beethoven was a house guest of Count Lichnowsky, where he met Count Oppersdorf, who offered Beethoven 350 florins for a new symphony. Beethoven was in love with Countess Therese of Brunswick at the time and this symphony may well have been a direct expression of Beethoven's personal happiness. The symphony was finished by November 1806 and received its first performance on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1807 in Vienna. The original manuscript was owned by the Mendelssohn family for a time.

1806 saw the completion of the fourth piano concerto, the violin concerto and the three string quartets dedicated to Count Rasumovsky, which were all forward-looking compositions. By contrast, the fourth symphony seems to retreat from the grandeur of the previous symphony, the Eroica. Maybe Beethoven realised that the public's unenthusiastic response to the Eroica in 1805 meant that he had to shelve his original plan, in which ideas left over from the Eroica project would form the next symphony in C minor (this is of course the fifth symphony, premiered in December 1808).

The fourth symphony starts with a long, slow, mysterious introduction, which gives way to a light-hearted Allegro Vivace in sonata form. The beautiful slow movement combines ostinato dotted figures with a wondrous outpouring of lyric song. In the high-spirited scherzo, containing ingenious cross-rhythms, Beethoven extends the ABA form into an ABABA form for the first time in one of his symphonies. The humorous and vivacious finale brings this cheerful symphony to a brilliant conclusion.

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Catharine Lester  
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George Sutcliff  
Morag Thomson  
Merri Williams

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Elspeth Brien  
Mark Lansdale  
Sally Smith

### Cello

Pete Brien  
Clym Stock-Williams  
Christina Warner

### Bass

Matt Banks  
Andy Knight

### Flute

Jo Conquest  
Annette Negus

### Oboe

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If you have enjoyed our concert, please join us again:

14<sup>th</sup> May 2016

St. Wystan's Church, Repton

Mendelssohn: String Symphony no 1.

Grieg: Holberg Suite

Holst: St. Paul's Suite

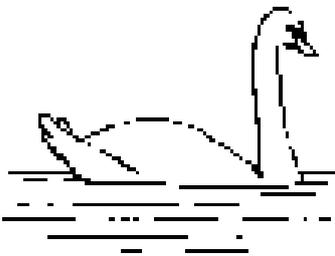
Finzi: Romance

Shostakovich: Chamber Symphony

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 performed alongside more familiar pieces, and has given first performances of more than 20 new compositions since its foundation in 1992.

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