

Saturday 22nd November 2014
and



Bedford Sinfonia

Leader: Martin Hughes

HOLST - *Ballet Music: 'The Perfect Fool'*

PARRY - *I was glad*

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Linden Lea Lark Ascending

Songs of Travel (Quentin Hayes: baritone)

INTERVAL

ELGAR - *The Music Makers*

Jeanette Ager: mezzo-soprano

Michael Rose: conductor



Supporting & Championing Voluntary Music

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www.bedfordchoralsociety.org.uk

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PROGRAMME NOTE

Tonight's programme celebrates the work of English composers, two of whom died in 1934 – Elgar in February and Holst in May. Together with Vaughan Williams (in our slightly revised programme), they all made important contributions to the English choral tradition.

Ballet music 'The Perfect Fool' (Op. 39)

Gustav Holst (1874 – 1934)

Holst is an English composer of Swedish descent. He studied composition at the RCM under Stanford where he became friends with Vaughan Williams. He joined the orchestra of the Carl Rosa Opera Company in 1895, playing the trombone. Later, he toured with the Scottish Orchestra, 'learning the orchestra from the inside'. During the early part of the 20th century, Holst made great contributions to music education and variously was Director of Music in Dulwich, at St. Paul's School for Girls, and at Morley College, greatly raising standards, community spirit and taste. His first major composing success came with *The Planets* in 1919. Holst's music shows the influence of folk song, and madrigal styles, with visionary quality, but with some reserve.

The opera *The Perfect Fool* was composed during 1918 – 22 and the ballet music which introduces the opera was first performed in 1920. Holst wrote the libretto himself.

The opera pokes fun at the works of Verdi, Wagner and Debussy. It was not a success, suffering from the inadequate text, especially in the dialogue. A Princess falls in love with the Fool, who has only one (spoken) word – "No!" – as he rejects her. Tovey suggested that the Princess symbolises the world of opera and the Fool represents the British Public.

The only music of substance is the ballet music, themes from which occur throughout the opera. A Wizard summons the Earth Spirits with a trombone invocation. They scurry underground, leaving the viola to call up the Spirits of Water. With the arrival of the spirits of Fire, the third dance comes into life – the leaping flames are heard in the brilliant orchestration.

"I Was Glad"

C Hubert H Parry (1848 – 1918)

Parry obtained his B. Mus. Degree while still at Eton and went on to read History and Law at Exeter College, Oxford, studying music in his spare time. He studied privately with Sterndale Bennett and Edward Dannreuther, influenced by the music of Brahms and Wagner. In 1875, he became sub-editor of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Parry became Professor of the History of Music at the RCM in 1883, and its director in 1894. Though he composed fine instrumental works (including five symphonies), he is best known for choral compositions.

The anthem "I Was Glad" has been sung at the entrance of the monarch to Westminster Abbey at every coronation since that of Charles I, set by the likes of Henry Purcell; Parry's setting of these verses from Psalm 122 was for the coronation of Edward VII. It was revised for George V in 1911, when the familiar introduction was added.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 - 1958)

Vaughan Williams was encouraged to take an active interest in music from an early age, and had lessons on the piano and violin. At Charterhouse, he took up the viola. Vaughan Williams learned composition in London, Cambridge, Berlin and Paris from Parry, Wood, Stanford, Bruch and Ravel. At this time, he established his close friendship with Holst. As part of the wide range of musical activities which lasted throughout his life, Vaughan Williams had an interest in English folksong, which he started collecting in 1903; this is shown in the modal

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harmonies of his music. Few major composers have kept open so many avenues of composition; earlier kinds of expression are found again in later works.

“Linden Lea”

RVW’s early works are mainly songs and chamber music, influenced by the revival of interest in 16th-century English music and his collecting of folk-songs. This is a setting of words by William Barnes (1801 – 1886), a Church of England minister who wrote over 800 poems.

“The Lark Ascending” – a ‘Romance for violin and orchestra’

Written in 1914, this piece was laid aside at the outbreak of war. It was revised for first performance in 1920. Based on Meredith’s poem of the same name, the piece is almost mystical as the violin soars above the orchestral landscape.

Songs of Travel

Our baritone soloist will be singing six of the nine Songs of Travel. They were composed to words by R.L.Stevenson, mainly in 1904 (“Whither Must I Wander?” had already been written in 1901) at the end of RVW’s apprenticeship which culminated in the Sea Symphony (1903-9). They show many insights into the composer’s temperament and are among the finest written in England around 1900, showing sensitive word-setting. The songs were not performed as a cycle until 1960; three were orchestrated by the composer in 1905, but the others were not set for orchestra until 1960, by Douglas.

1. *The Vagabond*
2. *The Roadside Fire*
3. *The Infinite Shining Heavens*
4. *Whither Must I Wander?*
5. *Bright is the Ring of Words*
6. *I have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope*

The Music Makers, Op 69 (1902 – 12)

Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934)

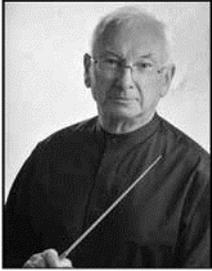
Elgar was born the son of a music shop owner in Worcester. He had hoped to go to the Leipzig Conservatoire, but his father could not afford to send him. Helping his father, Edward became his assistant organist at St. George’s RC Church in Worcester. The young Elgar also played the violin in several local orchestras and chamber group and was composing music for these groups at this early stage. His first large-scale London success came in 1899 with the *Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma)*. 1899 to 1919 was the zenith of Elgar’s creativity and success, with the composition of works like, *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles*, *The Kingdom*, two Symphonies, the Violin Concerto and various orchestral pieces. A gift for melody is at the root of Elgar’s compositions. Harmony is at times richly romantic, at others simple and popular. *The Music Makers* is choral ode, composed in 1911-12 from earlier sketches. It is littered with self-quotations from, among others, *The Enigma Variations*, the first Symphony and the Violin Concerto. H. C. Coles described the work as unworthy of Elgar’s genius; it was received politely but with no enthusiasm. Perhaps the vague sentiment of the poem appealed to Elgar’s weaker side, allowing himself to underline its words with the quotations from his greater works. There is a touch of vulgarity in both Elgar’s work and in the mood of the era just before the First World War. The text of the work is by Arthur O’Shaunessy (1844 – 1881), born in London of Irish descent. Although professionally he studied reptiles and amphibians, he had a true passion for literature, publishing his first collection of poetry in 1870. This ode comes from the 1874 collection ‘Music and Moonlight’.

G.D.D.

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THE ARTISTS

Michael Rose: *Conductor*



Conductor, teacher and composer Michael Rose's long and varied career ranges from conducting at the Proms to writing music for junior string quartets. He is renowned as one of the country's leading orchestral trainers, based on his four years as Assistant in Charge of the BBC Training Orchestra and over forty years as the musical director of the Bedfordshire Youth Orchestra.

Michael graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 1953 with piano and violin as principal studies. After three years' military service in the Regimental Band of the Scots Guards, he spent several years as a teacher and music adviser in London. During this time he won the Clements Memorial Prize for a String Quartet, and began his conducting career with choirs and orchestras, which led in 1966-67 to an Apprentice Conductor's position with the BBC Northern Orchestra (now the BBC Philharmonic).

Following his time with the BBC, Michael returned to the world of education as Music Adviser in Bedfordshire, where he was able not only to build an expert instrumental teaching team, but also develop the orchestral, band, choral and operatic opportunities for young musicians. He served as Chairman of the National Association of Youth Orchestra for fifteen years. For many years he assisted George Hurst on the Conducting Course at Canford Summer School of Music.

Michael was awarded the OBE in 1990, for services to music. In the same year, he took

early retirement to devote time to study, composition, conducting and examining, and for the Associated Board has examined in many countries from Malawi to Oman. He directed the Olney Conducting Workshops until 2013, and continues to teach conducting and composition privately.

Much of his music for young players has been published by the Associated Board, and continues to appear in the examination syllabuses. Other music, both choral and orchestral, has been published by OUP, Novello and others. Most recently, Recital Music has begun to publish a series of his works for ensemble and junior orchestra, many of which were written for young musicians in Bedfordshire.

Michael has continued as Conductor of the Bedfordshire County Youth Orchestra, with whom he has toured to France, Cyprus, Germany, Russia, Spain, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Italy. He is the conductor of the Bedfordshire Symphony Orchestra and the Bedford Sinfonia, and appears annually as guest conductor of Bedford Choral Society.

Martin Hughes: *Leader*

Martin studied violin with Leonard Hirsch at the Royal College of Music as a Foundation Scholar and won all the major violin prizes including the Stoutzker Prize in memory of Albert Sammons. He made his Wigmore Hall debut in 1974 to critical acclaim, and has appeared throughout the UK, in Europe, and in Japan as recitalist and concerto player. Martin spent twenty two years with the Northern Sinfonia in Newcastle upon Tyne as section principal and subsequently Associate Leader, in which capacity he partnered such eminent violinists as Wolfgang Schneiderhan, Vladimir Spivakov and Günther Pichler in the double and triple concertos of J.S. Bach, also appearing as featured soloist on CD, BBC

Martin Hughes: Leader (continued)

Radio 3 and television. Martin's interest in baroque period history and performance practice led him to re-engage with this music on period instruments and he was a founder member of the group Quadro Adriano.



In 1998 Martin was appointed Head of Strings at the RSAMD in Glasgow and his career took many new directions; he was a member of the prestigious Munich International Competition jury in 2000, and formed an association with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. He left Glasgow after five highly productive and successful years to become Head of Strings at Bedford School in April 2003, a position which he relinquished last summer. He has enjoyed the many and varied challenges of life at Bedford School where there is a great collaborative spirit in music-making - a project with the harpsichordist Richard Egarr in performances of Bach's Fifth Brandenburg Concerto and the Sonata in G major, BWV 1019 was particularly memorable. His violin teaching is highly respected nationally and many of his students have won scholarships to UK conservatoires.

Martin took part in the 2005 BBC "Imagine" programme, 'Elgar and the Lost Piano Concerto', and also appeared on Channel 4 in Howard Goodall's series, "How Music Works" with colleagues from the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. He has performed chamber music with international musicians in Jean-Bernard Pommier's annual international summer Musikh Akademie at home and abroad. He is a founder member of the De Parys Trio with his wife, flautist Jill Hughes,

and the renowned guitarist Eric Hill. DP3's CD of the trios of Ferdinando Carulli achieved critical acclaim and has sold worldwide. Martin undertakes a number of recitals and concertos each season and is appearing in November conducting the East Anglian Chamber Orchestra in a concert featuring John Tavener's *The Protecting Veil* in St. John's College Chapel, Cambridge. He continues his association with Bedford School as a Visiting Violin Teacher.

Jeanette Ager: Mezzo-soprano

It is an absolute pleasure to welcome back Jeanette after her wonderful Elgarian performance with us two years ago.

Jeanette was awarded an Exhibition to study at the Royal Academy of Music. She has won the Gold Medal in the Royal Over-Seas League Music Competition, the Richard Tauber Prize and won the Tillett Trust's Young Artist Platform. As a soloist, Jeanette's concert and oratorio work has included: recitals and other appearances at the Wigmore Hall; Handel's *Messiah* at St. David's Hall, Cardiff; Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall; Tippett's *Child of our Time* at the Royal Festival Hall; Verdi's *Requiem* at Gloucester and Hereford Cathedrals; Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* at the Barbican and Mozart's *Mass in C minor* at the Cadogan Hall. In addition to performances at many of the leading venues in the United Kingdom, Jeanette's concert work has taken her to Bermuda, the Czech Republic, Spain, Libya and China.

Jeanette's operatic roles have included Cherubino the *Marriage of Figaro*, Dido *Dido & Aeneas*, Marquise of Birkenfield *La Fille du Regiment*, Rosina *Barber of Seville*, Suzuki *Madama Butterfly* and Thea *The Knot Garden* - Tippett.

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Recent appearances include Apprentice in Wagner's *Meistersinger* at Covent Garden.



As a soloist, Jeanette has recorded for Hyperion, Deutsche Grammophon and Philips. She recently sang the Angel in the first performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in China. Jeanette also performed at the recent 3 Choirs Festival singing Britten's *Spring Symphony* and John McCabe's *Songs of the Garden* which was broadcast on Radio 3.

Quentin Hayes: Baritone

We are delighted to welcome Quentin this evening as he performs several of the celebrated Vaughan Williams' songs.

Since winning the VARA Dutch Radio Prize in 1993 at the Belvedere Singing Competition in Vienna, Quentin has sung roles with all the leading UK opera companies including Glyndebourne, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, English National Opera and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden where he was on contract as a principal from 2000 – 2005.

His concert engagements have been diverse, ranging from Purcell's *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* in St. Petersburg, as well as *Come ye Sons of Art* with Philippe Herreweghe in Lyon to Finzi's *In Terra Pax* in Rio de Janeiro and Dvůřák's *Requiem* in Valencia. In addition, Quentin has performed Brahms' *Requiem* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in the Usher Hall Edinburgh, *Messiah* in Trondheim

Cathedral, Norway and Britten's *War Requiem* at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam.

Recent concerts include Verdi *Requiem* (Worcester and Lincoln Cathedrals and Nottingham Concert Hall), *Elijah* (Wells Cathedral and Snape Maltings) and Elgar's *The Kingdom* (Exeter Cathedral).

More colourful excursions have included *Pirate King* (Horse of the Year Show, Olympia), *Sweeney Todd* (Fleet Street and Rose Theatre, Kingston) and *Carmen* in the O2.

Quentin has sung with many prestigious orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra (with the late Richard Hickox), Manchester's Hallé Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra in the Japanese première of Elgar's *The Light of Life*.

Recent engagements include *Rigoletto* (Luxembourg Festival), *Macbeth* (Blackheath Concert Halls), Glanert's *Caligula* at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw last December and a cruise singing up the River Amazon (Brazil).



As well as television appearances Quentin has recorded for Hyperion, Deutsche Grammophon, Decca, Argo, Chandos and Naxos.

Future plans include Mozart *Requiem* (Oxford Sheldonian), *Elijah* (Exeter Cathedral) and *Dream of Gerontius* (Winchester Cathedral).

He is now a visiting singing tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music.