



Hastings Philharmonic Orchestra

Stephanie Gurga *piano*
Marcio da Silva *conductor*

St Thomas' Church Winchelsea
Saturday 13th November 2021

Winchelsea Arts

CARL AUGUST NIELSEN 1865-1931

Little Suite for Strings in A minor, Opus 1

i. Präludium

ii. Intermezzo

iii. Finale

Seventh of twelve children in a poor yet musical Danish family, Nielsen was a violinist in the Royal Theatre Orchestra in Copenhagen from 1889 to 1905. He married the sculptor Anna Marie Brodersen after meeting her in Paris in 1891. Nielsen's dynamic wife may have contributed some of the inspiration and drive for his great compositions: the six symphonies, and the concertos for violin, flute and clarinet.

The *Little Suite for Strings* (as its opus number denotes) is an early work, composed just after Nielsen graduated from his music academy. It was expanded from a string quintet. A programme note for its first performance in 1888 named the composer as "Mr Carl Nielsen, whom nobody knows", a description soon redundant.

The *Suite* has great originality and inventiveness, with immediately appealing musical ideas. It begins in a serious vein with a dark and moody, almost foreboding *Präludium*. The *Intermezzo* is good humoured, commencing with a lilting Viennese style waltz, followed by a more energetic dance section. The *Finale* begins with a short restatement of the dark *Präludium* but the music soon takes wing, rushing into a high flying and exciting *Allegro con brio*. After a few momentary storm clouds, the music sweeps to a triumphant conclusion.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH 1685-1750
Keyboard Concerto in D Minor, BWV 1052

i. *Allegro*

ii. *Adagio*

iii. *Allegro*

J S Bach certainly knew of the piano (invented 1709), yet wrote almost nothing specifically for it, in contrast to his son Carl Philip Emanuel Bach whose output includes a notable *Concerto for Piano and Harpsichord in E flat major*.

“Klavier” can be translated as “keyboard”, to include instruments such as the clavichord, harpsichord and organ. There is a long tradition of performing Bach’s klavier works on the piano. The clavichord lacked the volume needed for concerts, while the harpsichord gradually faded from use.

Concerto No 1 in D minor is probably the most powerful of Bach’s seven solo concertos. Its popularity dates to Felix Mendelssohn’s performance in Leipzig in 1837. It may derive from a lost Bach violin concerto. Music scholars have identified that the first two movements appear in the *Cantata BWV146, Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal in das Reich Gottes eingehen* - ‘We must pass through much tribulation to enter God’s kingdom’. Music scholars have similarly identified that the third movement appears as the *Sinfonia* to *Cantata BWV188, Ich habe meine Zuversicht* - ‘I have my trust in God’. Angela Hewitt, a noted Bach interpreter, has written of the whole work’s ‘Passion’.

Concerto No 1 has the most brilliant finale of all Bach’s keyboard concertos, and demands the utmost in rhythmic precision and virtuosity from the performers.

INTERVAL

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART 1756-1791

Divertimento in D major, K136

i. Allegro

ii. Andante

iii. Presto

Written shortly before he was 16, the *Divertimento in D major* shows Mozart's early mastery over conventional forms and hints of the ingenuity to come. Normally an unassuming work in brief movements, a divertimento was meant as background music for conversation or dining. Mozart goes far beyond that: his exuberant *Divertimento in D* demands attention and is more like a small symphony.

The *Allegro* of the first movement is elegant in its simplicity, a small but perfectly cast sonata form. The *Andante* fulfils the standard role of minuet and trio, in miniature. Notice the moments when the first violin sustains a single tone, floating free above the rest of the texture. The *Presto* is the simplest of the three movements, providing a cheerful farewell to the audience.

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK 1841-1904

Serenade for Strings in E major, Opus 22

i. Minuet and trio *allegro con moto*

ii. Scherzo: *vivace*

iii. *Larghetto*

iv. *Finale: allegro vivace*

Remarkably Dvořák composed this extensive five movement work for string orchestra in only two weeks in 1875. He had just tasted his first real success after years of struggle, during which his occupations included church organist. Dvořák was a capable performer on both the violin and the viola, as is evident from many of his works. The serenade ranks alongside other great string serenades, such as Tchaikovsky's *Serenade* of 1880, played by the HPO at St Thomas's in December 2020.

Dvořák's uplifting, melodic work achieved immediate as well as lasting popularity. The music critic Ludevít Procházka wrote in *Národní listy*, 16th December 1876: "Antonín Dvořák gave us a pleasant surprise with his serenade for string orchestra, showing decisive progress in the evolution of his artistic development towards greater stability and independence. It would indeed be difficult for us to decide which of the movements would deserve the prize. They are all so interesting in overall thought conception and in thematic work, and also clear in their overall design, that they will surely be received as favourably everywhere as each of them was on this occasion." (*translation: David R. Beveridge*)

As a footnote it is pleasant to note that train-loving Dvořák visited England nine times and that his Seventh Symphony (1884) was commissioned by the London Philharmonic Society, of which he was an honorary member.

THE HASTINGS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA is the first fully professional orchestra in Hastings since the 1930s when the Hastings Municipal Orchestra was based at the White Rock Theatre, then a major national centre for classical music and the favourite recording studio for the Decca Record Label.

The 1930s was a dynamic period for classical music in the south-east, and Hastings was pivotal to this dynamism. The White Rock Pavilion, as it was originally called, was designed by an acoustically trained architect and was the first of its kind in the UK. Until the Royal Festival Hall opened in 1951, not even London could match it.

Many great names of the classical music world came to Hastings: renowned conductors Sir Henry Wood, Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Thomas Beecham and Sir John Barbirolli; and many brilliant soloists, including Sergei Rachmaninov (in 1935 and 1936), Vladimir Horowitz and Arthur Rubinstein, and the Spanish cellist Pablo Casals. These were the golden years of classical music in Hastings, when our town was at the heart of a vibrant classical music scene.

In founding a new professional orchestra in Hastings, the artistic director and principal conductor of Hastings Philharmonic Orchestra, Marcio da Silva, set himself the challenge of putting Hastings back on the map as a centre of excellence for classical music - one that will be recognised both nationally and internationally.

In the years that have passed since their first concert, HPO have developed a loyal and highly appreciative audience who relish their vibrant and energetic playing. Before the onset of Covid-19, their audiences took great pleasure in attending concerts in the unique and intimate atmosphere of the historic St Mary in the Castle, and Christchurch St Leonards-on-Sea generously hosted many Covid-secure concerts for them during the pandemic.

HPO's sixth season will include a special focus on the heritage of the orchestra. To celebrate this the orchestra is delighted to announce that its new home will be the White Rock Theatre - a return to the roots of the original professional orchestra founded in Hastings in the early twentieth century.

hastingsphilharmonic.com

stephaniegurga.com

marciodasilva.com

MARCIO DA SILVA

Born in 1983 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, Marcio da Silva began his music studies at the age of 9 with piano lessons and choral singing. As a young boy-soprano he performed as a soloist in Germany, Italy and Brazil, including performances for audiences of over 32,000 people. From a young age Marcio also gained extensive experience in opera, beginning as a child soloist at Palacio das Artes in Belo Horizonte, and then subsequently at the Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, and the Théâtre des Champs Elysees and the Théâtre du Chatelet in Paris. Marcio is the music director of the Grange Choral Society, and Artistic Director of Hastings Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hastings Philharmonic Choir and the HPO Singers. As a singer (baritone and countertenor) he performs regularly in opera and as a recitalist. Marcio is also a composer. His works include choral a capella pieces, art songs with piano accompaniment and a *Te Deum* for soloists, chorus and orchestra.

STEPHANIE GURGA *piano*

American pianist and harpsichordist Stephanie Gurga completed studies in piano and organ at DePauw University, Indiana, and at the École Normale de Musique de Paris, before specializing in performance practice on historical keyboards. She went on to complete a Künstlerische Ausbildung in harpsichord performance, as well as a Master's Degree in fortepiano performance, from the Hochschule für Musik, Freiburg, Germany. Featured internationally as a soloist, recitalist, accompanist, and chamber musician, on harpsichord, fortepiano, and modern piano, she has been on the staff as accompanist at the Haute Ecole de Musique Vaud Valais Fribourg, and the Conservatoire de Lausanne, Switzerland, since 2010. Stephanie is also organist at the Church of Saint-Guérin and Sacré Coeur in Sion (Switzerland).



Saturday 18th December at 4pm

WASSAIL - A FESTIVE CONCERT BY CANDLELIGHT

Pegasus Chamber Choir

Ann Rachlin commère



Ann Rachlin, and the Pegasus Chamber Choir conducted by Matthew Altham, present a range of seasonal music focusing on the secular traditions of these islands, not least that of wassailing, as well as from further afield

Ann Rachlin will explore some of these which, until recently, were a feature of Kent and Sussex, The Garden of England, where apple trees, used for cider making, were wassailed at the end of the year to promote a good harvest for the forthcoming season

Repertoire will include, Vaughan Williams' *Wassail* and *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree* by Elizabeth Poston



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