

### **New members**

If you would be interested in joining the orchestra, please contact us at [info@abergavennysymph.org.uk](mailto:info@abergavennysymph.org.uk). You can check our website for details of the rehearsal schedule.

### **Summer Concert 2019**

Our summer concert year will be held here in Our Lady and St Michael's RC church on the evening of Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June at 7.30pm. You can hear Arutiunian's brilliant trumpet concerto as well as a varied programme of lighter pieces.

### **Easy Fundraising**

This is an easy way to raise money for the orchestra if you shop online for anything from groceries to holidays. Say you want to buy a book from Amazon. Instead of going to [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk), you go to [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://easyfundraising.org.uk) first. You click from the easyfundraising website through to Amazon to make your purchase. The price of the book is exactly the same as if you'd visited Amazon directly. After you have bought your book, Amazon will make a donation to your cause as a thank you for shopping with them. easyfundraising collect these donations, and it costs nothing! As the saying goes, every little helps!

Go to our website and follow the link at the bottom of the home page.

### **Acknowledgements**

Abergavenny Orchestral Society is grateful to the staff and members of **Our Lady and St Michael's RC Church** for allowing us to use this beautiful church for our concert. AOS is affiliated to **Making Music**, which represents and supports amateur music societies throughout the UK, and gratefully acknowledges the support of: **Dance Blast** for provision of our rehearsal venue; The Music Parts Service at **Liverpool Libraries**, **G. Schirmer, Inc** and **Michael Bell** for lending us music.

Abergavenny Orchestral Society is a Registered Charity no: 1076523



# Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra

Our Lady and St Michael's RC Church  
Pen-y-Pound, Abergavenny

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2019, 2.30pm

[www.abergavennysymph.org.uk](http://www.abergavennysymph.org.uk)

# Abergavenny Orchestral Society

**Honorary Life Members:** Jean Bradley, Ruth Brown, Sally Ellerington,  
Eiry Hanbury, Odette Hutchison, Barbara Price, Sue Rogers

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Our Friends scheme enables us to benefit from your financial support and to involve you with the Society. For a subscription of £20 per annum you will not only be making a valuable contribution but you will receive newsletters giving details of forthcoming concerts and other orchestra news. For more information please contact the Friends' Secretary: Mr Ian Smith  
37 Cae Pen-y-Dre, Abergavenny, NP7 5UP

## Mailing List

If you would like to be kept informed of future events, why not join our mailing list? Contact us on [info@abergavennysymph.org.uk](mailto:info@abergavennysymph.org.uk) and we will send you details of forthcoming events and concerts.

## Players in the Orchestra

### 1st Violin

Helena Todd  
Ruth Brown  
Romilly Cook  
Mary Dixon  
Selina Hamilton  
Jane Loney  
Elizabeth MacFie  
Stephen Shearman

### 2nd Violin

Rachel Stubbley  
Jane Anscombe  
Cynthia Bailey-Wood  
Brigid Jones  
Asia Joseph  
Simon Marr-Johnson  
Stephen Shaw  
Diana Turnbull  
Paul Walster \*  
Charlotte Price \*

### Viola

Simon Large  
Clare McGowan  
Rachel Menna Hamlyn  
Gavin Stoddart  
Rachel Tucker  
Angi Turnbull

### Cello

Stephen David  
Clare Fisher  
Laura Kostoris  
Rohan Lewis  
Tessa Lewis  
Hannah Poulson  
Sue Rogers

### Double Bass

James Loney  
Richard Mynors  
David Higginbottom \*

### Flute

Bethan Barlow  
Heather Leighton

### Oboe

Malcolm James  
Martin Bailey-Wood  
Hilary Stavros Ives \*

### Clarinet

Rob Watson  
Bob Osborne

### Bassoon

Janet Lloyd  
Chris Poynton  
Becky Rogers  
Becky Drysdale \*

### Horn

Peter Geraghty  
Sarah Jones  
Rod Paton  
Hannah Stonelake

### Trumpet

Paul Kelly  
Mark Perry  
Morgan Rees  
Paul Jones \*

### Trombone

Iestyn Harding  
Salvatore Frusteri  
Mike Standley

### Tuba

Chris Baker

### Timpani

Judith Pendrous

### Percussion

David Fraser  
Catherine Baxter  
William Fraser  
Odette Hutchison

### Harp

Alys Bailey-Wood \*

### Piano

Vaughan Bennett \*

\* The orchestra is grateful for the support of non-members who have augmented various sections for this concert.

Michael has conducted an enormous and wide-ranging repertoire with CPO, in more than 350 concerts, including symphonies by Mahler, Richard Strauss, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Vaughan Williams, Elgar and Shostakovich, as well as major orchestral works by Stravinsky, Ravel and Prokofiev, and many more besides.

Michael has always had a great enthusiasm for film music, and in 1994 introduced *A Night at the Movies* as an annual feature of CPO's repertoire. The concert in December 2017, celebrating the music of John Williams, was performed to the highest audience figures at St David's Hall for thirteen years.

Michael is now also the regular conductor of Brecknock Sinfonia, and has been invited to conduct Hereford String Orchestra next season.

In the 2018 New Year's Honours Michael was awarded an MBE, and this was presented to him by HRH The Prince of Wales at Buckingham Palace in March 2018.

#### Other local concerts coming soon ...

##### **May 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> - Crickhowell Music Festival**

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> - Scholars' Recital

7.30pm at The Clarence Hall, Crickhowell

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> - Purcell – The Fairy Queen

7.30 pm at St Edmund's Church, Crickhowell

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> - Festival Service

10.00 am at St Catwg's Church, Llangattock

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> - Bach – B Minor Mass

7.30 pm at St Edmund's Church, Crickhowell

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> - Alaw

7.00 pm at The Clarence Hall, Crickhowell

[crickhowellchoralsociety.org/](http://crickhowellchoralsociety.org/)

# Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra

Leader

**Helena Todd**

Guest Conductor

**Michael Bell, MBE**

Violin

**Dennis Simons**

Karelia Overture, Op. 10

Sibelius

Violin Concerto, Op. 14

Barber

Allegro

Andante

Presto in moto perpetuo

### ***INTERVAL***

Refreshments will be available in the St Michael's Centre

A London Symphony (Symphony No 2)

Vaughan Williams

Lento – Allegro risoluto

Lento

Scherzo: (Nocturne) Allegro vivace

Andante con moto – Maestoso alla marcia – Allegro – Lento

– Epilogue

## Programme Notes

### **Karelia Overture, Op. 10**

**Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)**

Sibelius regularly composed incidental music to accompany stage plays and pageants. The first commission to do so appeared in 1892 from the Viipuri Student Corporation at the Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki to bolster Finnish, and specifically Karelian patriotism, in the face of ominous political rumblings from Finland's powerful and belligerent neighbour, Russia.

Sibelius began work on the score during the summer of 1893. It consisted of an overture and music to be heard during, and in between, the eight tableaux of the pageant. Before the month was out, he began conducting extracts from the score at concerts. A friend, conductor Robert Kajanus, assembled the three-movement suite that consists of music from the third, fourth, and fifth tableaux (Op 11). It was not until 1896 that he decided to issue the Overture separately (Op 10).

The Overture to Karelia is based on three themes: a noble opening strain in striding rhythms; a hymn-like melody of serious demeanour; and (after a recall of the opening strain) what Sibelius called the "march in the old style" that accompanied the third tableau. All three ideas are treated in the development section and returned in the recapitulation in condensed but intensified variants before the Overture reaches its stirring close.

© Don Anderson

### **Violin Concerto, Op. 14**

**Samuel Barber (1910-1981)**

Of the major American composers of the 20th Century, Samuel Barber was the most romantic and European in outlook. In contrast to almost all his contemporaries, Barber studied, not in fashionable Paris, the cradle of modernism, but in Italy, and his music is imbued with characteristic Italianate warmth alongside his personal voice. Barber

contrasted with faster music, which build to three successive climaxes of which the last, underpinned by a great stroke on the tam-tam is the loudest. This calls forth an agitated repeat of the main Allegro of the first movement, which is hushed for the Westminster chimes, now the third quarter hour. The epilogue opens with flutes, violins and violas rippling gently, cellos and basses once more rise from the depths echoed by horns and other brass and the music gradually sinks down. Cellos and basses are left at the end softly fading to silence.

When questioned about this haunting passage V.W. let slip a link to H.G.Wells' *Tono Bungay*, published significantly in 1909, which concludes with a passage "*To run down the Thames is to run one's hand over the pages of the book of England from end to end, light after light goes down ... the river passes, London passes, England passes*".

© Dominic Nudd, October 2018

Programme notes include those supplied through Making Music's programme note service.

**DENNIS SIMONS**, PhD FRAM has returned to the UK after 20 years in North America where he was music director and conductor of the orchestras of Saskatoon (1993-1997), Shreveport (1996-2003) and North Dakota's Minot Symphony Orchestra (2002-2012). He has also guest conducted in the USA, Europe and Australia including the Toronto Symphony and the Victoria Symphony.

Prior to this he was founder leader of the Alberni String Quartet, co-leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and leader of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. He has performed as solo violinist on three continents and has given over 20 solo broadcasts for the BBC.

**MICHAEL BELL** was born in Neath. After graduating from Cardiff University Michael formed Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra and has conducted the orchestra since CPO's inaugural concert in June 1982.

clarinet intone the Westminster chimes for the second quarter hour. There is a pause and a discordant crash heralds the surging main Allegro; the mood is both jaunty and sinister. It culminates in a brazen outburst before the woodwind introduce a counter melody, which is taken up by the strings; the main Allegro reasserts itself briefly and vanishes, superseded by a tranquil episode, flute, then pairs of solo violins and cellos introduce a mysterious passage in falling phrases. A clarinet solo over furtive nervous string figures leads to a recapitulation of themes heard earlier, and then builds gradually to a searing climax, lit by brilliant fanfares, a pause and a final upsurge lead to assertive final chords.

George Butterworth described the slow movement as *“an idyll of grey skies and secluded by-ways”*. V.W. was, for once, more specific *“Bloomsbury Square on a November afternoon”*. Over muted strings, a cor anglais weaves a long mysterious solo, trumpet and flute are heard over a new throbbing accompaniment and then pass the yearning melody to the strings. This fades away leaving a solo viola (V.W.'s own instrument) in a dialogue with a clarinet, which plays a Lavender seller's cry which V.W. noted down in Chelsea in 1911. The jingle of a hansom cab's harness is heard in the distance and the music rises to a passionate climax before gradually vanishing into the mist. Horn and bass clarinet have parting solos and the last word is left to the viola.

V.W.'s note said of the Scherzo *“If the listener will imagine himself standing on Westminster Embankment at night, with the Strand on one side with its great hotels, and the New Cut on the other with its lights and traffic, this may serve as a guide to the mood of this movement”*. Scurrying strings and darting woodwind exchange short musical fragments, different instruments come momentarily into the solo limelight, and the music dances merrily away. The opening is repeated, the cellos lead into a brisk march episode, and then there is an abrupt outburst and as the movement disappears, a moment of darkness falls.

The final falling phrase of the scherzo is transformed into the huge cry of despair which opens the finale. This introduces a great slow march,

enjoyed Italy so much that he returned there several times prior to 1939; his Symphony No 1 was premiered in Rome in 1936.

In early 1939 Samuel Fels, a wealthy Philadelphia businessman, commissioned Barber to write a concerto for his adopted son, the violinist Iso Briselli, who had graduated from the Curtis Institute in 1934, the same year as Barber himself. Barber accepted an advance on his commission fee and took another trip to Europe, where he began composing the concerto at Sils-Maria in Switzerland during the summer of 1939. In late August all US citizens were warned to leave Europe, and Barber returned hurriedly to America, completing the first two movements at his family home in Pennsylvania.

The story as related in the earliest biography of Barber, was that Briselli objected to the first two movements because he thought them too simplistic and then objected to the finale as he found it too difficult. However, detailed correspondence unearthed in 2010 between Fels, Barber and Briselli's violin teacher, Albert Meiff, told a very different story with Meiff emerging as the main culprit.

In the end Barber and Briselli parted company amicably and it was Albert Spalding who gave the premiere of Barber's concerto on 7 February 1941 with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy. The new concerto was praised as having *“straightforwardness and sincerity among its most engaging qualities”* and for *“gracious lyricism and a complete absence of tawdry swank”*.

The first movement opens with the soloist immediately introducing the main theme, over a rich but restrained orchestral accompaniment. As this theme is developed the woodwind introduce a new, rather more jaunty theme, which the soloist takes over and elaborates over woodwind accompaniment leading into the first orchestral tutti. When this has subsided the soloist enters again over an urgent throbbing accompaniment (a reminder perhaps of the anxious mood of Europe when this music was written?). The soloist is pitted briefly against the full orchestra, which then recapitulates the main theme on soaring

strings, leading into the impassioned coda and an accompanied cadenza before the movement ends in a subdued manner.

The slow movement is imbued with warmth and what seems like nostalgia (though for what could a twenty-nine year old be nostalgic?), opening with a long oboe solo. When the soloist enters, in reflective mood, he muses on earlier material and then takes up the oboe's melody, spinning out a development which leads into a full orchestral statement of the theme, in parallel with more agitated music. This subsides and the soloist is left meditating in the final bars.

The Finale opens with an urgent rumble of timpani and the soloist takes up the *moto perpetuo*, not stopping until the very last bars. Woodwind illuminate the orchestral texture with flashes of colour, and the whole movement is lit with showers of sparks. The coda becomes even more urgent, until the soloist's final flourish is terminated by the last chord.

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### **A London Symphony (No 2)      Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

Although Vaughan Williams was born in Gloucestershire and lived for many years in Surrey, he considered himself a Londoner. His forbears included many Londoners and he lived in, and knew the sights and sounds of, London at a crucial period in its history when its character changed comprehensively. V.W. attended the Royal College of Music from 1890, later earned his living as organist for St. Barnabas, South Lambeth. In 1905 with his wife Adeline, he moved to Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, which remained his home for 23 years, until Adeline's arthritis forced the couple to move out to Surrey. After Adeline's death in 1951 V.W. remarried, to the poetess Ursula Wood, and, in 1953, moved back to London, to Hannover Terrace in Regent's Park.

Vaughan Williams' first symphony, the choral *A Sea Symphony* was premièred at the 1910 Leeds Festival. It had gestated in his mind over a long period beginning in 1903, and the idea that it should be a symphony took hold only very late on. There was no real English symphonic tradition at the time, Parry and Stanford were still

composing, but their symphonies had not really taken hold, choral music was still the biggest influence and many people seemed to think that no Englishman could write a really big powerful symphony. The première of Elgar's First Symphony in 1908 changed all that. Even so, when V.W. came to contemplate his next major work after the *Sea Symphony*, he at first felt only that he wanted to write a large orchestral work celebrating the London that he knew and loved. V.W. related that the influence of his friend George Butterworth caused the work to transform into a symphony in his mind.

*“One of my most grateful memories of George is connected with my London Symphony: Indeed I owe its whole idea to him. I remember very well how the idea originated. He had been sitting with us one evening, smoking and playing ... and at the end of the evening, as he was getting up to go, he said in his characteristically abrupt way: 'You know, you ought to write a symphony.' From that moment the idea of a symphony – a thing which I had always declared I would never attempt – dominated my mind. I showed the sketches to George bit by bit, as they were finished, and it was then that I realised that he possessed, in common with few composers, a wonderful power of criticism of other men's work, and an insight into their ideas and motives.”*

The first performance was given on 27 March 1914 by the Queen's Hall Orchestra, conducted by Geoffrey Toye. In July V.W. was persuaded to send the score to the publishers Breitkopf und Härtel in Germany, who had already published his *Sea Symphony*. When war broke out Butterworth, realising that the score might never be seen again, organised to have it reconstructed from the orchestral parts which were still in London. V.W. made numerous revisions over the intervening years and the final revised score was not published until 1936.

In a programme note for the 1920 performance V.W. observed “A better title would perhaps be *Symphony by a Londoner* ... the music is intended to be self-expressive, it must stand or fall as absolute music”.

Cellos and basses creeping slowly from the depths open the first movement's slow introduction; gradually light dawns and harps and