

### **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.

### **Become a Friend of Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra**

Abergavenny Orchestral Society exists to promote and develop orchestral music in all its forms. We do this by providing weekly orchestra rehearsals and putting on concerts, and we try to cover a wide range of musical styles. We hold orchestral workshops where we invite non-members to join us to run through a larger scale work. We also try to encourage children to develop an interest in music, and for the last few years we have put on a free concert for children.

Our Friends scheme enables you to participate in these aims and to become more involved 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:

Mrs Sue Rogers, 01291 672170

or email us at [info@abergavennysymph.org.uk](mailto:info@abergavennysymph.org.uk)

### **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; **Wilhelm Hansen** music publishers, **Oxford Symphony Orchestra** and The Music Parts Service at **Liverpool Libraries** 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 17<sup>th</sup> November 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

## Friends:

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## 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  
John Jenkins  
Jane Leney  
Elizabeth MacFie  
Stephen Shearman  
Paul Walster \*

### 2nd Violin

Rachel Stublely  
Jane Anscombe  
Cynthia Bailey-Wood  
Simon Marr-Johnson  
Helen O'Reilly  
Ioan O'Reilly  
Lynne Pollitt  
Stephen Shaw  
Diana Turnbull

### Viola

Simon Large  
Rachel Menna Hamlyn  
Clare McGowan  
Gavin Stoddart  
Rachel Tucker

### Cello

Stephen David  
Clare Fisher  
Laura Kostoris  
Rohan Lewis  
Tessa Lewis  
Hannah Poulson  
Sue Rogers  
**Double Bass**  
James Leney  
David Higginbottom  
Roger Levett \*

### Flute

Bethan Barlow  
Sian Rees  
Heather Thornton

### Oboe

Malcolm James  
Martin Bailey-Wood

### Clarinet

Rob Watson  
Bob Osborne

### Bassoon

Janet Lloyd  
Chris Poynton  
Becky Rogers

### Horn

Peter Geraghty  
Rod Paton  
Hannah Stonelake  
Alun Williams \*

### Trumpet

Mark Perry  
Morgan Rees  
John Mudd \*

### Trombone

Iestyn Harding  
Mike Standley  
David Hopkins \*

### Tuba

Chris Baker

### Timpani / Percussion

David Fraser  
William Fraser  
Odette Hutchison  
Graham Bradley \*

### Harp

Emily Harris \*

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

Other local concerts coming soon ...

**November 23<sup>rd</sup> - Crickhowell Choral Society**

Bernstein *Chichester Psalms* and other works  
7.30pm St Edmund's Church, Crickhowell

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

**December 8<sup>th</sup> - Unicorn Singers**

Advent Concert  
8pm at Our Lady & St Michael's RC Church, Abergavenny

[unicornsingers.co.uk/](http://unicornsingers.co.uk/)

**December 13<sup>th</sup> - Gwent Bach Choir**

Christmas Carol Concert  
7.00pm at the Presbyterian Church, Abergavenny

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

**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](http://easyfundraising.org.uk) 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](http://easyfundraising.org.uk) 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.

# Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra

Leader

**Helena Todd**

Conductor

**Dennis Simons**

Viola

**Philip Heyman**

Scherzo Fantastique, Op.25

Josef Suk

Symphony No 7 in C, Op. 105 (in one movement)

Jean Sibelius

## ***INTERVAL***

Refreshments will be available in the St Michael's Centre

Harold in Italy, Op. 16

Hector Berlioz

Symphony in four parts with viola obbligato

Harold in the mountains: Adagio – Allegro

Pilgrims' march: Allegretto

Serenade: Allegro assai

Brigands' orgy: Allegro frenetico

## Programme Notes

### **Scherzo fantastique, Op.25**

**Josef Suk (1874-1935)**

Suk might well be described as Czech 'Musical Royalty', being grandfather of the great violinist of the same name as well as son-in-law to Dvořák. Widely performed in his homeland, he is less well-known internationally, although his chamber music and orchestral pieces are now being increasingly recorded.

The *Fantastické Scherzo* (to give it its original published title) marks something of a watershed in his output, since it was the last work composed before the deaths of his young wife and his father-in-law. Always of a somewhat morbid cast of mind – at the age of 14 he composed music for his own funeral, reminiscent of that other arch-pessimist Mahler, whose first childhood composition was "Polka with Funeral March" – these losses brought about a spiritual and artistic crisis that wrenched Suk's musical style away from a Dvořák- and Smetana-inspired lyricism towards something more complex and dissonant, the first fruit of this new period being the death-haunted *Asrael* Symphony.

The *Scherzo Fantastique* is cast in a substantial single movement, the outer sections alternating a stuttering, rhythmic theme with a languidly elegant waltz-tune, the slower central trio using delicate, almost spectral scoring to evoke a pastoral, nocturnal atmosphere. After a beautiful passage for the cellos, the opening section is repeated, leading to a coda where the full fury of the orchestra brings the piece to a thrilling conclusion.

### **Symphony no 7 in C, Op. 105**

**Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)**

Sibelius' death in 1957 at the age of nearly 92 was nothing unusual in his family, since his wife Aino lived to 97 and four of their six daughters into their eighties. More remarkable is the fact that his last thirty years – more than the entire creative lives of Mozart, Schubert or Chopin – were passed in complete compositional silence. The Seventh was to be

### **Christmas Concert for Children**

This year's concert, conducted by Michael Bell, MBE, will be held in King Henry VIII school hall on Sunday December 8<sup>th</sup> at 4pm. This time we are playing music from films with a space theme, including *Star Wars*, *ET*, *Thunderbirds* and *2001: a Space Odyssey*. Entry is free and we will once again be collecting for charity. Bring your children or your grandchildren and join us for a musical experience which is out of this world!

### **Orchestral Workshop 2020**

On February 16<sup>th</sup> 2020 we will be holding another of our popular workshops. Dennis Simons will be directing us as we look at Elgar's Symphony No 2, often considered one of his greatest works.

We welcome enquiries from players in every section. You can find more details and an application form on our website.

### **Spring Concert 2020**

Our spring concert next year will be held in Our Lady and St Michael's RC church on the afternoon of Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March at 2.30pm and conducted by Michael Bell, MBE. The programme will include Suppe Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna Overture, Borodin Symphony No 2 and Bruch Violin Concerto No 1 with Helena Todd as soloist.

**PHILIP HEYMAN** gave his concerto debut aged eleven, and went on to study at the Royal College of Music, winning three major viola prizes.

On graduation he was immediately offered a permanent post with the *BBC Symphony Orchestra*, with whom he toured extensively and appeared in many Prom concerts. Subsequently he accepted the position of Sub-Principal Viola with *English National Opera* where he remained for nine years. During this time he worked with many major British orchestras and ensembles, as well as giving recitals and teaching.

In 1998 he took up his current position as Principal Viola for *Welsh National Opera*, and has subsequently performed many of the major orchestral solos, some on radio and television. He has been invited as guest Principal with many national orchestras and groups including CBSO, RPO, BSO and RLPO.

As a member of the viola/piano duo *Altitude* he continues to give solo recitals, consultations and teaches, both privately and at Cardiff University. He was a member of the Cardiff based viola quartet *Absolute Zero* and has also started to explore the repertoire for guitar, flute & viola as a member of *Still Life with Guitar*

In 2002, Philip became the owner of Europe's first Pellegrina pomposa model viola; an instrument he considers to be a significant innovation in string design and which he feels privileged to champion.

Recently, Philip co-founded *Cardiff Friendly Strings*, a group for early-stage adult string players, and its 'Sister' group *Cardiff String Family*, an occasional string group for family string players to play together.

**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 Alborni 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.

his last symphony and, apart from the tone-poem *Tapiola* and *The Tempest* incidental music, his last major work. An Eighth Symphony was planned and worked on, even promised to Serge Koussevitzky for premiere in Boston in 1932, but in the end Sibelius is presumed to have destroyed the score, since no part of it was ever made public.

Although not first performed until 1924 (and not in Finland until 1927), the first sketches for what became the Seventh Symphony appear to date from 1914-15, when Sibelius was still working on no.5. The timing is significant in that both pieces explore extremes of thematic and metrical transformation. While the Fifth, however, is still recognisably a three-movement symphony, the Seventh has moved beyond any formal divisions to a process of continual evolution within a single-movement structure.

Beginning with a long rising scale (one of the fundamental building-blocks of the whole piece), there soon begins a noble hymn-like passage ("as if before the face of God", the composer said), led off by the violas, bringing the first appearance of a calm, sonorous trombone theme. A faster, increasingly frantic section follows, again full of rising scale passages, before the trombone attempts its theme again, this time overshadowed by surging, minor-key string figures like dark storm-clouds. More by determination than harmonic logic, the music wrenches itself through a dazzling E major back to the home key of C for a dancing, pastoral section leading to the third appearance of the trombone theme – noble and triumphant, yet once again pushed aside by heaving string figures, before the true climax arrives, a cataclysmic shriek from the horns that leaves nothing behind but high, lamenting string chords. Slowly, some warmth seeps back into the music until, over growling superpositions of tonic and dominant harmony, the final cadence is reached, a long-held leading-note in the strings at last resolving onto C – "like the closing of a coffin lid", according to Sir Colin Davis, although for Alex Ross it is "a hand outstretched disappearing into light", just one illustration of the emotional ambiguity of this endlessly fascinating work.

The Seventh (then known as “*Fantasia Sinfonica*”) was well-received at its premiere in Stockholm on 24th March 1924, with the composer conducting, and since then has enjoyed the greatest admiration across the musical world. For Robert Layton, it is “completely original in form, subtle in its handling of tempi, individual in its treatment of key and wholly organic in growth”, while James Hepokoski calls it “Sibelius’s most remarkable compositional achievement”. Closer to home, our own Dennis Simons believes it to be one of the greatest symphonies of all time.

### **Harold in Italy, Op. 16**

**Hector Berlioz (1803-69)**

Berlioz spent the years 1831-2 in Italy, a requirement of his winning – at the fourth attempt – the Prix de Rome. The 27-year-old composer left Paris unwillingly, torn from an unhappy love-affair and the beginnings of a musical career that had seen the premiere of the *Symphonie Fantastique* the year before. It was perhaps the enforced nature of this exile that made his time in Rome so musically unproductive; he seems rather to have devoted his days to roaming the mountains with his hunting rifle and guitar, befriending many of the picturesque characters he encountered in those wild parts.

However, although Berlioz composed nothing during those years, he nevertheless stored up a rich hoard of impressions and memories that later overflowed into such Italian-flavoured masterpieces as Harold, the opera *Benvenuto Cellini* and the choral symphony *Roméo et Juliette*. Harold itself seems to have arisen out of a commission from Paganini for a concerto to show off his new Stradivarius viola. First apparently conceived as a choral fantasy on the death of Mary Stuart, it quickly evolved into a uniquely original “Symphony with viola obbligato” on an Italian subject, although giving a nod to its Scottish roots by re-working themes from the earlier *Rob Roy* overture.

For a number of reasons – failing health, the unceasing hostility of the Parisian press, as well as perhaps a dissatisfaction with its limited opportunities for virtuoso display – Paganini never played the piece, the

premiere being given by Chrétien Urhan, under the direction of Narcisse Girard, in the Paris Conservatoire Hall, almost exactly 185 years ago, on Sunday 24th November 1834. The composer himself was entrusted with the noble task of bashing the cymbals in the finale.

In character with the protagonist of Byron’s poem *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, the solo viola takes the part of the melancholy dreamer, observing rather than participating in the vigorous life of the country around him. The first movement, *Harold in the Mountains*, begins with a long minor-key introduction before the viola enters, accompanied by harp, as if bathed in warm sunshine. When the main Allegro arrives, it is in an irresistible whirling Saltarello rhythm, a dance that Berlioz himself doubtless saw performed during his mountain wanderings. In the next, Harold watches as a procession of pilgrims passes, their bell tolling an obstinate C against the music’s prevailing E major. The third movement is a serenade of an Abruzzi shepherd to his beloved, the oboe and flute imitating a rustic Italian pipe. The finale allows Harold time to muse on his earlier travels and includes a delectable passage for a solo string quartet that is the closest Berlioz ever came to chamber music, before the dissipation of the *Brigands’ Orgy* brings the work to a riotous end.

David Fraser, 2019

### **James Joseph**



The orchestra wishes to dedicate this concert to the memory of our dear friend and colleague James Joseph.

His generous heart and his deep love for music are greatly missed. We have been blessed to have shared so much with him over the years.