



Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra

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

Sunday 3rd April 2022, 2.30pm

www.abergavennysymph.org.uk

Abergavenny Orchestral Society

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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, Sue Rogers.

Tel 01291 672170
Email info@abergavennysymph.org.uk

New members

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

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, you go to 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 **Llanarth Village Hall** and **Crickhowell High School** for provision of our rehearsal venue, and The Music Parts Service at **Liverpool Libraries** for lending us music.

Abergavenny Orchestral Society is a Registered Charity no: 1076523

Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra

1st Violin

Marisa Riordan
Romilly Cook
Roger Evans
Tessa Lewis
Abigail Linforth
Diana MacPherson
Liz Macfie
Derek Pike
Donetta Cook
Erin Morgan

2nd Violin

Selina Hamilton
Jane Anscombe
Anita Bromley
John Jenkins
Simon Marr-Johnson
Lynne Pollitt
Stephen Shaw

Viola

Simon Large
Rose Graham
Rachel Menna Hamlyn
Gavin Stoddart
Rachel Tucker
Angi Turnbull

Cello

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

Bass

Richard Mynors
Roger Levett
Nancy Mendoza

Flute

Bethan Barlow
Heather Thornton

Oboe

Malcolm James
Martin Bailey-Wood

Clarinet

Robert Watson
Ian Hall

Bassoon

Janet Lloyd
Chris Poynton
Becky Drysdale

Horn

Peter Geraghty
Ian Axtell
Rod Paton
Hannah Stonelake

Trumpet

Paul Kelly
Mark Perry

Trombone

Iestyn Harding
Chris de Lloyd
Mike Standley

Tuba/Euphonium

Eilir Alexander

Timpani

Ellen Smith

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

Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra

Leader

Marisa Riordan

Conductor

Michael Bell MBE

Serenade for 13 wind instruments, Op.7 Richard Strauss

Serenade for strings in C, Op.48 Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1. *Pezzo in forma di sonatina*
2. *Valse*
3. *Elegia*
4. *Finale. Tema russo*

INTERVAL

Symphony No 8 in G, Op.88 Antonín Dvořák

1. *Allegro con brio*
2. *Adagio*
3. *Allegretto grazioso – Molto vivace*
4. *Allegro ma non troppo*

The orchestra dedicates its playing today to those suffering from aggression in Ukraine and around the world. We wish the peace, freedom and stability we enjoy here on all people everywhere.

Programme Notes

Serenade for 13 winds, Op.7 **Richard Strauss (1864-1949)**

Strauss was famously dismissive of his own abilities, and later described this serenade, written when he was only 17, as no more than the respectable work of a music student. Thankfully, generations of wind-players have disagreed, and its melodic charm and beautiful instrumental writing have embedded it firmly in the wind-ensemble repertoire. The instrumentation is the same as in Mozart's great B-flat Serenade except that Strauss uses a pair of flutes (never used by Mozart in his wind pieces) instead of bass-horns.

The first performance was given by the Dresden Court Orchestra in November 1882. However, thanks to the efforts of Strauss's publisher, it came to the attention of Hans von Bülow, perhaps the most famous conductor in Europe, who included it in numerous programmes given by his Meiningen Court Orchestra, and later appointed Strauss as his assistant.

The piece is a gentle *Andante* in conventional sonata-form, with a rather chorale-like first theme (given a rather lovely recapitulation on horns and bassoons) leading to a more flowing second subject with a triplet accompaniment which plays a prominent part in the brief development section.

Serenade in C, Op.48 **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-93)**

Tchaikovsky composed his ever-popular string serenade in 1880, shortly after his return to Russia following an extended period in Western Europe, where he had fled from his disastrous two-and-a-half-month marriage to his student Antonina Miliukovna. While abroad, he had composed the Fourth Symphony and the Violin Concerto, so this Serenade may well have been written by way of relaxation. Its first public performance took place in October 1881 in

Live music is back!

Our next concert will take place on Sunday June 26th at 7.30pm. The provisional programme is:

- Suppe - Morning, Noon and Night Overture
- Debussy - Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
- Iestyn Harding – Pwt ar y bys
- Grieg - Symphonic Dances

We haven't yet established the venue but will announce this as soon as we can. Check our website for further information.

Other local concerts coming soon...

St. Woolos Sinfonia, 23rd April, Newport Cathedral
Beethoven 'Triple Concerto' for Violin, Cello, and Piano, Schubert Symphony No 5

Crickhowell Music Festival, 29th April – 2nd May
Crickhowell Choral Society's annual festival of mainly choral music over the bank holiday weekend.

Llangynidr Village Hall, 19th May
Sarah Newbold (flute) and Katherine Thomas (harp)

Brecknock Sinfonia, Brecon Cathedral, 11th June

Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra, St David's Hall Cardiff, 24th June, 40th Anniversary Concert. Gershwin Piano Concerto and Rachmaninoff Symphony No 2.

Hereford Symphony Orchestra, 25th June
Schubert "Rosamunde" Overture, Schumann Cello Concerto and Brahms Symphony No 1.

A word from our Music Director

In November last year our concert was in two distinct halves, strings performing in the first half of the concert; woodwind, brass and percussion in the second half. This was in the main because Covid regulations, at that time, meant that the players had to sit two metres apart, and we didn't have a rehearsal or concert venue large enough to accommodate a full orchestra under these circumstances.

A relaxation of the regulations has meant that we are able to perform once more as a full orchestra, and we have chosen to play one of the most joyful and life affirming works of all, Dvorak's Symphony No. 8. This was the first symphony I ever conducted (the year escapes me...!) I loved it then, and I've loved it ever since.

Finding a suitable rehearsal venue is as important as finding a suitable concert venue for an orchestra. ASO used to rehearse at Dance Blast in Abergavenny. Unfortunately that is no longer available to the orchestra, and in any case the relatively restricted space meant the orchestra wasn't able to expand its numbers as we would have wished. We decamped for two rehearsals to Crickhowell Sports Centre's hall. The space was certainly much larger than that of Dance Blast, but the boomy, reverberant acoustic made it quite unsuitable to rehearse. We then moved upstairs to the school hall, which seems to also be the canteen, with a much more tempered acoustic.

Another venue we've alighted upon has been the village hall in Llanarth. It is in a most beautiful location, and can (just about) accommodate the full orchestra. Even the smallest of villages, more often than not, have at their heart a community hall, and it is an essential focal point to bring the people of the village together.

Please stay safe and well, and we look forward to seeing you again at our next concert

Best wishes,

Michael.

St Petersburg, before being often programmed in Petersburg and Moscow.

The first movement, *in forma di Sonatina*, is a sonata-form without a formal development section, although Tchaikovsky subjects his material to continuous reworking throughout. A grand, rather solemn introduction in which a descending 3-note motif is heard is followed by a *Allegro* from which the spirit of the waltz is never far away. There is a scarcely-contained demonic energy underneath the whirling high spirits, expressed in increasingly jagged rhythms and extreme dynamics (the movement ends with chords marked *ffff*.) The second movement, by contrast, is a much better-behaved waltz, elegant and restrained. The third movement *Elegia* begins with a rising theme derived from the preceding movement, although now dissonant and tonally ambiguous. This theme dominates the movement, undergoing many sad and noble transformations. The Finale initially seems uncertain of where it is going, but introduces with great subtlety the two falling intervals which turn into the Russian Theme of the main *Allegro*. A second theme, long-limbed and striding, leads back into the Russian dance, after which the development section – the only official one in the entire work – combines the two in polyphony of great energy. Tchaikovsky is not often thought of as a great contrapuntist, but he could keep up with the best of them when it suited. A pause, and then the slow introduction to the first movement is heard again, then speeded up, then, in one of the best jokes in 19th-century music, turned back into the *Theme russo* which dances its way to the triumphant conclusion.

Symphony no.8 in G, Op.88

Antonín Dvořák (1843-1904)

Dvořák composed his 8th Symphony in 1889 on the occasion of his election to the Bohemian Academy of Science, Literature and Arts, and conducted the premiere early the following year. The composer commented that it presented "individual thoughts worked out in a new way" – perhaps there was some Straussian modesty at work here, since the piece is one of the most subtle and complex

symphonies of the late nineteenth century. Although it is in a major key, in contrast to nos. 7 and 9, it leans strongly to the minor mode and has more than its own share of sound and fury.

The first movement begins with a long G minor theme, rather hymn-like, on cellos, bassoon and horns over a pizzicato bass, leading to an inconsequential-sounding bird-call on unaccompanied flute; a characteristic of this whole symphony is its ability to derive large spans of music from such throw-away material. After a bit of rhythmic excitement, a second theme appears, so briefly that it is easy to miss – three notes down and up, followed by four repeated notes. That, in a little over 20 bars, is the entire material that will contribute to the development in this most unconventional of sonata-forms. More themes follow – Dvořák was incapable of not writing melody – including one for clarinets which sounds to Welsh ears rather like the nonsense-song *Sosban Fach* – before the opening hymn-tune reappears and we are into the development, during which the four repeated notes from earlier become a baleful, militaristic presence (perhaps Dvořák had in mind Haydn's last symphony, no.104 in D, in which four innocent notes come to dominate in a similar way). The hymn-tune is heard for a third time at the start of the recapitulation, now scored for full orchestra with blazing trumpets, before a curtailed recapitulation where, in a lovely detail, the opening bird-call theme is heard on the cor anglais in its only appearance in the work.

The second movement *Adagio* begins, remarkably like the first, with a minor-key theme followed by a bit of major-key birdsong on solo flute. A second theme follows, another of those endless melodies that seemed to flow effortlessly from Dvořák, before a central section in which the birdsong theme leads to something like a summer storm before the calm of the final pages. The third, *Allegretto grazioso*, is a sad G minor waltz with a major-key trio, while the Finale is another complete original, part rondo, part variations. After an opening fanfare, a relaxed theme appears, the first three notes the same as those of the first movement's bird-call, whose increasingly urgent repetitions lead to a thrilling orchestral outburst dominated by the

weird sonority of trilling horns. A central section in C minor leads back to the opening theme, after which the tension winds down, but before we are lulled quite to sleep, the full power of the orchestra is unleashed one last time.

David Fraser 2022

MICHAEL BELL was born in Neath and studied music at Cardiff University.

After graduating, Michael formed the Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra in 1982 and has conducted the orchestra for 40 years, the anniversary concert coming up this June. Michael has conducted an enormous and wide-ranging repertoire with CPO, in over 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.

In 2010 Michael was invited to conduct the Brecknock Sinfonia at Brecon Cathedral, and has since become the orchestra's regular conductor. He was invited to conduct the Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra in its summer concert in 2017 and returned a number of times to conduct the ASO before being appointed as Music Director in 2021.

In November 2019 he made his debut with the Hereford String Orchestra where he is now a musical director and a regular conductor.

Michael was awarded an MBE for services to music in the New Year's Honours 2018.