

NSSO

National Schools' Symphony Orchestra

Summer Concert

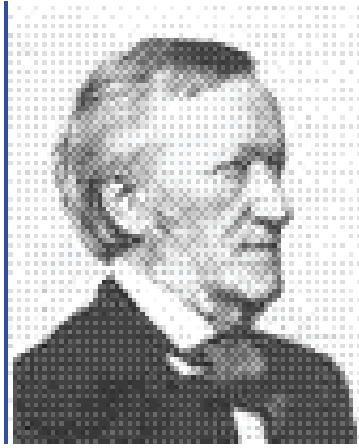
Conductor: Peter Bridle

2.30pm

22nd July 2006

at

*Reading University
Great Hall*



Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
Overture “Die Meistersinger”

The opera, or as Wagner liked to call it the 'music drama', was written between 1862 and 1867, but it is clear that Wagner had crystallized the themes well before it was completed. The overture, which contains the main themes, was finished long before the opera and was played several times by itself in concerts.

Wagner uses short, significant themes in his operas to represent persons or ideas. These are often referred to as 'leitmotifs'. He uses many of them in 'The Mastersingers', often combined with longer themes such as Walther's 'Prize Song'.

The overture opens with a magnificent statement of the 'Mastersingers' main theme - this is heard in different guises throughout the piece. A second theme known as the 'Lyric Motive' is heard next. This leads into two march tunes (one of which Wagner based on one found in a book published in Nuremberg in 1697). A theme known as the 'Longing Motive' leads on to the other main theme in the work: the 'Prize Song'. After a succession of other motives the 'Prize Song', 'Mastersingers Theme' and one of the 'March' themes combine, and build to a tremendous finale in which all the vast orchestration is exploited. Die Meistersinger was Wagner's penultimate music drama, and his only excursion into the realms of comedy.



Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)

Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes Opus 33

Dawn
Sunday Morning
Moonlight
The Storm

Peter Grimes was completed shortly after the spring of 1945. It was the time when Britten comprised four of the *Sea Interludes* into an orchestral suite and is regarded as a major orchestral work in its own right.

Day breaks with *Dawn* over a calm and quiet sea. However when the village of Borough wakes, the tranquillity is lost as the villagers scorn Ellen for siding with Peter Grimes who has earlier been accused by the villagers of abusing and murdering his young apprentice. Though it is not true the villagers deem him an outcast and turn their backs to Ellen. Peter then takes his new apprentice out to sea to learn the life of a fisherman.

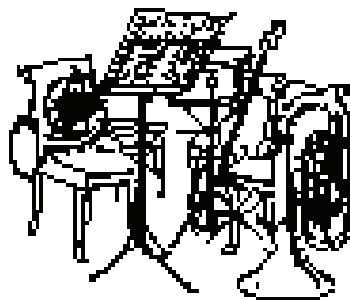
The peacefulness of *Sunday Morning* lures us in to a false sense of security for when the chiming of the church bells and the singing of the birds surrounds Ellen, John and Peter we believe everything to be well. But Peter demands that John goes to collect the fresh fish and Ellen thinks that a young boy like John deserves a rest and this angers Peter when he hears what she has said. Peter insists that if the boy is to learn the trade well he must work. Ellen starts to see in Peter what the villagers have been saying for some time about him; that he is arrogant. Peter is saddened to see that Ellen is now taking sides with the villagers as Peter really has a desire to marry Ellen.

Moonlight follows after the death of John, who fell of a cliff whilst trying to pitch fishing nets from the cliff door of Peter's hut. The people of the Borough gather to discuss the apprentice's disappearance and as expected from the villagers, the mood of hatred towards Peter gains momentum. Despite Peter's previous anger Ellen and a friend of Peter's, Captain Balstrode, resolve to offer Peter what help they can.

The fourth interlude of this work is *The Storm* in which Peter emerges from the fog, his mind in torment about what he should do. The contemplation of his desolate state is punctuated by the repeated cries of his name by the villagers. Ellen and Balstrode appear only to hear the cries coming from Peter. With no foreseeable future for Peter, Balstrode tells Peter to sail out to sea until land is no further in sight and to then sink his boat. The end of this interlude really shows the physiological state of Peter's mind, the unbearable torment of deaths and hatred in his life and having no escape other than to end his own life.

by Kate Rotheroe

SHORT INTERVAL





Antonin Dvorák (1841 – 1904)
Symphony No. 8 in G Major Opus 88

Allegro con brio
Adagio
Allegretto grazioso
Allegro ma non troppo

This story epitomises the spirit of Dvorák's later music. His music had been performed across all of Europe, he was constantly receiving numerous offers of honours and engagements and most importantly Dvorák had proven himself musically. It is his great achievements made through his first seven symphonies that allowed Dvorák to take his musical career at a more leisurely pace. It was when relaxing for the summer in Vysoka, enjoying his hobbies of pigeon keeping and train-spotting that inspired this more abundant in melody, colour Eight Symphony.

The symphony opens with a broad, hymn-like melody for 'cellos and violas - almost an opening "prayer" or invocation before the sun comes out, birdsong is heard from the flute, and a dancing rhythm builds to a huge climax that really launches the symphony on its way. A string of melodies pours out, by turns tender, dance-like and grandiose; and again and again woodwind birdsong brightens the texture and lightens the heart. The development section is at times stormy, but the energy unleashed is life-affirming rather than menacing, and as the movement ends Dvorák's exuberance seems to have burst its banks in a joyful torrent of G-major. The lovely *Adagio* comes as a calm contrast, beginning in a subdued C-minor. But once again, birdsong and folk-dance begin to creep in, lightening the

mood - and a sweetly lyrical violin solo ushers in the unmistakable strains of the "village music" Dvorák loved so much. Once again, there are rumbles of summer thunder and a torrential outburst at the centre of the movement, but all is radiant C-major calm as the *Adagio* ends. The *Allegretto grazioso* is too measured and graceful to be a *scherzo* - it more closely resembles one of Brahms' *intermezzi* complete with metre- and tempo - change in the coda. Its lilting, slavonic strain of melody and wistful, limpid *Trio* section need no elaboration. The *Finale* begins with a stirring fanfare, and proceeds through a colourful, increasingly lively set of variations on a theme announced by the 'cellos. As in the "Eroica" this gives way to a bustling minor-key development section, and then a recapitulation of the variations, with a brief, reflective interlude before the symphony speeds to a brilliant, exuberant finish in sunlit G-major.

The Eighth Symphony was premièred in February 1890 in Prague, and then given in London shortly before Dvorák travelled to Cambridge to receive an honorary doctorate. For this reason, it has sometimes been called the "English" symphony - a strange twist of fate, for, although Dvorák had another great symphony in him yet, no other work of his would ever so embody the truth of what he once said about himself - "In spite of the fact that I have moved about in the great world of music, I shall remain what I have always been - a simple Czech musician".

Peter Bridle

Over the past thirty years Peter has become deeply involved in music making with young people in the West Midlands and has gained a reputation as conductor, accompanist and violinist. He studied the piano and violin at the Royal Academy of Music, London and his first teaching post took him to Birmingham. Since 1976 he has been on the staff of King Edward's School, Birmingham where he has built up a flourishing orchestral side to school musical life.

In 1986 he was appointed as Musical Director of the Birmingham Schools Symphony Orchestra. This orchestra performs a regular series of concerts each season in the Adrian Boult Hall and Symphony Hall, Birmingham. Recent concerts have included the Sibelius violin concerto with Tasmin Little, Brahms's first piano concerto with Peter Donohoe, Elgar's Cello Concerto with Tim Hugh and the Schumann Piano Concerto with Freddy Kempf. Younger soloists have included some of the BBC Young Musicians of the Year including pianists David Horne and Benjamin Grosvenor. The schedule with the orchestra includes residential courses and concert tours abroad and recent tours have included visits to Germany, Hungary, Japan and Italy.

January 2003 Peter was awarded an MBE for his services to Music in Education in the West Midlands.

Schools Represented

Ampleforth
Aylesbury High

Bedales
Bedford High
Benenden

Canford
Charterhouse
Cheltenham Ladies'
Chetham's
Chigwell
City of London Freemans
Concord

Denmark Road

Eton

Felsted

Hanley Castle
Hampton
Harrow

King Edward VI Southampton
King's Canterbury

Leicester High
Lord Wandsworth

Malvern

Norwich High

Oundle

Pate's Grammar
Perse Girls
Perse

Radley
Reading Abbey
Red Maids'
Repton
Rugby

Sevenoaks
Solihull VI Form College
St James'
St Mary's Ascot
St Paul's
St Paul's Girls'
St Swithun's
Stonyhurst
Streatham and Clapham High

Uppingham

Wells Cathedral
Westminster
Whitgift
Winchester
Worksop
Wycliffe

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