

# Chamber Concert



**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**Hook Norton Church**

**Programme Free**



# Concert Dates for Your Diary

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## Banbury Symphony Orchestra

### *Summer Concert*

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

Vítězslava Kaprálová — *Suita Rustica*

Igor Stravinsky — *The Firebird Suite*

Florence Price — *Symphony No.1*

**7.30 p.m. – St Mary's Church, Banbury**

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## Banbury Symphony Orchestra

### *Autumn Concert*

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2024**

Ethel Smyth – *Overture, The Boatswain's Mate*

George Gershwin – *Concerto in F*

Soloist – Madalina Rusu

Ruth Gipps – *Symphony No.3*

**7.30 p.m. – Deddington Church**

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**Tickets from**

**banburysymphony.com**

# Programme

## **Edward Elgar – *Serenade for String Orchestra***

I – Allegro piacevole

II – Larghetto

III - Allegretto

## **Antonin Dvořák – *Serenade for Wind Instruments***

I – Moderator, quasi marcia

II – Minuetto. Tempo di minuetto

III – Andante con moto

IV – Finale. Allegro molto

## **Interval**

## **Louise Farrenc - *Symphony No. 3***

I – Adagio – Allegro

I – Adagio cantabile

III – Scherzo: Vivace

IV – Finale: Allegro

I'm delighted to welcome you to the beautiful St. Peter's Church in Hook Norton. I'm pleased that you are able to be with us for our chamber concert, when Banbury Symphony Orchestra becomes Banbury Chamber Orchestra for the day, allowing a smaller set of players to have a chance to perform music from earlier periods.

We are continuing our 2024 season showcasing works by women composers, and today you have the opportunity of hearing the wonderful Symphony No. 3 in G minor by Louise Farrenc, composed in 1847 when she was Professor of Piano at the Paris Conservatoire.

The decade beginning in 1840 saw the publication of Mendelssohn's violin concerto in 1844, together with all four of Schumann's symphonies. Farrenc's music is definitively within this Romantic tradition, and is inventive, full of great tunes and with her very personal way with harmonies. The lively third movement in particular would be a perfect soundtrack to a silent film.

In addition to the Farrenc symphony, we have two other pieces, more well-known and composed at slightly later times: Elgar's Serenade for Strings, composed in 1892, and Dvořák's Serenade for Wind Instruments, composed in 1878. Both of these pieces are fabulous works, composed towards the start of each composer's career.



I hope that you will enjoy these works, and also that we will see you again at our symphony concert on July 6th in St Mary's Church, Banbury.

Dave Settle  
Chair, Banbury Symphony Orchestra

[chair@banburysymphony.org](mailto:chair@banburysymphony.org)

## Paul Willett – Conductor

Paul Willett is our Conductor and Musical Director. Paul studied violin, singing and piano as a student but his main instrument was the French horn on which he gained his Performance Diploma from The Royal College of Music at the age of 16. He then went on to read music on scholarship at The Queen's College, Oxford, and studied for his teaching certificate in Music and Physical Education at Reading University.

For several years Paul combined teaching and freelance playing. He has given solo recitals and performed concertos throughout the country. He was a member of The Five Winds, a group that performed both at home and abroad, and also on BBC radio. Paul worked as a brass teacher for Oxfordshire Music Service and was director of a Saturday Music School of 200 students.

Paul was the Director of Didcot Sixth Form and whilst he is now mostly retired to concentrate on his music making and being a 'stay-at-home' dad to his son



Alfie, he has continued working part-time at Didcot Girls' School where he was Deputy Headteacher for many years.

## Anna Fleming - Leader

Anna was born in South Africa where she started playing the violin at the age of ten. While studying music at secondary school, Anna became a member of the South African National Youth Orchestra. After successfully completing her music degree, majoring in orchestral studies, Anna joined the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra in 1992.

Anna moved to England in late 1996. Keen to continue her orchestral playing, Anna joined the Banbury Symphony Orchestra in 1997 and became the leader of the orchestra in 2000, a post that she has held ever since. As a committed Christian, Anna plays an active role in church music. Focusing primarily on private violin tuition, Anna particularly enjoys helping adults to learn to play and she can be contacted on 01295 780017.



# ***Serenade for String Orchestra***

## **Edward Elgar**

Prior to the success of the Enigma Variations and Cello Concerto, Edward Elgar was a composer of relative obscurity, making ends meet by freelancing as a violinist in various orchestras and serving as the director of music at the Powick Lunatic Asylum, where he conducted a band made up of attendants and inmates. Elgar completed his String Serenade just after leaving his position at Powick, and its musical language, idiomatically written for string orchestra, was undoubtedly informed by Elgar's experience as a freelance violinist.

The exact genesis of the String Serenade is shrouded in mystery, but seems to have been derived from Elgar's Three Pieces for String Orchestra, which he composed in 1888. Unfortunately, the manuscript of the Three Pieces has been lost; however, a program from the first performance remains. From that program, we learn that Elgar had assigned specific names to each of the three movements: "Spring Song," "Elegy," and "Finale." The three-movement structure of the String Serenade, combined with the fitting correlation between the movement titles, have led scholars to conclude that the String Serenade was likely a revised version of the Three Pieces.

Elgar completed the String Serenade in the spring of 1892, just in time to



present the work as a third anniversary gift to his beloved wife, Alice. The String Serenade did not receive its professional premiere until 1896, yet remained for years a favorite work for Elgar. Elgar at one point wrote to his friend Charles Buck about the Serenade: "I like 'em – best thing I ever did." His affinity for his Serenade is manifested in the fact that it was the last piece Elgar himself recorded before his death in 1934.

The first movement begins with a playful, rhythmically incessant figure in the violas, which returns throughout the movement. This makes way for a wistful and pastoral theme, with beautifully polyphonic writing for the entire string orchestra. The Larghetto is the emotional crux of the work, with a gorgeously delicate melody that Elgar develops beautifully through the movement. The elegiac character of the first movement returns in the Allegretto, with a subtle nod to the Serenade's opening near the end.

## ***Serenade for Wind Instruments***

### **Antonin Dvořák**

Antonin Dvořák's beginnings were rather ordinary, if not inauspicious. The son of a butcher and one of eight siblings, his rise to the ranks of the great European composers was nothing short of extraordinary. Scraping together a living teaching music lessons and playing in local orchestras, he composed by night and in his spare time. In an effort to get more financial support for his growing family, he sought funding through an artist stipendium from the Austrian Imperial government, which ruled his Bohemian homeland in this era. The stipendium committee saw his potential and over the years he received five of these grants.

As Dvořák's popularity grew across Europe, he battled anti-Czech sentiment, with his publisher urging him to include German translations and abbreviate his first name as "Ant.," which could be interpreted as the German 'Anton' just as easily as the Czech 'Antonín'. However tempting it may have been to leave behind his Czech roots publicly, Dvořák's music never does so. If anything, the *Serenade for Winds* showcases these roots. The *Serenade* was mainly a German-Austrian historical genre, and Opus 44 certainly preserves much of that heritage; yet it was also highly adaptable, making it quite amenable to Dvořák's unique influence. His Czech take on this form is peppered

with folk dances and idiomatic rhythmic features.

As an almost tongue-in-cheek reference to the marches that prelude Mozart's serenades, the first movement is a quasi *marcia* with dotted rhythms and a bass-heavy foundation that suggests the grandeur and distinction of a military parade. However, the ensemble of mostly wind instruments lacks the brassy timbre of a military band and its sombre D minor suggests something almost foreign. The second movement, labeled as a *minuetto*, features two Czech dances including a traditional couple's dance called a *sousedská*. The twin clarinets twirl around each other in tandem before alighting into a lively *furiante*: a vivacious dance with alternating rhythms. The third movement (*andante con moto*) bears the harmonic and lyrical weight of a symphonic movement with long, complex phrases and rich harmonies.



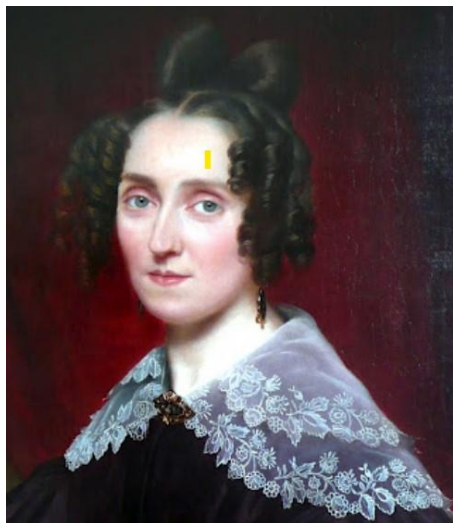
The last movement begins with a polka-like theme that drifts into contrasting material between appearances before building to an exultant horn volley and triumphant end.

The work is full of youthful invention, illustrates the breadth of Dvořák's compositional style and captures his genuine playfulness and excitement. As Brahms said of the piece in 1879, "It would be difficult to discover a finer, more refreshing impression of really abundant and charming creative talent."

## ***Symphony No. 3***

### **Louise Farrenc**

The recent popularity of Louise Farrenc's Symphony No. 3 is indicative of the 21st-century revival of this French composer's music. The current increase in programming this piece, however, belies the hurdles that were present in



producing an orchestral work in 19th-century France, when the symphony was out of favour and the opera ruled supreme. When the barriers Farrenc surmounted as a female composer are added to this equation, the positive reception of the symphony during her lifetime holds even greater significance.

Farrenc (née Jeanne-Louise Dumont) was known primarily as a composer of piano works. She entered the Paris Conservatoire at age 15 to pursue piano performance, the more typical domain of female musicians at that time. Women were not yet allowed to study composition formally, but she was able to arrange for private lessons with composer and professor Anton Reicha, developing a style with German Romantic and Classical influences. She paused her studies at age 17 when she married flautist Aristide Farrenc and they embarked on a concert tour together. Eventually, they settled back in Paris, where her husband opened a successful publishing company, also helping to further her compositional career with the publication of many of her piano works, starting in 1825.

Farrenc returned to the Conservatoire to become a professor of piano, remaining there for thirty years and with her daughter Victorine among her prized pupils. Her professorship is recognized as historically significant for at least two reasons: she was the only woman to hold a permanent post of her rank



during the entire 19th century, and she is an early example of a woman asking for, and receiving, equal pay to that of her male colleagues, which she did following the successful premiere of her Nonet in 1850. While Farrenc continued teaching until two years before her death at age 71, the latter part of her career changed course after the tragic death of her daughter due to illness in 1859. Farrenc turned away from composition and performance, and she and her husband focused on compiling a multi-volume musical anthology as part of their interest in historical keyboard revival initiatives.

Farrenc's large-scale orchestral compositions were part of her later oeuvre, with two overtures written in 1834 and three symphonies written in the 1840s. They all remained unpublished during her lifetime but were performed multiple times across Europe. She wrote her Symphony No. 3 in G Minor in 1847, but it was not performed until two years later, by the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire; the delay was perhaps due to the reluctance in French musical circles to produce symphonic works. Over the course of the next few years, however, it was performed again in Paris as well as in Geneva and Brussels.

The intensity of the symphony is palpable from the start. After an oboe ushers in a slow introduction, tinged with dark melancholy, the ensemble

delves into a swirling triple meter for a robust statement of the main theme in unison strings. The movement develops energetically, picking up the pace even more with a final burst of energy in the coda. In contrast, the second movement Adagio opens with a smooth, lyrical clarinet melody, supported by horns, bassoon, and timpani. This movement provides a simple and elegant interlude, building gradually but overall remaining serene and unruffled. The third movement Scherzo begins with quiet tiptoeing in the strings but has a forward momentum and excitement constantly bubbling below the surface, paused only during the central woodwind trio. The decisive unison strings that open the final movement signal a return to a darker, bold energy. The ensemble pursues the twists and turns of thematic development with a vigour worthy of this Romantic-inflected symphony, ending with three triumphant final chords.

# Banbury Symphony Orchestra

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David Settle (Treasurer and Chair), Rachel James (Secretary),  
Alice Palmer, Clare Walton, Elizabeth Beckett.

Conductor - Paul Willett

## **Violin I**

Anna Fleming (Leader)  
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Keith Crompton

\* - section principal

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Banbury Symphony Orchestra



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All rehearsals take place in Banbury in term time on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 to 9.30 pm.

