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Programme 80p

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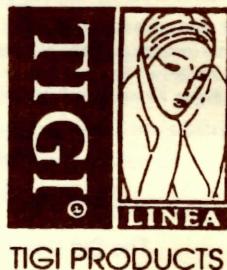
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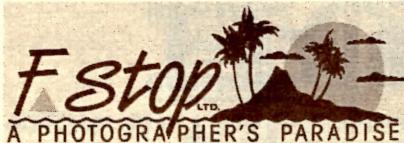
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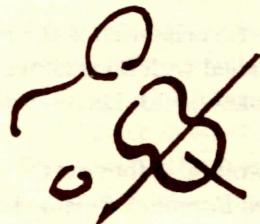
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Banbury Symphony Orchestra



Paul Willett

Paul Willett studied the French Horn with Ifor James and gained his performance Diploma from the Royal College of Music at 16.

He read music at The Queen's College, Oxford, on scholarship, and now combines teaching and freelance playing. He has given solo recitals and performed concertos throughout the country. He was a member of The Five Winds for many years, a group which performed both at home and abroad, and also on BBC radio.

He is currently Acting Head of Music at Fitzharrys School in Abingdon, and is the conductor of Oxfordshire Schools Senior Orchestra.

Karen Khachaturian
(b.1920)

In the Circus

Allegro; Tempo di Valse; Allegro Moderato; Maestoso

Karen Khachaturian is the nephew of the more well-known Aram Khachaturian. He studied with Shostakovich at the Moscow Conservatoire, where he was later appointed Senior Lecturer in Instrumentation.

This work is in four movements, each exciting and colourful. The movements are entitled *Bareback Riders*, *Acrobats on the High Trapeze*, *Jugglers*, and *Star Turn*.

Note by Paul Willett

Paul Hindemith
(1895-1963)

Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by
Carl Maria von Weber

Allegro; Moderato; Andantino; March

As a composer, conductor, teacher and viola-player, Paul Hindemith made a distinguished contribution to music in the first half of the 20th century. His career spanned 50 years from 1913, when he entered the Hoch Conservatoire in Frankfurt-am-Main, close to his native German city of Hanau, right up to his death in 1963. He showed a particular devotion to contemporary music both in his compositions and in his performances and had a natural ability as a musical organizer and educator.

Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber* is one of his most accessible and enduringly popular orchestral pieces. It originated in 1940 in sketches for a projected ballet on themes by the early 19th century composer Weber for the choreographer Léonide Massine. Over the next three years he elaborated on the themes to make a work suggestive of a symphony. It was introduced in New York on 20 January 1944 in a performance by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Artur Rodzinski. In constructing the piece, Hindemith avoided Weber's most familiar works such as *Oberon* or *Der Freischütz* and instead selected more obscure excerpts, ones that represent the composer at less than his best. Hindemith implied that deliberately choosing such themes gave him the excuse to change and ornament them as he saw fit.

In the first movement, using material taken from the fourth of Weber's eight

pieces for piano duet entitled *All' Ongarese* (1818-19), the theme is heard at once; a second more energetic melody is then presented, and both tunes are subjected to elaboration, in the manner of a sonata-form development section. In the second movement, a lively *scherzo*, the music takes on a mock-Chinese flavour - small wonder, since it is based on the overture to Weber's incidental music to Schiller's reworking of *Turandot* (1809). The flute presents the melody in a highly ornamented form, to be taken up later by the strings at a faster pace. The third movement, the light *andantino*, draws upon the second piece in another set of piano duets, the six *Petites pièces faciles* (1801). The *finale*, a brisk march adapted from the seventh of the eight piano duets *All' Ongarese*, follows the third movement without a break. In it the music is accompanied by a strong, rhythmic contribution from the orchestral percussion.

Programme note © 1996 by William Gould

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INTERVAL

Many thanks to the Church Social Committee for arranging the refreshments



**Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)**

Symphony no 4 in E major Op.98

Allegro non troppo; Andante moderato; Allegro giocoso;
Allegro energico e passionato

Brahms's habit of composing works in contrasting pairs has often been remarked upon. In his orchestral compositions this is best seen in the two pairs formed by his four symphonies. Thus the tragic First Symphony was followed within a year by the gay and pastoral Second, and within two years of each other came the brightly optimistic Third and the autumnal farewell of the Fourth. With each symphony we seem to be entering into a different region of Brahms's inner world; each appears to be treating a new and intensely personal 'theme'. But because of his notorious reticence, we are left with no clue as to the meaning of this 'theme'.

The fourth symphony was completed in the summer of 1885, at Murzzuschlag in Styria, where two years previously the composer had finished his Third. the first performance took place under his direction at Meiningen in October of that year, but the reception was cool. It was only in later years that the work began to be recognised for what it is: the crowning achievement of Brahms's career as a

symphonist and the most serious and profound of his large-scale orchestral compositions. The opening *Allegro*, whose first subject is spun out to no fewer than nineteen bars, is perhaps the most lyrical of Brahms's symphonic first movements, although it also contains episodes of an intense dramatic conflict.

In the *Andante*, melodic beauty is wedded to magical touches in harmony and orchestration. Already the very opening provides a superb example of this - a gently swaying passage for horns and woodwind in C major which, with the entry of the strings pizzicato, shades into E major. The ensuing *Allegro* is the only movement to be found in the Brahms symphonies to possess a genuine scherzo character. The giocoso of the title is fully borne out by the music and a small but not insignificant feature is Brahms's addition to the orchestra of a piccolo and triangle.

The finale is cast in the form of a passacaglia or variations on a ground bass. Brahms took the passacaglia theme from Bach's Church Cantata no.150: *Nach dir, Herr, verlangt mich*. No composer before had thought of conducting a symphony in this way - a fact which at first puzzled and even disconcerted its early audiences. Brahms displays a magisterial skill in avoiding the pitfalls inherent in this form - a sectional structure and lack of cohesion between the individual variations. He makes the music flow with scarcely any interruption, variation follows upon variation with compelling musical logic, and the cumulative effect is one of overwhelming grandeur. Incidentally, this is the only movement of the symphony to use trombones.

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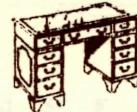
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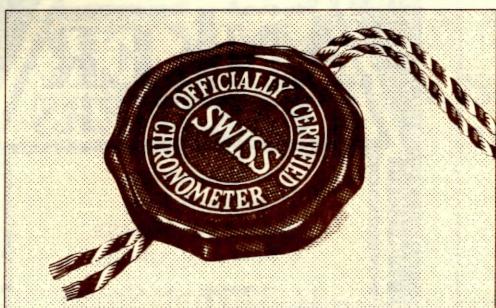
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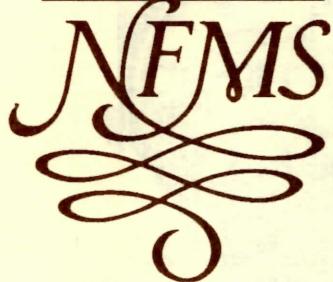
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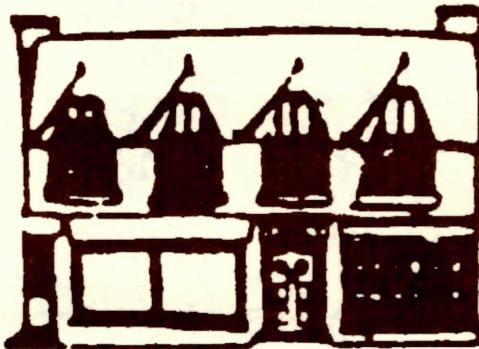
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