

# The Banbury Symphony Orchestra

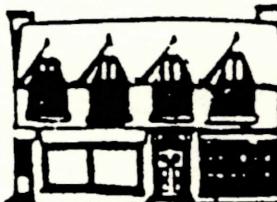
**19th June 1999**  
**Programme £1**

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Dvorak  
(1841 – 1904)

Overture ‘Carnival’, Op. 92

Dvorak was the son of an innkeeper and village butcher. His musical talents were discovered as a child and from 1857 to 1859 he attended the Prague Organ School. He worked as a viola player in various orchestras to support himself whilst gaining recognition as a composer of every genre: opera, oratorio, orchestral, instrumental, choral and vocal. He visited and was acclaimed in various European capitals but it was in America that he settled.

The ‘Carnival’ overture, composed in 1891, was originally entitled ‘Life’. Dvorak stated that it was ‘to a certain extent programme music’. It is in three sections, the outer parts fast and joyous with much hustle and bustle, the middle section slower, more lyrical and with a lighter texture.

Tchaikovsky  
(1840-93)

Swan Lake Suite op. 20

*Scene - Waltz - Dance of the Swans - Hungarian Dance (Czardas)  
Spanish Dance - Mazurka*

The Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow commissioned Swan Lake, Tchaikovsky’s first ballet score. Its first performance, in 1877, was not a success. It was not until two years after the composer’s death that it received acclaim and it has since become one of the most frequently performed of all ballets.

The story of *Swan Lake* comes from a fairy tale. Odette, a Queen, together with her subjects, a group of girls, has been bewitched by the evil sorcerer Von Rothbart to assume the form of swans by day. To break the spell and kill Von Rothbart, a young man must offer undying love to the Queen. Prince Siegfried walks lonely through the night and comes across the lake where Odette lives and discovers his ideal love.

At a ball the following night to celebrate his coming of age, Prince Siegfried is to choose a bride, but he has already lost his heart to Odette. Von Rothbart attempts to deceive the Prince at the celebratory ball by magically making his own daughter resemble the image of Odette. Prince Siegfried is at first deceived, but before he swears to her his love he realises the trickery. The Prince rushes to the Lake where he swears his love to Odette, Von Rothbart dies, and the lovers and girls celebrate.

Tchaikovsky had always felt a strong inclination towards the rhythms of the dance and this is found in many of his works. In his ballets he was able to express his musical imagination to the full. His music is at times tragic, descriptive, beautiful and joyous. His dance movements in different national styles are not just merely a vehicle to accompany a ballet, but have musical integrity of their own.

~  
*interval*  
~

**Sir Edward Elgar  
(1857-1934)**

**‘Enigma’ Variations**

Elgar’s dedication is ‘To my friends pictured within Malvern, 1899’. Each variation is ‘a sketch of the idiosyncrasies’ of a particular member of his circle. The initials at the head of each variation are a clue to the identity of the person portrayed. This is only part of the enigma, for it was long believed that the original theme could be combined with a well-known tune. This part of the puzzle remains unsolved. The theme is in three parts: the first, in the minor key, makes use of a falling third; then, as the melody rises the interval becomes a falling seventh; the central section, in the major, ascends smoothly, and the return of the minor opening gives symmetry to the whole theme. Unlike purely classical variations, when each variation generally is the same length, Elgar treats some characteristic feature of his theme, so that each

variation differs in length and mood, as befits his purpose in portraying his characters.

**C.A.E.** of the first variation is easily identified as the composer's wife. The theme is little altered and the music reflects a gracious personality.

**H.D.S.P.** played the piano in trios with Elgar. His preliminary finger exercises are playfully suggested.

**R.B.T.** portrays an amateur actor whose voice tended to break when he impersonated an old man. The key changes to the major, and the opening notes of the theme are heard on the oboe, with a change of rhythm.

**W.M.B.** was a country squire noted for his musical house parties. Elgar's forceful use of the theme - *allegro di motto* - expresses his business-like manner, and the accidental banging of the door causes amusement among the guests.

**R.P.A.** like his father Matthew Arnold, was a serious minded man with a delightful sense of humour that lightened his conversation. Elgar adds a warm counter melody above the theme, while the light-hearted moments are largely on the woodwind.

**YSOBEL** As this lady was an amateur viola player her instrument plays a large part in this variation. The three-note figure of the bassoons is derived from the theme, TROYTE. The famous opening timpani solo creates the mood of the movement, marked *Presto*. Later, the strings rush down and up in great excitement, which is all part of Elgar's joke, for Troyte Griffith was apparently rather staid and a little pompous.

**W.N.** The theme's opening is played, with varied rhythm, on the clarinets. Winifred Norbury's old-world charm is caught and her characteristic laugh suggested.

**NIMROD** is joined to the last variation and develops the theme's leaps - the falling seventh brings a fine strength to the music. This richly scored movement is dedicated to Elgar's closest friend and critic A.J. Jaeger. In German, Jaeger means hunter, hence, Nimrod, 'the mighty hunter'.

**DORABELLA** After the majesty of Nimrod the delicate interplay of strings and woodwind makes an effective contrast. In this intermezzo - it is not a variation - the woodwind suggest the rhythm of the name Dorabella.

C.R.S. describes how the dog of the organist of Hereford cathedral fell into the river Wye, paddled upstream - a version of the theme is in the basses - shook himself, and barked. From these fragments this exhilarating variation is built.

H.C.N. was the cellist of Elgar's trio. The falling seventh is prominent, both in the opening cello solo and in the fine melody that develops on the lower strings,

\*\*\* (Romanza) The asterisks conceal the identity of Lady Lygon who was on the sea when the variation was written. By a happy inspiration the clarinet quotes from Mendelssohn's 'Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage Overture', while the drum suggests the throb of a liner's engines.

E.D.U. (Finale) This is a portrait of the composer himself, vigorous and confident. Lady Elgar always called him Edouard, hence the initials E.D.U. An introduction, in the 'Pomp and Circumstance' manner, brings a version of the theme on the full orchestra. Both the first variation and Nimrod are recalled, and a broad climax is built to the final chord.

*Programme note by James Angel  
supplied through the Programme Note Bank  
of the National Federation of Music Societies.*

## Paul Willett: conductor

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 for several years combined teaching and freelance playing. He has given solo recitals and performed concertos throughout the country. He was also a member of The Five Winds for many years, a group which performed both at home and abroad, and also on BBC radio. His conducting experience includes Oxfordshire Schools Symphony Orchestra. He is currently Head of Music at Fitzharrys School in Abingdon.

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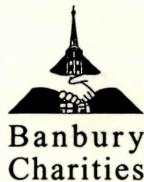
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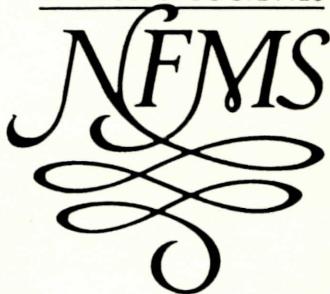
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