

BANBURY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

(Leader : Geoffrey Kent)

With

MICHAEL HEXT
(Solo trombone)

CONDUCTOR : PHILIP SHAW

on

SATURDAY 24TH NOVEMBER AT 7.30 pm

in

ST MARY'S CHURCH, BANBURY

YEAR

1984

Prelude to The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

Wagner

Most ordinary mortals would have been crushed by the load of misfortune and discouragement with which Wagner had to cope at the time he began one of the greatest operatic comedies. *Die Meistersinger* had first taken shape in Wagner's mind in 1845 as a sort of parody or rather satire play to follow his *Tannhauser* on which he was working at the time. Seventeen years later, after the completion of his death-and-passion-fraught *Tristan and Isolde*, after the fiasco of *Tannhauser* in Paris, after the accumulation of mountainous debts, after a long series of lesser discouragements and perhaps as a reaction to all of these, Wagner began actual composition of his warmhearted comedy. He began in oddly enough with the Overture or Prelude as he later renamed it.

The Prelude opens with the sturdy, ceremonious C major theme of the Mastersingers themselves. The Prelude is dominated by this and two other equally straightforward C major themes associated with the Mastersingers' Guild. One of these, the March of the Mastersingers, is an authentic Mastersinger melody of the sixteenth century. These themes contrast with those associated with young Walther von Stolzing, his love for Eva, and his attempts to win her as his bride. Since the Mastersingers stand for tradition and establishment, while Walther represents youth, inspiration, innovation and rebellion, the contrasting group of themes embody the basic conflict of the opera, in which Walther is almost frustrated. In the final scene, however, young love and the Mastersingers, inspiration and the "rules", are reconciled-which is exactly what Wagner does, symbolically, at the exultant climax of his Prelude, by combining one of Walther's melodies (a phrase later incorporated into Walther's victorious "Prize Song") with the theme of the Mastersingers, with the Mastersingers' March, and with a fourth, scherzo-like theme associated with the malevolent Beckmesser, all interwoven in one passage of breathtaking contrapuntal virtuosity and dramatic power.

Trombone Concerto

Gordon Jacob.

Andante maestoso; Adagio molto; Vivace alla marcia.

Soloist: Michael Hext.

After study at the Royal College of Music, where he worked with Stanford and Herbert Howells in the years immediately after the war of 1914-18, Gordon Jacob, the English composer, conductor and teacher, began his professional career by teaching theory and composition at Birkbeck and Morley Colleges. Conducting came later, largely through the direction of his own works at provincial festivals and at the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts; but subsequently he took on regular conducting for the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society and at the R.C.M. Jacob was a specialist in instrumentation and wrote a textbook on scoring and transposition, 'Orchestral Technique' (1931). His interest in the individual qualities of instruments was aroused by some early transcriptions which he made of Elizabethan music for orchestra and for military band. His later orchestrations of '*Les Sylphides*' (a great improvement on the Russian version of Chopin originally used by the Diaghilev Ballet) and other ballets for the Sadlers Wells Company - for whom incidentally he wrote two ballets, his only works for the stage-version testify to his taste, knowledge and skill in this department of the art. The scoring of his own works is always effective, though usually economical and sometimes even reticent.

Although Jacob wrote plenty of vocal music, his instrumental works are naturally more characteristic of his musical mentality and outlook. Everything he wrote is marked by sterling craftsmanship and by clarity, economy and a directness that sometimes amounts to brusqueness, though in his vocal music he allowed a more lyrical vein and a more sensuous harmony to appear. His style, however, was formed at a time when romantic impulse was suspect and the general flavour of his music is astringent, though his robust counterpoint, ingenious rhythms and his willingness to repeat crisp figures *ostinato-fashion*, rarely resulted in the aggressiveness that characterised so much music after the first world war. Perhaps this is because he had a proper respect for his medium and a fastidious ear for tone quality; certainly his main interest was in the musical material and its exploitation in the chosen medium rather than in the expression of this or that sentiment or the representation of non-musical ideas. Hence there are few descriptive titles among his works, which are chiefly concertos, suites and sets of variations. His concertos for various instruments are all of them pithy and brilliantly business-like.

F.S.H.

INTERVAL

Symphony No 9 in E minor "From the New World"

Dvorak

In the summer of 1892 Dvorak arrived in America where he was to spend two years as Director of the new Conservatory of Music in New York. He was also expected to teach composition, conduct the student orchestra, and arrange concerts of his own music. During his first winter in New York Dvorak began work on his Ninth Symphony. "It seems that America will have a good effect on my music" he wrote to a friend. "I think you will be able to hear this in my new symphony." When the symphony was performed in New York the following winter it was a great success. Earlier Dvorak had written a newspaper article expressing his interest in American folk music - particularly Negro Spirituals. This led some to think that he had used existing American folk tunes in his new symphony, whilst others thought that the music was typically Czech in flavour and that the title suggested a greeting from a homesick composer to his friends in Bohemia. Later when the symphony was to be performed in Germany, Dvorak wrote: "Ignore all the nonsense about my having used 'Indian' or 'American' tunes - it is untrue. I merely tried to write music in the spirit of actual American folk melodies."

I. Adagio; Allegro molto A slow introduction foreshadows the main Allegro theme, a bold fanfare for two hours. Flutes and oboes follow with a fetching little tune that twists and turns upon itself. . The strongest contrast comes with the famous melody for solo flute irresistibly recalling "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" one of Dvorak's favourite spirituals. All three themes are developed separately and together, with increasing excitement. The reprise of the opening themes is followed by a triumphant coda.

II. Largo A solemn procession of chords leads to the celebrated melody of the slow movement. The Cor Anglais chants a strain that has been adopted in America almost as another spiritual.

III. Scherzo: Molto vivace We need not be overly concerned whether the opening gaiety is of American Indians or Czech peasants. The beginning and end are fiery and excited. In between there are moments which could conceivably suggest a more relaxed village scene with dancing peasants, a tootling village band and laughing crowd.

IV. Allegro con fuoco A finale of tremendous sweep and splendour is built around the sturdy, assertive theme proclaimed by horns and trombones. Material from earlier movements, recalled and combined with new, concludes the work in another burst of triumph.

MICHAEL HEXT was born on Christmas Day in 1960 in Wuppertal, Germany. He was educated at Bedford Modern School and began playing the trombone at the age of nine, taught by his father.

In June 1978 he was selected by the B.B.C. as their "Young Musician of the Year", the first of their bi-annual competitions, and as a result he received a number of engagements around the country. Amongst these were recitals at the Wigmore Hall, London, Croydon's Fairfield Halls, Free Trade Hall, Manchester and many others. A number of concerto performances included a commissioned concerto by Edward Gregson on Radio 3, the British premiere of a work by Ray Premru at the Royal Festival Hall with the Philharmonia Orchestra, a performance of the Buxton Orr Concerto with the City of London Brass at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and numerous performances of the concerto by the late Gordon Jacob. He was also engaged for a variety of T.V. and radio appearances including a recital for Radio 3's 'Young Music Makers' series and even an appearance on the Val Doonican Show. For two years he was principal trombone of the European Community Youth Orchestra under Claudio Abbado.

In 1979 Michael Hext won a foundation scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music where he was taught by John Iveson. On leaving College he freelanced in London, working mainly with the Phillip Jones Brass Ensemble and the 'Fires of London'. In February 1982 he was appointed principal trombone of the Halle Orchestra where he remained until March of the following year when he was invited to join the London Philharmonic Orchestra as principal trombone.

BANBURY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

First Violins	Cellos	Bassoons
G. Kent (Leader)	A. Thom	C. Pawley
J. Hargrave	L. Caperon	C. Gray
J. Bache	R. Atkinson	
E. Snowden	S. Jakeman	French Horns
B. Thomas	J. Preece	D. Simpson
A. Adams	P. Sutcliffe	M. Taylor
A. Bharali		M. Wood
	Double Basses	K. Kerridge
Second Violins	E. James	
G. Walker	L. Burn	Trumpets
M. Saunders	S. Riley	R. Barnett
D. Golby	I. Towson	R. Auld
R. Gebbels		K. Whale
A. Waite	Flutes	V. Fisher
B. Yelloly	R. Townsend	
E-J. Hutchings	S. Blanch	Trombones
G. Cross	C. Oliver	M. Hil
K. French	H. Malcolm	P. Macey
D. Cummins		M. Saunders
D. Hunter	Piccolo	
J. Hunter	E. Gilchrist	Tuba
		A. Prickett
Violas	Oboes	
L. Smith	A. Coltman	Timpani
R. Shield	R. Jordan	S. Lawrence
D. Bolton King		
D. Cummins	Clarinets	Percussion
	J. Chadwick	S. Towson
Cor Anglais	M. Graver	M. Everitt
R. Jordan	C. Bevan	

Our grateful thanks are due to all our Patrons for their continued support.
Anyone wishing to join the orchestra should contact the Hon. Secretary,
R. Barnett (Banbury 57314)