

# The Banbury Symphony Orchestra

**21st November 1998**  
Programme £1





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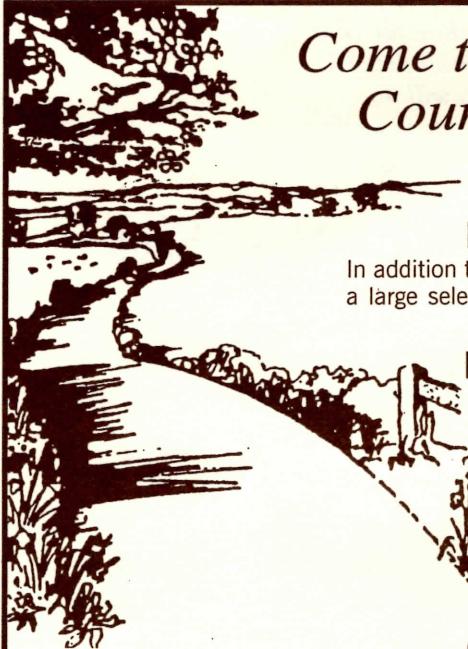
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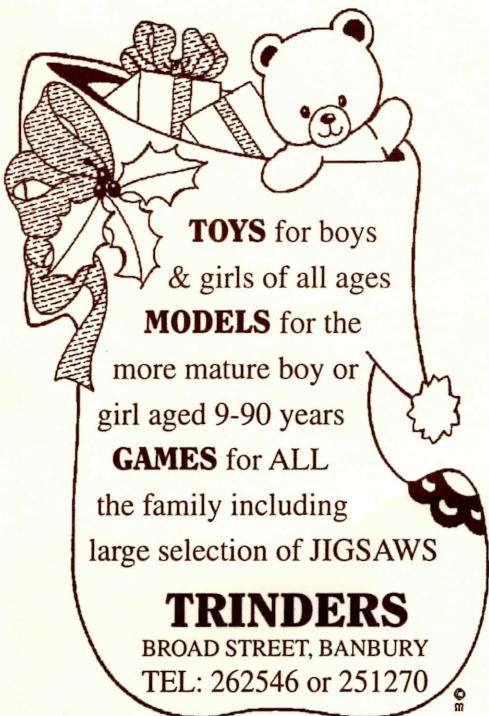
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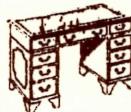
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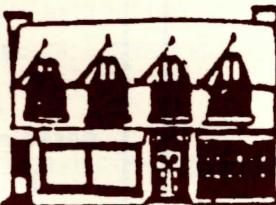
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## **Banbury Symphony Orchestra**

Thank you for coming to our first concert in the 1998/9 season, our thirty-sixth. We all have pleasure from working hard to make music for you to enjoy. Last season we felt we achieved this with our performances of Tchaikovsky's 4th and Vaughan-Williams' 2nd symphonies, two very different works. We hope to do so again with tonight's programme. We are delighted to have Stephen Bingham return (from 1981!) to be our guest leader and soloist in *Sheherazade*.

We hope that after tonight you will feel you can encourage some friends to join you at our next concert, here in Deddington on 13 March, when the programme will include the 5th symphony by Tchaikovsky and Peter Adams playing the glorious cello concerto by Dvorak.

Richard Hartree, Committee Chairman

### **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 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 and Thames Vale Youth Orchestra. He is currently Head of Music at Fitzharrys School in Abingdon.



## **Stephen Bingham**

Stephen Bingham was brought up in Banbury and this is his second time leading the Banbury Symphony Orchestra in *Scheherazade* - last time round, in 1981, he was still at school. Having studied initially with Michael Bochmann, Stephen Bingham entered the Royal Academy of Music in 1981. While there he studied violin with Emanuel Hurwitz, led three of the Academy orchestras and won several prizes and scholarships including two for violin and one for orchestral leading.

His love of the string quartet medium led him to form the Bingham String Quartet in 1985. The Quartet has gained a reputation as one of the outstanding chamber ensembles in this country and has performed widely both here and abroad. As well as recording for television and radio, the Quartet has released several compact discs to much critical acclaim.

Alongside his quartet commitments Stephen has maintained a varied orchestral and solo career. He leads the contemporary groups Music Projects, London and the Oxford Festival Ensemble, and for several years led the orchestra of New Sadlers Wells Opera. Stephen is also Artistic Director of the London String Soloists.

**Johannes Brahms**  
**(1833-97)**

**Tragic Overture**

Brahms composed both the Tragic Overture Op.81 and the Academic Festival Overture Op.80 in the summer of 1880. Brahms considered the two overtures a contrasting pair of works, describing them in a letter to Reinecke: 'One weeps, the other laughs'.

The title 'Tragic' was established by its first performance in September 1880, having previously been called 'Dramatic' or 'Tragedy'. There is some speculation as to whether the overture was originally intended for the concert hall or as a musical introduction to a stage play.

The Tragic Overture is structured in three main sections. It opens Allegro ma non troppo with two decisive chords followed by a fading timpani roll. This leads into the main theme which is built in four phrases, the first two legato, the second two rhythmically energetic. The middle section is slower in tempo and funereal in style, while retaining the features of the opening theme in its contrast of legato and dotted rhythms. The third section sees a return to the Allegro tempo, but the brief glimpses of the opening theme are more developmental in style than a recapitulation. The end of the overture seems to lose its earlier energy and begins to draw to a close, but is dramatically interrupted by an emphatic D-minor finish.

**Antonin Dvorak**  
**(1841-1904)**

**The Water Sprite**

Dvorak was the most internationally acclaimed of Bohemia's composers. He worked extensively in America and England, but his true love was for his native country.

Dvorak wrote *The Water Sprite* (also known as *The Water Goblin*) in 1896 and it was first performed publicly in London the same year. The work is in the form of a symphonic poem and is one of a number of works inspired by his

country's national poetry and folk legend. Dvorak was particularly attracted to the folk tales of KJ Erben and it is Erben's poem Vodnik (The Water Sprite) that inspired Dvorak's music.

*The Water Sprite* tells the story of an evil sprite, signified by the main theme. At the start of the work we are introduced to the sprite, at first seemingly pleasant as he sits on a poplar branch, making himself a green coat and red shoes. He sings as he works, for tomorrow he is to be wed. The next day he shows his true colours as he lies in wait for a human bride. She is a girl who takes her washing down to the lake against the advice of her mother who has premonitions of evil. The girl falls into the water and the sprite drags her to the bottom of the lake and makes her his wife. They have a child and we hear a sad lullaby sung by the girl to her child. She is desperately homesick and begs to visit her mother. Eventually, the sprite is persuaded but he insists she returns to the lake by nightfall and he keeps their child to ensure this. The girl visits her mother and there is a tearful reunion. As evening arrives, the sprite angrily knocks on the door of the mother's house - he has come to collect his wife. The mother refuses to let her go whereupon the sprite creates a fearsome storm. Something is heard to crash against the mother's door - she opens it and finds the headless body of her daughter's child.

The main events in the story are heard in the music, from the introduction of the sprite and the sad lullaby to the storm and terrible act of revenge. The music is very descriptive but one cannot help thinking that Dvorak had some fondness for the sprite whose character portrayed in music seems more impish than evil.

*The music is being performed from the  
Novello hire library edition*

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**INTERVAL**

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~

Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov  
(1844-1908)

Symphonic Suite, *Scheherazade*

A 19th-century showpiece, *Scheherazade* was the linchpin of Diaghilev's first ballet season in Paris in 1910. Rimsky-Korsakov wrote it in 1888; like his earlier *Antar*, it has the shape of a symphony, with a big first movement, a martial scherzo, a lyrical slow movement and a busy finale that ends with a grand catastrophe.

Can music tell a story? Yes, it can, but not here in the incident-by-incident way of Richard Strauss in his tone poems. Here, each movement sets a scene, and he who likes to add his own pictures can happily do so. The solo violin part impersonates Scheherazade herself, getting on the right side of her hard-to-please husband and introducing each 'story'.

*The Sea and Sinbad's Ship* is a pre-Debussy picture of the sea, and we remember that the composer had been a naval officer who sailed around the world in a Russian warship. In *The Tale of the Kalender Prince*, the bassoon solo shows the prince disguised as a holy man, who later takes up arms with enthusiasm. *The Young Prince and Princess* is a Hollywood romance; it is easy to fit Clark Gable and Ida Lupino into some exotic setting. The finale starts off in a busy city, but suddenly switches back to Sinbad's ship, which is spectacularly wrecked. Scheherazade rounds off her stories with a last gesture, fading into silence.

*This note was supplied through the Programme Note Bank  
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**Our next concert will be on  
13 March 1999  
in Deddington Church at 8pm**

**The programme will feature  
Peter Adams  
playing the Dvorak cello concerto,  
Tchaikovsky's  
5th symphony and the overture  
The Merry Wives  
of Windsor.**

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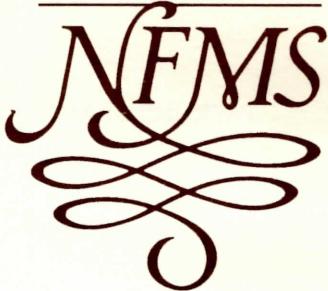
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