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Programme 80p

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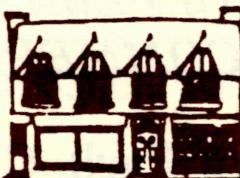
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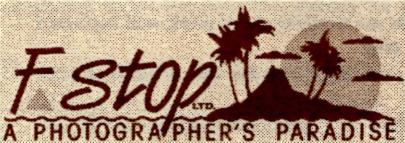
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Paul Willett

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.

*We are grateful to Banbury Charities for covering
the advertising expenses of this concert.*

Brahms
(1833-1897)

Academic Festival Overture

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg. His father was a double bass player in local theatres, and Brahms supported himself as a young music student by playing in taverns and dance halls. At the age of twenty he toured with the Hungarian violinist Reményi. Through him he met Joachim, and came to the notice of Liszt, who helped him considerably. Though a lyrical and romantic quality is always present in the music of Brahms, his marked preference for traditional classical forms and proportions is very apparent.

This overture was written in 1880, a year after the university of Breslau had conferred an honorary doctorate of Philosophy on Brahms. Subsequently the composer offered this overture by way of a thesis. With its frequent allusions to several well-known German student songs, and particularly its incorporation of *Gaudeamus Igitur*, it was a stirring, if not strictly academic, response to the honour which had been conferred on him. The score is made heavy with its very full brass and "batterie", but sufficient gaiety is always there to justify Brahms' own description of it as a "laughing" overture.

Britten
(1913-1976)

Soirées Musicales

March; Canzonetta; Tirolese; Bolero; Tarantella

Britten had been a prolific composer from his schooldays, and, although they were first published as Opus 9, in 1938, these pieces were certainly used a year or two earlier. These arrangements of short dances by Rossini were first prepared as a film score for a documentary, made by the G.P.O. film unit, about the Post Office Savings Bank! The original score was for a small orchestra and voices, but the eventually published revision omitted the voices, and expanded the orchestra to a full one, which, however, is used sparingly and with all of Britten's skill in this art. The suite was also subsequently used for a ballet.

INTERVAL

Many thanks to Banbury Operatic Society for arranging the refreshments

Dvořák

Symphony no. 9 in E minor "From the New World"

Adagio - Allegro molto; Largo; Scherzo; Allegro con fuoco

Whilst Smetana can be credited with being the effective founder of nationalism in Czech music, its most abundant flowering was undoubtedly in the music of Dvořák. The son of an innkeeper and village butcher, Dvořák was sent to school at an early age to learn German, but his teacher discovered in the boy a musical aptitude, which he was able to develop. From 1857 to 1859 he attended the Prague Organ School, where he was able to acquaint himself with the music of early and contemporary composers. He had already started composing but, in order to live, he was engaged as a viola player in various orchestras, including that of the Czech Provisional Theatre, one of whose conductors was Smetana himself. However, Dvořák gradually became known as a composer of leading status, and during the next thirty years he produced works of every genre: opera, oratorio, orchestral, instrumental, choral and vocal. He visited and was acclaimed in various European capitals, and in Russia; he made repeated visits to England in the 1880's, and in 1890 conducted the first performance of his 8th Symphony at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert in London. In 1892, after much deliberation, he accepted an invitation to direct the recently founded National Conservatory of Music in New York, a post he held for three years, and in December 1893, the first performance of the *New World* Symphony was given in Carnegie Hall. Whether or not one feels impelled to argue the relative influences of American folk music and the music of Dvořák's native Bohemia, suffice it to recognise that the constant stream of melody, and colourful orchestration, have enabled it to become probably the most popular symphony of all time.

The first movement opens with a slow introduction, towards the end of which the horns hint at the opening theme of the movement proper. This first subject group is characterised by an arpeggio theme, announced by the horns, and followed immediately by a woodwind figure; after some brief treatment a new theme is played by the flutes and clarinets, and taken up by the second violins; all of this material is then worked out until there is a transition to the relative major. The chief theme in the second subject group bears some passing resemblance to *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, and is extensively worked out. The development section is based chiefly upon the first subject group; a recapitulation of the first and second subject groups is followed by a short and brilliant coda.

The slow movement opens with four bars of brass, clarinets and bassoons

effecting a marvellous modulation to the key of D flat major, not so remote a key as it may appear, being the enharmonic equivalent of C sharp major, closely related to the symphony's key. The cor anglais plays the opening phrase (presumably now fated always to be associated with brown bread) and after a repetition of the opening chords, the muted strings continue the melody, echoed at the section's close by the muted horns. Flutes and oboes usher in a contrasting idea, following which, and joined by the clarinets, they play a new melody accompanied by a pizzicato bass; these figures are developed until a tutti climax is reached, followed by a diminuendo, a modified restatement of the movement's first section and a wistful coda in which the movement's opening chords are recalled.

The Scherzo and Trio remind one of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* in their rhythms, melodic content, and delicacy of scoring. The Scherzo has two main themes, the first consisting of rhythmic fragments in the tonic key, the second a more extended melody played first by the flutes and oboes, and taken up by clarinets and cellos; however, the restless first theme soon reappears, and is used to effect a change of key to C major for the Trio. The Trio also contains two themes, the second rich in woodwind and violin trills. The Scherzo is repeated, and the coda includes some thematic material from the first movement.

The Finale opens with a short, impassioned introduction, and horns and trombones announce the opening of the first subject group. (This same melody, rhythmically modified, is the opening theme of the Cello Concerto, which also dates from Dvořák's time in America.) Strings continue the melody, and accompanied by the rest of the orchestra, complete it. A new dance-like theme immediately follows, played by the violins, but soon the mood and the key change, and the clarinets open the second subject group with a more contemplative melody in G major; this melody is continued by the violins, and the final theme in this group ends with a cadence figure resembling *Three Blind Mice*, and which assumes some importance in the development section which now follows. However, here the movement takes its own unique path, as after subjecting its own themes to development, it starts to incorporate themes from all the preceding movements; Dvořák's musical imagination weaves these melodies with great ingenuity, yet the colourful orchestral texture is always marvellously clear. The first movement's opening theme returns in triumph as a climax to an exciting coda for the entire work.



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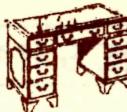
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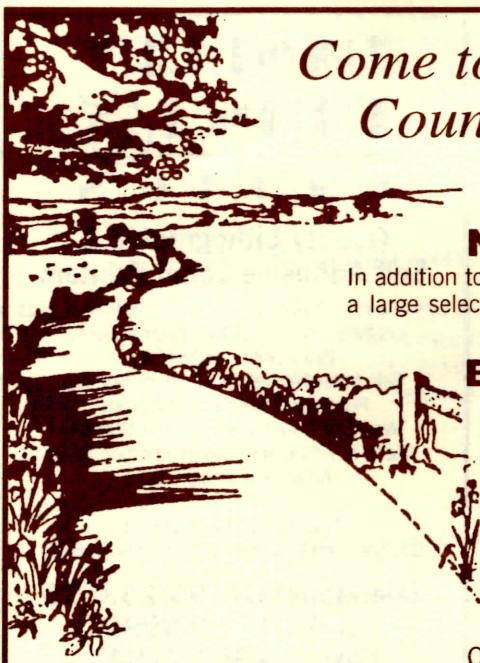
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