



Solihull Symphony Orchestra



Programme £1

Autumn Concert - Bruckner 200
Shirley Methodist Church
15:30, Saturday 23 November, 2024

Richard Jenkinson



Richard's musical education began at the age of five when he started to play the 'cello and was awarded a scholarship by Derbyshire County Council to study with Florence Hooton and William Pleeth. Whilst in the sixth form, Richard began his conducting studies with Michael Salter at Repton School. In 1990 he won a scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, studying 'cello with Raphael Wallfisch and William Pleeth and conducting with Alan Hazeldine. He graduated with Distinction in 1994 and was awarded the Guildhall's coveted Gold Medal

Richard is Musical Director of the British Police Symphony Orchestra (BPSO) and the Orchestra of St John, Bromsgrove (OSJ). From 2016-19 he was Music Director of the orchestra and choir of the GKT Music Society at King's College, London and, since September 2017, has been conductor of the Worcestershire Youth Orchestra. In

2019, Richard conducted the BPSO at the Royal Albert Hall, London in a Gala Concert celebrating the orchestra's 30th anniversary involving fanfare trumpets, troupes of bagpipers and massed choirs from around the United Kingdom which involved over 600 performers.

In 2019 Richard successfully defended his Ph.D. on the music of Zoltán Kodály at the University of Birmingham where he was awarded a Bramall scholarship. During the Covid imposed lockdowns of 2020 he utilised the time to gain Grade 8 (in 100 days) and subsequently an ARSM diploma in Singing, which he passed with Distinction. Highlights of the 2024 season include staged performances of Johann Strauss *Die Fledermaus*, Respighi *Pines of Rome* and the Elgar *Cello Concerto* at Ripon Cathedral with the BPSO, Holst *The Planets* with Enigma Brass and tours to France and South Africa with the Dante Quartet. Future performances include Symphony Hall, Birmingham with the BPSO (December 2024), Bruckner 7 and Strauss 4 Last Songs (OSJ) and a tour of the USA with the Dante Quartet in March 2025.

Programme notes - David Evans and Vivienne Brown
Cover - Hans Makart (1840-84), *The Dream after the Ball*, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Programme

Borodin - *In the Steppes of Central Asia* 8'

Tchaikovsky - *Polonaise and Waltz*
from Eugene Onegin 10'

INTERVAL

Bruckner - *Symphony No 4 'Romantic'* 70'

Conductor

Richard Jenkinson

Leader

Charlotte Beresford



Please make sure that all telephones, watch alarms and other electronic devices that make noises are switched OFF or to silent. You can make short video recordings and take photographs - but please do not use flash and be careful not to disturb people nearby. And we'd love it if you could share them and tag us on social media!

Alexander Borodin (1833-87) In the Steppes of Central Asia



Although the three composers whose works are featured in this concert were more or less contemporaries, there is little in common in their music other than a general origin in early 19th century Romanticism. The two Russians, Borodin and Tchaikovsky knew and respected each other, but the latter was far more steeped in French culture while Borodin was a member of the celebrated group of composers known as ‘The Mighty Handful’ alongside Modest

Mussorgsky, Mily Balakirev, César Cui and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov who were dedicated to the development of Russian nationalist music. Borodin’s works in particular are marked by evocative use of folk themes and rich, colourful orchestration.

Borodin was a chemist by profession but also an entirely self-taught composer in his spare time. *In the Steppes of Central Asia* is a vivid tone poem composed in 1880 as part of a celebration for the 25th anniversary of Tsar Alexander II’s reign.

The piece captures the vast and varied landscapes of the Russian Empire’s eastern frontiers, depicting in music a caravan traveling across the immense plains, guarded by Russian soldiers. Borodin manages to evoke a sense of cultural encounter and unity by blending two main thematic elements: a delicate, lyrical Russian theme and a sinuous, oriental melody representing the caravan. These themes intertwine throughout the piece, illustrating the peaceful coexistence of two different worlds.

The work opens with a quiet, atmospheric drone that suggests the endless expanse of the steppes. The Russian theme, introduced by the clarinet, is warm and pastoral, while the oriental melody, played

by the cor anglais, evokes a sense of the exotic. The orchestration paints a picture of the travellers moving through the vast landscape, with instruments weaving in and out to mimic the shifting sands and echoes of the steppe. This beautifully crafted piece captures Borodin's unique ability to portray scenes of Russian life with grandeur and poignancy.

In 1881, during a journey to Weimar, Borodin visited Franz Liszt and wrote to his wife that 'Liszt had been so pleased with 'The Steppes' that he urged the making of a four-hand piano arrangement at once.' Borodin therefore dedicated the work to the Hungarian composer.

Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Waltz and Polonaise from Eugene Onegin, Op.24

Tchaikovsky started work on an opera based on *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin's great verse novel, in the spring of 1877, at the same time he began an ill-fated affair with Antonina Milyukova in an attempt to gain social respectability and divert attention from his homosexuality. He was deeply struck by the parallels between Tatiana's love and Onegin's treatment of her and the similar

letters from Antonina and his own response. The disastrous wedding took place in July 1877, but the composer almost immediately fled the relationship. He had completed the sketches for *Onegin* during his correspondence with Antonina, and finished orchestrating the opera in the early months of 1878, while travelling in Italy in the highly charged emotional aftermath of the marriage.



Eugene Onegin is one of the most cherished operas in the Russian repertoire. Premiered in 1879, it captures the complex emotional landscape of its characters, set against a backdrop of Russian aristocratic society. Tchaikovsky's

score is a masterclass in musical storytelling, deftly intertwining lyrical melodies with the dramatic pulse of the narrative. Two dance forms, the waltz and the polonaise, play a crucial role in reflecting the characters' social environment and emotional states.

The waltz in *Eugene Onegin* appears in Act II, during a festive scene at Madame Larina's estate. The waltz, a popular ballroom dance originating in 18th-century Austria, embodies grace and elegance with its triple metre and flowing, circular motion with a strong emphasis on the first beat of each bar. In France however, the waltz became lighter and more playful. Tchaikovsky's waltz, which is more French than Austrian captures the intoxicating atmosphere of a lively social gathering, filled with the youthful energy of flirtation and courtship. The graceful melodies, accompanied by sweeping orchestral textures, emphasize the charm and sophistication of the occasion. However, beneath the outwardly cheerful surface lies a layer of tension and unspoken emotion, foreshadowing the personal conflicts that will soon unfold. The waltz serves as a backdrop for pivotal moments in the drama, subtly reflecting the characters' social roles and hidden

desires.

In contrast, the polonaise in *Eugene Onegin* occurs in Act III, at a grand ball in St. Petersburg. The polonaise, a traditional Polish dance in triple metre, is stately and majestic, characterized by its accentuated first beat and rhythmic drive. Historically, the polonaise was associated with nobility and power, often used in ceremonial contexts to convey grandeur and sophistication. Tchaikovsky's polonaise exemplifies these qualities, with bold orchestration and regal rhythms that capture the opulence of the aristocratic setting. The dance exudes formality and splendour, emphasizing the rigid social structures and the characters' detachment from genuine emotional connection. As the music unfolds, it creates a vivid portrait of high society's glamorous yet often superficial world.

The juxtaposition of the waltz and the polonaise within *Eugene Onegin* highlights the contrast between different spheres of Russian society and the evolving emotional landscape of the opera. The waltz, with its light and fluid qualities, reflects a world of youthful optimism and romantic possibility. In contrast, the polonaise, with its more pronounced, authoritative character, underscores the formality and restraint of the aristocracy.

While the waltz invites us into a world of playfulness and emotional vulnerability, the polonaise demands a sense of decorum and grandeur, illustrating the characters' struggle to navigate social expectations.

Tchaikovsky's masterful use of these dance forms not only enriches the opera's musical texture but also enhances the narrative. The waltz scene, for example, becomes a space where the characters' relationships are both revealed and concealed.

Tatyana, young and impressionable, experiences her first encounter with Onegin, and the music captures the excitement and confusion of her burgeoning feelings. Meanwhile, the polonaise underscores the emotional distance that has developed between the characters by the final act, as Onegin finds himself isolated and tormented by regret in the glittering world he once sought.

Both the waltz and the polonaise are vital to understanding the emotional and social complexities of *Eugene Onegin*. Tchaikovsky's ability to use dance forms as a narrative device provides a window into the opera's exploration of unrequited love, societal norms, and the inexorable passage of time. Through these dances, the audience is transported into the heart of 19th-century Russian society, experiencing its beauty, constraints, and inevitable sorrows.

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

Symphony No. 4 'Romantic' WAB104

1. Bewegt, nicht zu schnell (With movement, not too fast)
2. Andante quasi allegretto
3. Scherzo: Bewegt (with movement) – Trio: Nicht zu schnell, Keinesfall schleppend (not too fast, by no means sluggish)
4. Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell (With movement but not too fast)

1874-1876, revised 1878-1881

Anton Bruckner was born in the village of Ansfelden near Linz in Austria. He was the eldest of eleven children born to the local schoolmaster (Anton senior) and his birthplace, the schoolhouse, is now a museum. Bruckner's musical education started early with his father at the school, along with organ lessons at which he excelled, and he produced his first composition aged 11. Sadly Anton senior died when Bruckner was only 13, and the young Anton was sent as a choirboy to the Augustinian monastery of St Florian to continue his education, eventually becoming a teacher and cathedral organist himself in a variety of positions. He continued to compose, mostly for organ and choir, but was notoriously

insecure as, like Borodin, a largely self-taught composer. He was supported by various mentors who encouraged his compositions and introduced him to Franz Liszt and to the works of Wagner, a major (but already divisive) influence.



In 1868 Bruckner accepted a teaching post at the Vienna Conservatoire and began composing symphonies and other orchestral works. Unfortunately, these were not always well received and the premiere of his Third Symphony in 1877 was a

disaster, with the audience leaving in droves throughout, and the orchestra keen to escape as soon as the performance ended. This reception, and critical reviews from anti-Wagner Viennese critics such as Hanslick, prompted Bruckner to extensively revise his already completed Fourth Symphony – the new version was eventually premiered in 1881 and was much more warmly received by all but the most disapproving critics. This could be due in part to the revisions which streamlined the structure but could also be due to the title and programme provided by Bruckner himself which invites the audience to share Bruckner's 'Romantic' vision. 'Romantic' here refers to the very Germanic sense of folk tales, of mysteries lurking in the forests, of chivalry and courtly love. It is therefore a very different notion of romance from that presented by Tchaikovsky in *Eugene Onegin*.

Bruckner paints a series of cinematic word-pictures:

'Medieval town, dawn, from the towers of the town sounds the morning summons-the gates open-on proud horses knights spring forth into the open; the magic of the forests surrounds them – forest murmurs – birdsong – and so the romantic picture develops'

This describes the atmosphere of the first movement perfectly, as it opens with shimmering strings and a plaintive horn call from which much of the later music will be developed. The audience is left to imagine the rest of the story as the town awakes: various themes are introduced including a gentle violin melody evoking the call of a local bird, a brass chorale evoking a cathedral organ, and eventually building to a fanfare before fading away again. Listen too for the persistent 'Bruckner rhythm' – a 2+3 pattern widely used in many of his works.

According to one contemporary, Bruckner described the second movement (in C minor) as the tale of a thwarted youthful lover unable to climb in to see his sweetheart, having instead to serenade her on the lute. It remains steady but not funereal, with the lyrical laments passed between different sections of the orchestra, often accompanied by pizzicato strings. Bruckner himself was thwarted in love, remaining a bachelor all his life after having unsuccessfully proposed marriage to a succession of teenage girls even when he was well over 60. His music evidently speaks more effectively than his words.

The third movement is a lively hunting scherzo or '*Jagdthema*' complete with excited calls from the

horns, interspersed with a gentler trio section in which the woodwind section recreate a barrel organ for a lunchtime dance (this is the 'Ländler', an Austrian folk dance much used later by Mahler).

The final movement went through so many versions that it is hard to be sure of Bruckner's vision, although one early version with much of the same material is entitled '*Volksfest*' ('Carnival' or Festival'). The final version most usually played starts again with mysterious calls in the forest but is more ominous than the opening of the first movement: there is rising tension as the orchestra crescendos to a grand unison theme in the dark key of Eb minor. Other more lyrical folk-like tunes are introduced and the music rises to a succession of peaks in volume. The entire movement is fairly described by Katy Hamilton in the programme notes to the BBC Proms performance this year as 'a vast study in delayed gratification' - before finally achieving a glorious, if harmonically unexpected, resolution back to the home key of Eb major. Not so much a triumphant return, more the exhausted relief of arriving home after a long and dangerous adventure.

Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra



Conductor - Michael Lloyd
Violin - Charlotte Moseley

FARRENC - Overture No 1
BRUCH - Violin Concerto
BRAHMS - Symphony No 3

Sunday 15th December, 15:00
Royal Birmingham
Conservatoire

Tickets - £16
Under 25 - £6



Non-Playing Members

If you've enjoyed our concert and want to become more involved with the orchestra, there are a variety of tasks and activities that are always open to friends of the orchestra as well as to players. In return, we can offer you complimentary tickets for our concerts, visits to rehearsals and other benefits!

info@solihullsymphony.org.uk

Our Mailing List

If you've enjoyed this concert, why not sign up to our Supporters' Newsletter to make sure you don't miss out on future events? You'll receive advance notice of the full season's programme, and reminders about all our concerts a few weeks in advance.

solihullsymphony.org.uk/mailing-list



Solihull Symphony Orchestra

Patron: The Mayor of Solihull



First Violins

Charlotte Beresford

leader

Marina Battey

Lis Branson

Vivienne Brown

Elena Lemke

Jo Oswald

Sarah Sasse

Will Scott

Second Violins

David Roper

John Bayley

Ella Begley

Stephanie Byrne

Rachel Johnson

John Maxwell

Charlotte McLuskie

Lucy Wilson

Violas

Joanna Clarke

Hannah Branson

Mark Emms

Kelvin Farge

Cellos

Helen Atherton

Sheila Armstrong

Mike Bond

Jeremy Dale

Kim Free

Raye Garrett

Alison Hart

Anne Kemp

Louise Robertson

Nicola Walters

Double Basses

David Evans

Sue Hawthorne

Flutes

Su Newton Ede

Mary Wright

Oboes

Sarah Vaughan

+ *cor anglais*

Fiona Speak

Clarinets

Victoria Rex

Jane Emms

Bassoons

Harry Jones

Simon Gates

Trumpets

David Hirst

Colin Farlow

Horns

Tim Overton

Sarah Gee

Stephen Mayes

Edward Fisher

Emma McLeod

Trombones

Ian Rae

Tony Miller

Bernard Moses

Tuba

Paul Arthur

Timpani

David Pett



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About the Orchestra

Solihull Symphony Orchestra is an diverse and friendly group that enjoys taking on the challenge of a varied repertoire with professional leadership and inspiring soloists.

We are always open to new members, especially violin, viola and double bass players. A commitment to attend rehearsals regularly, and a willingness to learn are more important than formal music qualifications. We like to perform in different venues around Solihull, and welcome invitations to play at special events.

Rehearsals are held at Shirley Methodist Church every Tuesday from 19:30 until 21:45 during school term time, with at least four concert performances each year.



Our Next Concert . . .

Saturday 1 February 2025, 15:30
St Philip's Church, Dorridge, B93 8DX

Opera Gala

Bizet - *Carmen*

Verdi - *Aida, La Traviata*

Strauss - *Die Fledermaus*

Puccini - *Turandot, Manon Lescaut*

Gianna Schicchi

Tchaikovsky - *Eugene Onegin*

And much more!

Guest Conductor - Jack Lovell-Huckle



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