

Southampton Music Hub presents

# SYO

Southampton Youth Orchestra

## Summer Concert

*Sibelius - Finlandia*

*R. Strauss - Wind Serenade*

*Elgar - Serenade for Strings*

*Vaughan Williams - Symphony No. 3 'Pastoral'*

*Conductors - Christopher Braime and Kevin Withell*

**Saturday 17 July, 7.30pm**  
**Romsey Abbey**



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SOUTHAMPTON  
CITY COUNCIL

Good evening, and welcome to Southampton Youth Orchestra's much-anticipated first concert since March 2020.

Fifteen months of lockdowns have taken their toll on most of us, and as we step tentatively back towards normality, SYO would like to assure tonight's audience that every effort has been and will be made to protect the health and well-being of all present.

Southampton Youth Orchestra concerts are always a celebration of the hard work and talent of some of Southampton's finest young musicians, but tonight is more meaningful than ever. These young musicians have shown commitment, passion and maturity beyond what could ever reasonably have been asked from them, shown consistently over the last year through their attendance at online rehearsals, their dedication to continuing to make music together and their unquestioning adaptability. Without this, Southampton Youth Orchestra would probably no longer exist. I cannot put into words the pride, gratitude and joy that I will feel as I walk onto tonight's stage with this incredible group of students.

After opening the concert with Sibelius' ever-popular *Finlandia*, SYO will showcase two pieces that they were first introduced to back in late 2020 when we managed a few weeks of sectional rehearsals in between lockdowns; Richard Strauss' *Wind Serenade* and Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*. The concert will finish with Vaughan Williams' *Third Symphony*, the '*Pastoral*'.

For the safety and wellbeing of orchestra and audience, tonight's concert will be performed without an interval; however there will be a five-minute comfort break before the Vaughan Williams where audience members will have the opportunity to stretch legs and clear throats within the vicinity of their seats.

It remains only to thank each and every member of tonight's audience for supporting us tonight, and to wish you all a most enjoyable evening.

Kevin Withell

Assistant Director of Southampton Youth Orchestra

# Programme

Sibelius – Finlandia

Strauss, arr. Withell – Wind Serenade

Elgar – Serenade for Strings

I – Allegro piacevole

II – Larghetto

III - Allegretto

Vaughan Williams – Symphony No.3 ‘Pastoral’

I – Molto moderato

II – Lento moderato – Moderato maestoso

III – Moderato pesante

IV - Lento

## Jean Sibelius – Finlandia, Op. 26 (1899)



By the late 1800s, the complications involving the relationships between Finland, Russia and Sweden had escalated. The ownership of Finland had long been the subject of wars, often serving as a literal battleground over the course of several hundred years. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw an agreement between Russia and Sweden, whereby Russia ‘owned’ Finland, but allowed Sweden to govern it. An angry patriotic spirit that had been brewing for centuries reached boiling point as even the most passive Finns realised that parliament and all major decisions being held in a language that the majority of the population didn’t speak was not particularly democratic. In 1835, a milestone in Finnish nationalism was reached, when a collection of traditional Finnish poetry and folklore

was compiled and published, in the original language. For the first time, Finnish people were able to explore, appreciate and understand the richness of their cultural history, ultimately leading to the strongest and most unified demand for independence the country had ever seen. By 1917, they had achieved it.

*Finlandia* was composed in 1899, originally entitled *Finland Awakes*, and serving as the last of seven pieces in a suite composed to support national protests against increasing Russian censorship. *Finland Awakes* was revised the following year, arranged as a stand-alone piece with a few changes primarily to how it ended. Re-branded *Finlandia*, it has become one of Sibelius’ best-known compositions and remains at the heart of Finnish identity and patriotism.

An angry opening in the brass, full of hatred for the oppressors and grief at their treatment, relaxes through the woodwind and then strings, finally building into a flurry of fanfares that introduce a march full of pride, hope and strength. A moment of reflection begins as the final chord of the march gives way to a hymn-like tune in the woodwinds, repeated by the strings with short but plaintive counter-melodies in the horns. Without warning, the march bursts in once again, eventually broadening into the coda, where a final refrain of the hymn, this time full-blooded and triumphant, brings this landmark of Finnish musical history to a rousing end.



## Richard Strauss – Wind Serenade, Op. 7 (1881)

Born in 1864 to a rich and musical family, Richard Strauss showed promise from a very early age. After beginning piano lessons aged four, he produced his first composition aged six, and continued to compose



prolifically for almost the entirety of the next eight decades. The son of one of the country's finest horn virtuosos, Strauss spent his childhood in audiences around the world, experiencing everything from Baroque classics to premieres of Wagner's operas. Strauss would go on to be famous for his own operas, as well as a collection of orchestral tone poems demanding huge numbers of players as well as phenomenal technical ability and stamina. In addition to little fewer than 300 compositions, Strauss was also highly regarded as a conductor. Later in life, he was appointed (unbeknownst to him) as the head of the Nazi's Reich Chamber of Music, an institution designed to eradicate Jewish art and music from German culture. He risked his own wellbeing by accepting the role only so that he could have the power to defy the Nazi regime by implementing regulations and censorship as leniently as he could get away with. Strauss was ultimately fired from his position, and although he was criticised by many for his involvement with the regime, was cleared of all suspicion in the post-war denazification trials, only nine months before his death, aged 85, in 1949.

But in 1881, seventeen-year-old Strauss had little idea of the fame and success that lay ahead of him as he composed his Serenade in Eb for 13 Wind Instruments, an exceptionally mature piece that displays a subtle mastery of the instruments he composed for. Contrasting gentle classical expression with romantic drama and sweeping grandeur, Strauss' Serenade foreshadows the epic, majestic sound that was to become synonymous with his name.

Tonight, we hear a version created in October 2020 by Southampton Youth Orchestra's assistant director Kevin Withell, arranged for the orchestra's woodwind and brass players as they went between online and restricted face-to-face rehearsals throughout the year.



**Sir Edward Elgar –  
Serenade for Strings,  
Op. 20 (1892)**

In May 1888, 30-year-old, little-known composer Edward Elgar conducted a small local string orchestra in Worcester, the programme including a

short suite of his own composition; *Spring Song*, *Elegy* and *Finale*. The manuscript disappeared, but four years later, the three-movement *Serenade for Strings* was completed. The score contained acknowledgements to 'Braut', one of Elgar's terms of endearment for his wife Alice.

It is easy to understand why many academics conclude that the opening *Allegro piacevole* (fast and pleasing) is a reworking of the earlier *Spring Song*, if not exactly the same music. A gently lilting melody is evocative of the beauty of the banks of the River Severn, where Elgar and his wife would have shared many happy memories. Again, it is not a huge leap to surmise that the original *Elegy* eventually became the middle-movement *Larghetto*. Elgar builds, from a single short phrase, a movement of exquisite musical depth, expression and control, not dissimilar in its structure and development to what would become one of his most-performed works: *Nimrod*, the ninth of the *Enigma Variations*, to be composed only 6 years later, but to finally bring the international recognition that Elgar had longed for all his life.

The final movement is pastoral in style; brief glimpses of sun-lit warmth hidden between moments of flowing playfulness, before one last memory of the opening movement brings the suite to a gentle end.

Although one of his earliest works, Elgar would view his *Serenade for Strings* as one of his favourite compositions for the rest of his life.

## Ralph Vaughan Williams – Symphony No 3 ‘Pastoral’ (1921)

It is well documented that composer and critic Peter Warlock dismissed much of Vaughan Williams’ music as ‘a little too much like a cow looking over a gate’, so it is not to be taken lightly that he regarded the Pastoral Symphony as the greatest English orchestral work of the generation.

There is much to compare between this symphony and Elgar’s *Serenade for Strings*; both composed in England by composers born in the West Country, both within thirty years of each other, both largely reserved in terms of dynamic and tempo and both inspired by pastoral themes. There is, however, one major difference. Elgar’s *Serenade* was conceived in the Worcestershire countryside. Vaughan Williams’ symphony evokes the eerie calmness of the empty French battlefields of World War I.



Vaughan Williams served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, with whom he was sent to support the front line in Northern France in 1916, not returning home until 1919. Within three years, he had completed the Pastoral Symphony. It is noted, often bitterly by historians who were hoping for juicy details, that Vaughan Williams never spoke of his experiences in the war, yet he wrote later about this symphony ‘It is really war time music – a great deal of it incubated... in Ecoivres.’

The first movement opens with a flat, expressionless line in the woodwind, with a solo violin introducing the first melody. The music moves through varying modes and time signatures, never allowing the listener to comfortably lock into the pulse. Vaughan Williams develops a tune which begins with an interval of a perfect 5<sup>th</sup>, the first two notes of the *Last Post* – this is a little motif that runs, not by accident, throughout the symphony. The development of the tune builds to what could become a thunderous finale, but instead fades to leave a solo cor anglais, interspersed with barely audible strings.

The second movement opens with a horn solo over *pianissimo* strings. Quieter, sparser and with even less movement than the first movement – the disconcerting and poignant silence of the World War I battlefields has rarely been so effectively and movingly committed to manuscript paper. One of Vaughan Williams’ residing memories of his time serving in France was the military bugle calls. Out of the gentle rise and fall of the music, a solo trumpet sounds over the top of sustained strings,

opening with the perfect 5<sup>th</sup> of the *Last Post*. The solo gives way to a rare *fortissimo* outburst, dying away as suddenly as it began. A short development gives way to a solo horn revisiting the trumpet solo, while a clarinet echoes with the horn's opening theme.

The third movement serves as a rude awakening. Slightly too slow to be a traditional *scherzo* (playful) third symphonic movement, the forceful opening borders on dissonance, before giving way to a light brass feature. A slower-paced flute solo combines with the first violins, before the trumpets introduce a new livelier theme, not dissimilar to ideas from Vaughan Williams' *English Folk Song Suite*, which was to be completed the following year. The perfect 5<sup>th</sup> interval is still present, albeit more subtle this time. Both themes develop, before the movement ends with a fast but delicate fugue, fast-moving lines jumping between instruments, before finally slowing and relaxing to an unexpectedly understated end.

The finale opens with a wordless soprano solo, sometimes performed on a clarinet, over a single timpani roll. A new melody builds through the orchestra, a masterclass from Vaughan Williams in switching between modes and keys, and in basing his harmonies around the simplest but more effective scales. The movement builds to a climax; an impassioned and sustained *fortissimo*. Vaughan Williams allows the listener to believe that this might become the thunderous finale that he denied us in the previous three movements, but instead he brings it back down until just the strings remain, fading to a sustained single note in the violins, held underneath a recapitulation of the opening solo, before fading into poignant nothingness.



# Southampton Youth Orchestra

## Flutes

Isabelle Lawes  
Anna Prince  
Alex Jones

## Oboes

Cameron Hutchinson  
Abi Caveney\*

## Clarinets

Amelia Veal  
Becky Rees  
Justine Courtier

## Bassoons

Lucy Gowans  
Rob Eckett\*

## French Horns

Trevor Grant\*  
Kevin Withell\*  
Beccs Grogan\*  
Naomi Andrew\*

## Trumpets

Pip Watkins  
Daniel Gould

## Trombones

Andrew Carr  
Benji Graf  
Catherine Lewis\*

## Tuba

Morro Barry

## Percussion

Byron Horne  
Katie Nichols\*

## 1<sup>st</sup> Violins

Isaac Wright  
Katie Ho  
Esme Thompsett  
Annabel Cullington-Doss  
Henry Ward  
William Ward  
Alice Ren  
Sam Kinchington  
Christa Porter\*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Violins

Harry Price  
Nathan Yam  
Lara Prince  
Kyriaki Hannides  
Euan Lee-Cann  
Eoin Williams  
Ho Kwan Lam  
Charlotte McKenzie\*

## Violas

Tom Gilbert  
Malcolm Porter\*  
Chris Nichols\*  
Doug Morgan\*

## Cellos

Heather Greenfield  
Isabella Rose  
Ipsa Dash  
Zoe Hunting\*

## Double Basses

Barnaby Saer  
Lucas Olley

## Harp

Laura Lister\*

\*denotes adult helper/staff



### Christopher Braime - Conductor

Christopher Braime was born in 1983 and was awarded a Foundation Scholarship to study oboe and conducting at the Royal College of Music. He is active as a conductor throughout the UK and Europe.

Christopher is Musical Director of the London Gay Symphony Orchestra, the Putney Choral Society, and the Southampton Youth Orchestra; in January 2019 he also became Musical Director of the Symphonic Wind Orchestra of North London.

Christopher recently made his debut at

Symphony Hall Birmingham, conducting the Birmingham Schools Symphony Orchestra and is active as a guest conductor, he has worked with the Farnborough Symphony Orchestra, the Redhill Sinfonia, the Suffolk Sinfonia, the Kensington Philharmonic Orchestra and the Petersfield Orchestra. In 2013, he made his European conducting debut with the Orquestra do Algarve, Portugal, and has recently conducted in Germany and Amsterdam. In the 2019/20 season he will be returning to the Suffolk Sinfonia where he maintains a very happy guest conducting relationship with the orchestra.

Christopher has worked with some of the most outstanding young soloists of this generation including the cellist Jamal Aliyev, horn player Joel Ashford the baritones Huw Montague-Rendall and Edward Jowle, Soprano Jessica Gillingwater and the saxophonist Huw Wiggin. With the pianist Simon Ballard he also gave the first public performance in the UK of the Leroy Anderson Piano Concerto.

Until recently he was the Musical Director of the Grosvenor Light Opera Company who have regularly been invited to perform at the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival and have won awards for their productions at the festival.

Christopher is still active in the field of teaching, he was a Music Appreciation lecturer for the charity Open Age, based in West London, and conducts at the Mary Ward Adult Education Centre. Considering musical training and communities essential, he also conducts the Gustav Holst Community Orchestra, an adult training orchestra based in Primrose Hill. He was also a consultant on the Royal College of Music's "Rhythm for Life" project where RCM students explored the skills required when working with older adult learners, and recently wrote guidance for the RCM on the subject.

Christopher was formerly Musical Director of the Imperial College String Ensemble, the Pelly Concert Orchestra, Farnborough and the Worthing Youth Orchestra.

## Kevin Withell - Conductor

Kevin Withell enjoys a busy and varied conducting career in the south of England, as well as playing and teaching French horn, trombone and percussion. Kevin read music at University of Southampton, where he excelled in conducting, as well as commercial composition, orchestration and a dissertation in music written and performed during and in the aftermath of the holocaust – a subject which he continues to research and write about. He completed his Masters in conducting two years later.



During his studies at University of Southampton, Kevin was awarded the prestigious positions of assistant conductor of both Southampton University Symphony Orchestra and Southampton University Sinfonietta. Kevin currently conducts Southampton Youth Concert Sinfonia and Southampton University String Orchestra and is Assistant Director and Orchestra Manager of Southampton Youth Orchestra, having worked previously with ensembles including Worthing Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Southampton Orchestra, London Gay Symphony Orchestra, Ealing Symphony Orchestra, Charity Symphony Orchestra and Worthing Choral Society. When not conducting, Kevin can often be spotted performing in the brass or percussion sections of various orchestras around the Hampshire and Sussex area, and has recently dusted off his trombone in preparation for upcoming solo appearances.

Kevin is planning his first appearance as guest conductor of North Downs Sinfonia and is also working on an exciting project to unite the massed musicians of Southampton in a large-scale concert over the summer.

Kevin has also enjoyed small-scale success as a composer, conducting Worthing Choral Society and local guest singers and orchestras in the premieres of his own settings of the Requiem Mass (2011) and Gloria Mass (2013), as well producing numerous compositions and arrangements for the orchestras he directs.

## Isaac Wright – Leader



Isaac started playing the violin at the age of 7, attending Redbridge Music School and playing as part of Junior String Orchestra and then Intermediate Orchestra before moving to Southampton and joining Southampton Youth Orchestra in 2016. He took an active part in music at Bitterne Park School, where he played as part of folk band and string group and has given several solo performances at school concerts, including recording the solo part of the theme of Schindler's List accompanied by Southampton Youth Concert Sinfonia to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of WW1 in 2018. Isaac then attended Peter Symonds College, playing as part of the Concerto Orchestra. He also plays violin and piano as part of the New Community Church band.

Isaac's highlights with SYO include a tour to Germany in Summer 2018 and a performance of Dvorak's Symphony No.9 at Chandlers Ford Methodist Church in July 2017. Isaac has recently finished year 13 exams, and is planning to go to study Medicine at Cardiff. He is also a keen mathematician and in his spare time you might find him playing tennis or badminton.

### **Southampton Music Hub**

The Southampton Music Service is the lead partner for the Southampton Music Hub. Over 30 music and arts organisations are represented within the Southampton Music Hub partnership. The group (established in September 2012) work collaboratively to bring a high level of music provision, expertise, access and resource to communities and young people in Southampton.

Our aim is to support schools and colleges in delivering the National Plan for Music Education and provide opportunities for young people to engage in a rich programme of music making. This is an exciting time for all involved and we look forward to seeing music in Southampton continue to thrive and ensuring our young people can take fond musical memories with them into their future lives.



### **Southampton Music Service**

In March 2011, the Southampton Music Service was judged by the Federation of Music Services as being in the top category of Music Services in the country. SMS has maintained the level of excellence and access to music activity that our community has come to expect. SMS seeks every opportunity to promote and develop the musical potential and personal development of all young people in the City and region of Southampton.

In addition to the specialist instrumental lessons and curriculum support we deliver in schools, SMS also provides an impressive range of choirs, bands and orchestras to support musical progression.

Any young musician interested in joining a Southampton Music Service ensemble or starting lessons for the first time should contact the music service at [music@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:music@southampton.gov.uk) or call 02380 833648

Southampton Hub website [www.southamptonmusichub.org](http://www.southamptonmusichub.org)

Twitter <https://twitter.com/MusicHubSouth>

If you are age 8-18 and would like to join a student focus group to help shape future Hub activity, please contact us.