

Farnham Sinfonia



Conductor - Matthew Taylor
Leader - Elizabeth Cooney

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Programme

Edvard Grieg (1843 -1907)

Holberg Suite for Strings, Op 40

Prelude; Sarabande; Gavotte; Air; Rigaudon

Following his training in Leipzig it is almost inevitable that Edvard Grieg's early works should have been influenced by German romanticism but, on returning home to Scandinavia he became aware of his own musical inheritance, largely through the influence of the young Norwegian nationalist Rickard Nordraak. He now aspired to writing music with an unmistakable Norwegian character, grounded in folksongs and dances, making his style immediately identifiable.

In the *Holberg Suite*, however, he had a different object in mind, for here he was writing a pastiche with the full title *From Holberg's Time*. Ludwig Holberg lived from 1684 to 1754, a contemporary of J.S. Bach, and it was music from this period that Grieg set out to imitate, harking back to the earlier composer's keyboard suites and the works of the French *clavicinistes* and providing a pioneer exercise in the revival of Baroque idioms. Like Grieg, Holberg had been a citizen of Bergen and, known as the Molière of the North, he was one of Norway's greatest literary sons. Although most of his comedies were written and performed in Denmark, the people of his birthplace considered him to be their own and in 1884 the year of his bi-centenary was marked by a Holberg Festival. Grieg was invited to write a cantata for male voices, to be performed in the market square of Bergen at the unveiling of a statue of the great man, together with a new instrumental work. This latter was to be the *Holberg Suite*; originally a piece for piano. It was not until the following year that Grieg arranged it for string orchestra and it is in this form that it is better known today. Only when the suite gained great popularity, however, did the over-modest composer become convinced of its intrinsic worth.

The rhythmically restless *Prelude* resembles a *perpetuum mobile* and bubbles with *joie de vivre*. Three dances follow. The graceful *Gavotte* and *Rigaudon* are also permeated with the joy of music making, the latter being set for solo violin and viola, with *pizzicato* accompaniment from the rest of the orchestra. The *Sarabande*, making use of the deeper strings, is more expressive, and the *Air*, probably one of Grieg's loveliest creations, echoes the style of a Norwegian folksong.

Programme notes provided by John Dalton

Matthew Taylor

Concertino for Violin and Strings

Soloist – Elizabeth Cooney

Antonin Dvorak (1841 - 1904)

Serenade for Strings in E Major, Op 22

Moderato; Tempo di Valse; Scherzo "Vivace; Larghetto; Finale - Allegro vivace

Dvorak's *Serenade for Strings* was composed in 1875, during a happy period of his life. He had married Anna Cernakova in 1873, and the same year had seen this first public success a performance in Prague of the *Hymnus* which was reported to have "carried the whole audience off its feet in a wave of enthusiasm". The following year, on the recommendation of Brahms, and the critic, Hanslick, he received a state grant which at last gave him some financial security.

Dvorak was already a consciously nationalist composer - the *Hymnus* was a setting of a fervently patriotic poem - but in the *Serenade* he wears his nationalism with the lightest of touches. Starting from melodies which often show the small range, circling patterns and buoyantly vocal rhythms of Czech folk songs, he creates movements which seem to unfold effortlessly, with a spontaneity which justifies the frequent comparisons with Schubert. The masterly orchestration uses the full range of the instruments, often dividing the ensemble into as many as nine parts, and giving special prominence to the 'cellos, who time and again answer the violins in the manner of a vocal duet.

The first movement sets a scene of pastoral calm, enlivened by the dance-like rhythm of the middle section. The *Waltz* - full of touches reminiscent of the Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances* is followed by a *Scherzo* on a canonic theme. In the *Larghetto* the falling phrases of the principal melody are built up towards soaring climaxes, accompanied by many rich and varied figurations. The *Finale* opens with a fanfare-like gesture, which disappears to a whisper in which the sudden appearance of the main theme has a most magical effect. The theme of the *Larghetto* returns in the middle of the movement, and there is a nostalgic reference to the first movement just before the end.

Programme notes provided by Philip Young

Matthew Taylor

Matthew Taylor is a composer and conductor who lives in Farnham. He studied composition with Robin Holloway at Cambridge University and later at the Guildhall and the Royal Academy. He later studied with Leonard Bernstein and received special encouragement from Robert Simpson who became a crucial influence.

Exposure to Beethoven symphonies at a very young age provided the initial stimulus for Matthews' desire to compose, which was soon followed by a lifelong fascination with the music of Schumann. Matthew is particularly fond of the music of Sibelius and Nielsen.

He has appeared as Guest Conductor with the English Chamber Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and the City of London Sinfonia. His compositions have been performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He is Music Director of the LSE Orchestra and Junior Academy Sinfonietta and teaches at the Yehudi Menuhin School.

Elizabeth Cooney - Violin

Elizabeth feels lucky to have been immersed in the Japanese Suzuki method of learning the violin from the age of 5 in her native Cork, Ireland. The focus on the method of learning music by memory contributed to her enjoying the process of learning symphonies by memory with the dynamic Aurora Orchestra whom she has toured with all over Europe, Australia and Mexico. She will appear at the BBC Proms in Aurora playing Stravinsky's Firebird Suite at the Royal Albert Hall this August. Elizabeth studied with Itzhak Rashkovsky on scholarship to the Royal College of Music and is laureate of several international competitions including second prize and audience prize at the Sion-Valais International Competition for Violin, Switzerland.

She has toured internationally with the English Chamber Orchestra and has played solo at the Royal Festival Hall, Wigmore Hall, Weill at Carnegie Hall to name but a few. She is now living in Farnham and is director of the new Farnham Chamber Music Festival

Farnham Sinfonia

First Violins

Elizabeth Cooney (leader/soloist)
Julia Wilson
Juliet Warden
Emily Hinchliffe
Viviane Plekhotkine

Second Violins

Sarah Wormell-Evans
Jane Gomm
Diane Wakefield
Mira Marton

Violas

Martin Fenn
Mike Briggs
Peter Fenech

Cellos

Judith Fleet
Jayne Spencer

Bass

Nicola Davenport
Lucy Rundle

Future Farnham Concerts

7-30pm Friday 25 June 2021

St Andrew's Church, GU9 7PW

Solem String Quartet

Haydn "The Lark", Bartok No 5, Beethoven String Quartet No 12

7-30pm Saturday 7 August 2021

Farnham Spire Church, GU9 7QU

Coco & Yume Tomita (violins) Kan Tomita (piano)

Coco Tomita was BBC Young Musician Strings Winner 2020

Programme to be announced

7-30pm Saturday 2 October 2021

St Andrew's Church, GU9 7PW

Farnham Sinfonia (Soloist: Coco Tomita)



Mozart Violin Concerto

Farnham Chamber Music Festival

22,23,24,30 October

www.tilbach.org.uk

Future Conservatoire Concerts

7-00 pm Saturday 5 June 2021

St John's Church, Farncombe GU7 3EJ

Peter Fenech Sextet

www.conservatoireconcerts.org.uk

Tilford Bach Festival

Tilford Church

12-13 June 2021

Details: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/kyww/fqmu/>