

# Solway Sinfonia

Newsletter October 2015

## Ooh La La La Sinfonia



### Welcome from your Chairman

Welcome, everybody, to another season with the Solway Sinfonia, South of Scotland's Orchestra. To those new to the delights of orchestral music (and we hope a few newbies will enjoy hearing the orchestra over the coming year) and to those seasoned followers of the Solway Sinfonia we look forward once again to sharing our love of orchestral music with you all. Our warm thanks, as ever, go to our loyal Patrons and Sponsors who continue to support us financially and allow us to plan our adventurous and exciting programmes.

Last November we enjoyed music from the Bohemian lands through the music of Smetana, Janacek and Dvorak. This year we turn to Romantic music written nearer home as we celebrate the Auld Alliance with beautiful music from Bizet, Berlioz and Cesar Franck. In the interest of expediency, however, we are deviating a little from the original Treaty as we rely heavily on our English friends in the wind and string sections! But we're a friendly bunch and all will be harmonious! We are hugely privileged to be joined by the glorious Freya Jacklin (soprano) in Berlioz's masterpiece *Les nuits d'été*.

Spring 2016 takes us to Lockerbie where we'll perform a concert in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support. What could be better than having a great night enjoying another great performance by the Solway Sinfonia while knowing that we will all be supporting this wonderful charity? We hope to see you there!

Enjoy the season! *Nick Riley.*



### Message from the Editor

"Bonne Santé (from your Editor in the French Alps) and welcome to the first French Edition of the Solway Sinfonia Newsletter.

Our Director Geoff, whisks us away across the Channel, this season, to a Franco-Belge programme. The Newsletter echoes the theme."



### Freya sings *Les nuits d'été* at Easterbrook



Freya Jacklin graduated from University of York in 2010 with First Class Honours in Music, and is currently completing her Masters studies at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, under Theresa Goble. She performs professionally with ensembles such as London Voices, OperaUpClose, Opera Holland Park, RSVP and Bellaphonics. Career highlights so far include solos with Birmingham Opera Company in Stockhausen's *Mittwoch aus Licht* directed by Graham Vick, film soundtracks (including *Interstellar*, *Maleficent*, *The Hobbit* and *Hunger Games* series to name a few) and she recently had her solo debut at the Wigmore Hall with the Wigmore Hall Voiceworks programme. Upcoming and recent roles include Dido in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* for OperaUpClose, The Mother in Menotti's *Amahl* and the Night Visitors for Opera Anywhere, Julia Bertram in Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park* for HGO, Amastris in Handel's *Xerxes* for HGO, Flora/Annina in Verdi's *La Traviata* for various companies, Mercedes on a tour of Bizet's *Carmen* for Young Opera Venture 2015, and her first outing as the naughty Cherubino in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* for Opera Piccolina. She also originated the role of Stephanie in the new Opera *Evariste*, which will be performed at Somerset House and Tête-à-Tête festival in July 2015. She is passionate about French opera and song, performing much of the repertoire of Debussy, Hahn and Fauré. She is very excited for her first performance of *Les nuits d'été*. [www.freyajacklin.com](http://www.freyajacklin.com)

[www.solwaysinfonia.org.uk](http://www.solwaysinfonia.org.uk)

Cathy Tyler: Editor Ken Smyth: Design & Printing

# Horns playing curves, romanticism and the French



It is clear that the French understand the romance of the chase better than the English and that length is an important factor in achieving it. On the one hand the French cor de chasse produces a tenor paintbrush of mahogany sound, whilst on the other the English hunting horn sounds like a hyperactive sheep farting. The only problem for the excitable French was where to put it all. Whilst having all eight foot of horn straight out in front is a stupendous achievement it is also a serious impediment when negotiating trees on horseback. As Mae West observed “a curve is the loveliest distance between two points”; the French said “mai ouis” and the French horn was born.

When I was a so very young shy pre-teenager my music teacher pulled out a box of mouthpieces and through a process of embouchure divination, prescribed an arranged marriage with my partner for life, the French horn. Not till the hormones kicked in a few short years later did I realise what a gift I had been given. Horn playing is life lived on the edge, like ice-climbing progress is precarious and has to be found through training, hard-won knowledge, intelligence and daring, and the consequences of getting it wrong are devastating. Horns are versatile and romantic; they are the sun-rising, the heroes, the somewhere of dreams and they are lovers of fertile imagination. They are also dangerous; and when you are young, that is a seductive quality.

Whilst all credit is due to the French it was really the Germans who worked out how to use the thing to its sublime best, from Mozart to Richard Strauss and beyond. In fact the worst sound known to humankind is that of massed French, french-horns; the cor de chasse choirs. The same effect can be achieved by polishing off a cheap bottle of port or two and the following morning with little sleep and a lump-hammer headache standing in the middle of a traffic jam in La Paz (a hangover with altitude). This may, however, say more about hunting than the French.

The Russians unsurprisingly embraced the dark underbelly of the horn as star-crossed lovers and the long rivers of repressed,

bloody and conflicted yearning that sits deep within the soul. Home territory for horn players as well as the fragments of the former Soviet Union

As a horn player in the middle bloom of youth, I am still coming to terms with the psychological scars that decades of horn abuse have inflicted. The years of living on your nerves, the Walter Mitty-like trips into romantic delusion, the still not knowing after 40 years of practice what your embouchure is going to do next, take their toll. When talking about a Sheila, called Sue in this case as I understand it, going to see a therapist, Crocodile Dundee asked “hasn't she got any mates?” Fortunately the universal answer for horn payers is a categorical “yes”. These mates it turns out in all but exceptional circumstances are other horn players. Orchestral horn players hunt in packs, and what this means is that horn players can be secure in the knowledge that there is always someone close-by who understands the complex, dangerous and extraordinarily beautiful world they inhabit, a world of romance that has delightful curves and that at its core is irrevocably French. *Ian Kille*



## Dates for your Diary

**Next concert: 29 November 2015, 7.30pm**

**Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries**

**Tickets: £12 From: Midsteeple Box Office 01387 253383**

### PROGRAMME:

**Georges Bizet: “L'arlesienne” Suite No. 1**

**Hector Berlioz: Song cycle “Les nuits d'été” - soloist Freya Jacklin**

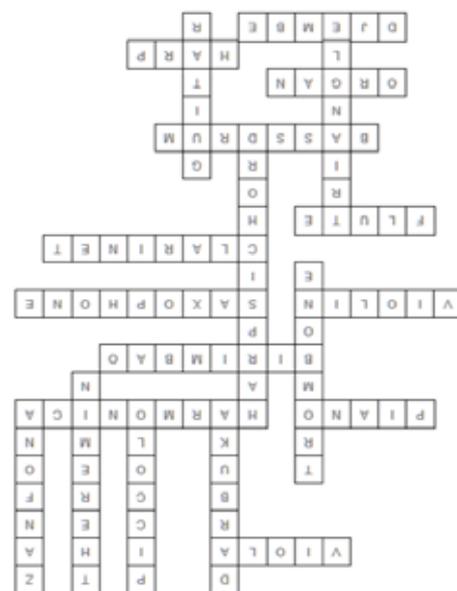
**César Franck: Symphony in D minor**

**Spring Concert: 13 March 2016, 7.30pm**

**Lockerbie Town Hall (in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support)**

**PROGRAMME: Includes: Respighi: The Bird; Beethoven: Symphony no. 2  
see website for further details**

### Crossword Solution (back page)



## *Patron's Piece: Neil Hoyle*

France has always followed its own musical path, since every élève knows that Paris is the capital of civilisation, its conservatoire the most prestigious, and its opera the grandest. By and large this has taken the form of an emphasis on lyricism, formality – even stateliness – and elegance, plus a certain insouciance towards Germanic rules of harmony. But even Gallic hauteur could not resist the tsunami of Romanticism that swept Europe as the 18th century whirled into the 19th: indeed, revolutionary France was well in the vanguard. An especially potent current was the idea of the wilderness: untamed nature and its unsophisticated, passionate inhabitants were sublime and fascinating – and where more stern and wild than Caledonia, with its crags, torrents and redoubtable Highlanders? Hence Le Sueur's *Ossian, ou Les bardes*, Boieldieu's *La dame blanche* and Bizet's *La jolie fille de Perth*. Fervent Romantics also yearned for unattainable ideals, counterpointing them with the macabre and grotesque. Hence Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Nor could the French ignore new ideas in musical structure, such as cyclical forms and thematic transformation, which peaked with Wagner's irresistible, all-too-Teutonic influence. The Solway Sinfonia's programme on 29 November will showcase several of these trends. We will hear Bizet's incidental music to Daudet's "rustic tragedy" *l'Arlésienne*; Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été*, with its songs of love and longing; and Franck's *Symphony in D minor*, which seeks to balance French and German structural imperatives. *L'exception Française?* Well, it will be an exceptionally interesting evening!

*N H studied music at Edinburgh and Cambridge before joining the civil service. In 1989 he was appointed Chief Executive of the Incorporated Society of Musicians – the UK's professional body for musicians – and remained there until his early retirement in 2008, when he moved to Gatehouse of Fleet (though he still divides his time between Scotland and Oxford). He has been a board member of Enterprise Music Scotland, and is currently President of the Galloway Music Festival. He is proud to be a patron of the Solway Sinfonia because he believes that music-making is one of humanity's most important and fulfilling activities, that classical music needs all the support it can get, and that the Sinfonia's work exemplifies the best traditions of bringing individuals and communities together in the joy of music.*



## *Librarian's Lowdown*

### **What are we playing next year?**

It may surprise some members of our audiences that we start planning our concerts anything from eighteen months before the day, with the whole package decided a year ahead. Programmes have to be tailored to the venue and to the prospective audience. Our November concerts are always in the Easterbrook Hall so we know we can accommodate a full orchestra, even with extras such as a harp or bass clarinet, but for the Spring concerts we play in other halls, for different charities or societies. For our concert in March 2014, for example, when we played in Moffat Academy, and in Gatehouse Parish Church in March 2015, we had room for as many string players as wanted to play but there wasn't room for trombones or tuba and only for two horns instead of four.

As far as the music we are to play is concerned, the committee starts with the suggested soloist and work we are to ask them to play. Since the autumn one is a very expensive concert, with the Easterbrook Hall costing around £1,300, the hire of a piano (if we need one) between £650 and £1,000, an average £1,000 plus for a soloist, and the cost of hiring music and possibly the odd extra player, we have to choose works which will draw the size of audience we need to help towards our costs.

Once the soloist is settled the conductor (with the assistance of the librarian) has to sit down and look for works which complement the core work, not only musically but in terms of personnel. The librarian searches for sources of hiring the parts. This can be expensive if we want to play a modern

work that is still in copyright. When we played the Vaughan Williams Tuba concerto, for example, it cost £350 to hire the music from the publisher (which cost was generously covered by one of our patrons.) We are fortunate to have the wonderful services of Pat Edwards at Carlisle Music Library who obtains music for us through the inter-library loan system. If she has to source it elsewhere it costs us £40 a set for three months' hire, and £20 if it is in Cumbria Library. Inevitably there are not enough copies for every string player to have one for practice so the librarian has to copy parts for this (but only for practice, under copyright laws.)

Those who are regulars at our concerts will have realised that we pride ourselves on introducing lesser known works, like the Kalinnikov (who?!) Symphony we played in November 2013 and which was so enjoyed by everybody. Last November's was a concert of 'Music of Bohemia', with Dvorak's Cello Concerto as the main work. Next November's concert will be easier to cater for as the three French works, Bizet's *l'Arlésienne* Suite no 1, the gorgeous Berlioz songs 'Les nuits d'été' and Cesar Franck's exciting symphony are all available through the inter-library service. Having collected the music from Carlisle the parts are bowed by the leaders of the string sections. She then puts each person's set of parts together, noting down their numbers so that she knows who has which copies of the music. She is very grateful to members that we very, very rarely have missing music, which makes her job much easier!

Now, what were we thinking of for March and November 2016...? *Helen Keating*

Players choose their favourite French composer and tell us why:

- **SATIE:** He gives the brass section more time in the bar. *Ian McAndlish*
- **DEBUSSY:** La Mer. I spend so much time painting by the sea, and Debussy conjures up all the inspirational elements. *Angela Lawrence*
- **POULENC:** Motet Timor et Tremor, because the first bass part is sublime. *Gavin King-Smith*
- **DEBUSSY:** String quartet, for its innovative harmonies and textures. *Sarah Berker*
- **DEBUSSY:** Arabesque no 1 for piano, which I learnt as a teenager and still enjoy now. *Christina Montgomery*
- **POULENC:** Piano Sonata for Two players, for its musical cynicism. *Pauline Roe*

# Caption Competition Results



THE WINNER..... "I think we're flat" – David Howdle

THE RUNNER-UP..... The bass underlay – Alice Howdle

... AND HIGHLY APPRECIATED!

"I'm sure it would sail better if we were on top" – Roger Windsor

Six Foot Under – Roger Windsor

"I told you to put wheels on it" – Pauline Roe

"Fall out - at the double!" – Jeff Clayton

## ACROSS

- Instrument similar to a violin but with longer strings
- Orchestral percussion instrument with strings
- Larry Adler made this his own
- Stringed instrument common in Brazil
- Smallest bowed stringed instrument in the orchestra
- Uncommon orchestral instrument featured in Ravel's Bolero
- Woody Allen plays one
- The champagne instrument
- Verdi's percussion instrument of wrath
- Mozart's king of instruments
- This instrument is the official emblem of Ireland
- Favoured drum of the Mandingo Empire

## DOWN

- Ancient Arabian drum
- A small flute
- Instrument invented by Leon Theremin
- Stringed instrument from Galicia
- Fantastic for glissandi!
- Precursor of the piano
- Generally equilateral nowadays
- Fretted stringed instrument

## Crossword

