

# Sheffield Symphony Orchestra

Registered Charity number 701526

2018/2019 Season

Ecclesall Parish Church, Saturday 5th January 2019, 3.00 pm

## A New Year Viennese Gala Concert

Jenny Stafford – mezzo-soprano

Martin Usher – leader

John Longstaff – conductor

### **March 'Calling all Workers'**

**Eric Coates (1886-1957)**

This attractive march was composed in 1940 as the signature tune for the Light Programme's daily broadcast of 'Music while you work'. The programme's intention was to provide light, happy music with memorable tunes to encourage workers in war-torn Britain. The programme was so successful that it remained in the daily schedules until 1967.

### **Overture 'Raymond and Agnes'**

**Edward Loder (1809-1865)**

*Raymond and Agnes* was first performed in Manchester in 1855 where Loder was Musical Director of the Theatre Royal. It was subsequently performed in St. James's Theatre in London in 1859 and thereafter was unheard until a production in Cambridge in 1966 which was hampered by the unavailability of the original libretto (as was not uncommon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the opera has spoken dialogue which is essential to understand the plot). Thanks to the brilliant scholarship and editing of Dr. Valerie Langfield the entire opera has recently been recorded and is available from [www.retrospectopera.org.uk](http://www.retrospectopera.org.uk). The Overture is a striking dramatic piece; introducing themes connected with the opera, in particular the prayers of the pious Agnes who hopes that her affection for Raymond will be returned, and also a theme from their first duet. We nothing in the overture of the music for the Baron of Lindenberg who unsuccessfully tries to elope with Agnes, but the hustle and bustle of the opening tune conveys that this is an opera of considerable dramatic intensity. We hope that this performance of the overture will encourage further exploration!

### **Ah fors'è lui...Sempre libera (from 'La Traviata')** Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Verdi's *La Traviata* was first performed in Venice in 1853 and has been in the standard operatic repertoire ever since. The story is taken from a novel by Alexandre Dumas *The Lady of the Camellias* and has an element of autobiography about it, since the

author fell in love with a courtesan by the name of Marie Duplessis who died of tuberculosis at the age of 23 in 1847. In *La Traviata* ('the fallen woman') the heroine is Violetta, who at a party she is hosting realises that she is developing strong feelings for Alfredo Germont. She tries to suppress her emotions, claiming to be 'always free', but the music tells us that this relationship with Alfredo won't go away.

### **Ballet Égyptien**

**Alexandre Luigini (1850-1906)**

Luigini (French, despite his Italian-sounding name) was a violinist, conductor and composer in Paris and Lyon, where his Ballet Égyptien was inserted into the second Act of Verdi's *Aida* to give the dancers greater prominence in the production. In English-speaking countries this piece was made famous as the accompaniment to the music-hall act of Wilson, Keppel and Betty, who performed a pseudo-middle-eastern tap dance dressed in Egyptian costume. The original ballet has eight movements, we are playing four of them, the last one ending with a reprise of the well-known tune with which the work begins.

### **Chanson de Matin op. 15 no. 2**

**Edward Elgar (1857-1934)**

Elgar was largely self-taught as a composer, and it took him until his mid-forties to establish himself with such works as the 'Enigma' Variations and 'The Dream of Gerontius'. Before that, he composed a considerable number of smaller works, which demonstrate that even at the start of his career he was a master of the memorable tune and a brilliant orchestrator. 'Chanson de Matin' is the second of a pair of orchestral miniatures.

### **Selection from 'West Side Story'**

**Leonard Bernstein (1918-1970)**

*West Side Story*, Bernstein's New York based rewrite of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was an immediate success when it opened on Broadway in 1957, and has remained popular both in the theatre and cinema ever since. Our selection today presents many of the most popular numbers including 'I feel pretty', 'Maria', 'Something's Coming', 'Tonight' and 'America'.

## **I N T E R V A L**

**(Please remain in your seats, drinks will be served to you)**

### **Overture 'Die schöne Galatee' (Beautiful Galatea) Franz von Suppé (1819-1895)**

When one thinks 'Viennese' one tends to think automatically of the Strauss family, but it is important to remember that they didn't have a monopoly on light music of their time, and that composers such as Suppé were very successful in their own right. Most of Suppé's operettas are now forgotten apart from their Overtures (though the present writer has located and edited the original orchestration of his *Zehn Mädchen und kein Mann* (Ten Brides and no Groom); the Overture to 'Die schöne Galatee' shows Suppé's energy and lyricism at its best – note the memorable waltz tune which comes twice!

### **Waltz 'Tales from the Vienna Woods' (Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald)**

**J. Strauss II (1825-1899)**

'Tales from the Vienna Woods' is one of the most extended Viennese waltzes, which begins with a lengthy introduction evoking the enchantment of the forest immediately outside Vienna (trees seem to grow twice as high in central Europe as they do in England!) After a flute cadenza there follows what is supposed to be a ländler (an Austrian folk dance) for solo zither. Unfortunately, we do not know a zither player, but we trust that our substitute will be more than satisfactory!

**Vilja (from 'The Merry Widow')**

**Franz Lehár (1870-1948)**

Little need be said about this most famous of songs from Lehár's most famous operetta: the Widow of the title is Merry because she is phenomenally rich – in the course of the show she hosts a party at which she sings this song about a maid of the woods who encounters a young hunter. He falls in love with her, but after their first kiss she disappears forever, leaving him bereft.

**Ah! Je ris (The Jewel Song from 'Faust')**

**Charles Gounod (1818-1893)**

Gounod's Faust was first performed in 1859 and the first 100 years of its existence was among the most popular operas in the repertory. Less frequently heard nowadays, it nonetheless contains many attractive numbers, among them this brilliant aria, sung by Marguerite as she sees a casket of jewels placed by the devil (Mephistopheles) in order to entice her away from her suitor Siebel, and to make her succumb to the charms of Faust instead.

**Persian March**

**J. Strauss II**

**Pizzicato-Polka**

**J. Strauss II and Josef Strauss**

**Waltz 'The Blue Danube' (An der schönen blauen Donau)**

**J. Strauss II**

**Vergnügungszug (Pleasure Train) op. 281**

**J. Strauss II**

According to *Wikipedia* Strauss's *Persian March* was composed and performed in 1865 at one of Strauss' numerous summer seasons in the Russian town of Pavlovsk, an important stop on the Tsarskoye Selo Railway, the first railway line in Russia. The Vauxhall restaurant near the Pavlovsk station had fallen on hard times, and the manager felt that booking Strauss to give summer concerts there would bring back the lost customers. Next comes the Pizzicato-Polka; the earliest work in the repertoire I know of which required two composers! As usual, we are playing Strauss's tribute to 'The Beautiful Blue Danube'; the only river in the world which flows through four capital cities; Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade, and which hasn't been blue for a very long time. Our concert officially ends with the *Vergnügungszug* polka composed by Johann Strauss II in 1864 for the Association of Industrial Societies' Ball and was inspired by the opening of the Austrian Southern Railway – the Südbahn – which operated many 'pleasure trains' offering trips from Vienna to the countryside. It appears that although many of Strauss's works commemorate travel and other forms of transport, neither he nor his brother eagerly undertook extensive journeys. Happy New Year!

**Guest Conductor- John Longstaff**



John Longstaff conducted the SSO for the first time in October 1992, when he took over a programme on the day of the concert. Since then he became Musical (and latterly Artistic) Director for 18 seasons ending in June 2011, conducting some 117 concerts, including performances in Beverley, Bury St. Edmunds and Harrogate, along with two tours to Belgium and Germany. Other conducting work included periods as a staff conductor at the opera house in Kiel, Germany, at Northern Ballet (for whom he still continues to arrange and orchestrate ballet scores) and English National Ballet. His reduced orchestrations are being played all over the world; full-length ballet and opera scores have been heard recently in Malaysia, Lithuania and the USA.

He was founder Musical Director of Young Opera Venture, with whom he toured *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*. Recently he has been turning his attention to composition: his new score for *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* was toured by Northern Ballet throughout the UK in 2017, (with a few performances in Dubai) and was also filmed for BBC CBeebies. John is delighted that over 25 years after his début with the SSO in October 1992 he is still being invited back!

### Guest Soloist- Jenny Stafford



Yorkshire born soprano Jenny Stafford possesses 'a voice of immense beauty and a modern, pragmatic sincerity' (Libby Purves) and is cultivating a successful career on both operatic and concert stages. In the 2017/2018 season, Jenny makes her Dutch National Opera debut as **Sarah Clemency** (James MacMillan), performs **Annina** *La traviata* with Longborough Festival Opera and covers **Alice Ford Falstaff** with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Vasily Petrenko. Highlights of the 2016/2017 Season included Jenny's Royal Albert Hall debut in Mozart's *Requiem* and *Exsultate, jubilate* conducted by Brian Kay, performing the role of **Pied Piper** *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (Jonathan Willcocks) with Opera North Children's Chorus and covering the role of **Frasquita** *Carmen* for The Grange Festival.

Jenny studied at the Royal Academy of Music where she won the Isabel Jay Operatic Prize and Dame Eva Turner Operatic Award. In 2015 she was a semi-finalist in the Kathleen Ferrier Awards, performing at the Wigmore Hall, a finalist in the Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards and was awarded 2nd prize at the Dean & Chadlington Singing Competition.

Jenny has performed the roles of **Vitellia** *La Clemenza di Tito* in the Cadogan Hall, **Donna**

**Anna** *Don Giovanni* with Heritage Opera, **Fiordiligi** *Così fan tutti* for Bury Court Opera and Opera Lyrica, **Micaëla** *Carmen* for the Northern Aldborough Festival, **Mimi** *La bohème* for Woodhouse Opera and The Merry Opera Company, **Musetta** *La bohème* for Silent Opera at The Vaults Festival (Old Vic), **First Lady** *Die Zauberflöte* for Ryedale Festival Opera, **Adina** *L'elisir d'amore* for Woodhouse Opera and **Sāvitri** *Sāvitri* and **Alison** *Wandering Scholar* at Grimeborn Festival.

Jenny has extensive recital and oratorio experience, performing such venues as the Barbican Centre, St Martin-in-the-Fields, York Minster, the Linder Auditorium, Johannesburg, Real Academia de Bellas Artes, Madrid and for the Spitalfields Music Festival and Chipping Campden Music Festival. Solo performances include Handel's *Messiah* (Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra), Strauss' *Vier letzte Lieder* (York Musical Society), Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Mendelssohn's *St Paul*, Mozart's *C Minor Mass* and *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*, Haydn's *Harmoniemesse*, *Theresienmesse*, *Missa Sancti Nicolai* (Zürich, Switzerland) and *Missa in Angustiis*, Faure's *Requiem* and Monteverdi *Vespers* 1610.

Jenny studies privately under Susan Roberts in London and previously undertook a BMus at King's College, London, ENO Opera Works and the prestigious Georg Solti Accademia di Bel Canto. Her studies have been kindly supported by the Rhoda Jones Roberts Scholarship and Josephine Baker Trust.