



Conductor: Alexander Webb **Leader:** Edward Judge

Winter Concert

Saturday 3 December 2016 7.30pm

St. Mary's Church, Marlborough



featuring Irene Enzlin and Verena Chen

Irene Enzlin (cello) was born in Zuphen, Holland, and started playing the cello when she was 4 years old. She won many prizes in Dutch competitions as a child, and at 15 entered the Yehudi Menuhin School in England, after a chance meeting with Christopher Irby, Marlborough Concert Orchestra's former conductor, who told her about the school and suggested that she apply. "Auditioning and getting into the prestigious Yehudi Menuhin School changed the course of my life completely. I owe so much to Christopher and Carol Irby." Whilst a student, she came on three occasions to Marlborough to perform with MCO, playing the Elgar and Dvorak concertos and Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations.

Irene continued her cello studies in Salzburg at the Mozarteum University and since finishing there has performed with several professional orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic and the Dutch Symphony, and in many music festivals, particularly those connected with Yehudi Menuhin. In 2013, Irene and two fellow Dutch musicians co-founded the Delta Piano Trio. They have won first prizes in international competitions, as well as enjoying professional engagements across the world - in Italy, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Austria, Russia and the USA. Irene has a 2006 Bertrand cello on loan from the Dutch Music Instrument Foundation, and a bow from the Mozarteum Salzburg.

Verena Chen (violin) was born in Hamburg and started playing the violin at age 7. She has studied in Hamburg, Hannover and, since 2012, in Paris with Boris Garlitsky. She has won an array of prizes in German music competitions, and in 2013 was awarded a special prize at the International Heifetz Competition in Vilnius. She has performed with several orchestras and at music festivals, and holds scholarships from the German Music Foundation and the Villa Musica. Verena plays a 1690 violin by Giovanni Gracino, loaned by the German Music Foundation.

Alexander Webb (conductor) is a graduate of the percussion programme at the Birmingham Conservatoire, and in 2016 accepted a place to become the Timothy Reynish Conducting Scholar at the Royal Northern College of Music. He first studied with Guy Woolfenden and Edwin Roxburgh, and now studies with Mark Heron and Clark Rundell. He has also participated in masterclasses with Nicolas Pasquet, Jac Van Steen, and Sir Mark Elder. Alexander maintains a busy schedule as a freelance musician balancing percussion performance with his conducting studies. He has been conductor for the Asklepios Orchestra, The Beaufort Ensemble, and the Redditch Orchestra, as well as working closely with a number of brass and wind ensembles across the UK. This has included a recent London debut with the RNCM Brass Band. He is also an assistant conductor with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, and in March 2017 is looking forward to working with the Liverpool Mozart Orchestra. Alexander has performed with the English Symphony Orchestra, Queen's Park Sinfonia, Desford Colliery band, and in 2012 was awarded the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Scheme place for timpani. He has undertaken tours around Europe, Asia, and the United States and has also made recordings for broadcast on BBC Television and Radio.

Alexander is very generously supported by the Waverley Fund.

Programme

Double Concerto in A minor
for violin and cello, Op 102

Brahms

Interval

Invitation to the Dance, Op 65

Weber

Vocalise, Op 34, No 14

Rachmaninov

Variations on a theme
of Haydn, Op 56a

Brahms

Double Concerto in A minor for violin and cello, Op 102 Brahms (1833-1897)

Brahms was encouraged to write this concerto by the cellist Robert Hausmann, for whom he had just written a sonata, but he also intended it to be an olive branch to his old friend, the violinist Joseph Joachim, from whom he had been estranged for some years. Hausmann and Joachim gave the first performance in Cologne in October 1887, with Brahms conducting. Critics immediately complained that it was not much like a concerto. It is true that the soloists often combine with each other, rather than giving a display of virtuosity over an orchestral accompaniment, as in a traditional concerto. Brahms' use of the solo instruments is almost operatic, an ardent duet between male and female voices. At times the musical conversation between the soloists is so intense and the texture so rich that the orchestra's role is reduced to a minimum.

1. Allegro

The concerto begins with a strong, four-bar statement of the first subject by the full orchestra, which dissolves into an unaccompanied recitative for the cello soloist. The woodwind announces the second subject, which is taken up by the solo violin. The soloists then engage in a conversation with each other which establishes their contrasting musical personalities and leads to a full statement of both subjects by the whole orchestra. During the rest of the movement the soloists develop the thematic material through a variety of moods, sometimes forceful, sometimes tender and meditative, the orchestra holding their reverie in check with periodic restatements of both subjects.

2. Andante

The slow movement begins with two rising intervals in the woodwind, which suggest the shape of the theme to come, a long flowing melody played by the soloists in octave unison. After some meditative phrases for the soloists, Brahms takes elements of the theme and transforms them into a chorale-like passage, played by the woodwind, which gives rise to further musings by the soloists. The original theme returns and the soloists bring the movement to an ethereal conclusion.

3. Vivace non troppo

This is a rondo with a Hungarian flavour, but Brahms also gives the theme an element of whimsy by slurring the first two notes of each three-note group (against the advice of Joachim, who had suggested a more conventional bowing). The cello introduces both the first and second subjects, the latter a sequence of rising intervals in powerful double-stopping. The central part of the movement contains a dotted rhythm and reminders of the first movement, which give a sense of unity to the concerto as a whole.

Brahms himself was very diffident about this concerto and even began to sketch a second work for the same instruments in case this one was a flop. At first, audiences were lukewarm. In Vienna, on the other hand, the première was a great success, but even so, Brahms could not be found to come and take a bow – until someone discovered him hiding behind the double basses.

Invitation to the Dance, Op 65

Weber (1786–1826)

Weber wrote this in 1819 as a brilliant concert piece for solo piano. In 1841 it was orchestrated by the French composer Hector Berlioz and this is the version best known today. This is not dance music; it is a musical depiction of a dance.

Weber had a very detailed programme for the first 35 bars: a man and a woman meet, exchange greetings, and hold a brief conversation; the man suggests a dance, she agrees and the couple take their places on the dance floor. The music begins with a waltz theme which reappears three times, with contrasting passages in between, and the dance ends in a whirl of scales and arpeggios. The couple then exchange thanks, bow politely to each other and depart.

Vocalise, Op 34, No 14

Rachmaninov (1873–1943)

This is the last of a set of 14 songs which Rachmaninov wrote between 1910 and 1912 while visiting his uncle's country estate about 500 kms south-east of Moscow. It was a place that Rachmaninov loved; he had spent holidays there as a boy and he was eventually to inherit it through his marriage to his cousin Natalia. It was, he wrote, "on the steppe, and instead of the boundless ocean there were endless fields of wheat and rye stretching to the horizon". It made him realise how strongly Russians were tied to the soil. This was, he explained later, "an instinctive inclination towards quietude, tranquillity, admiration of nature and perhaps a quest for solitude. It seems to me that every Russian is something of a hermit".

The first thirteen songs in Op 34 are settings of words by Pushkin and other Russian poets, mostly on rural themes, such as winds sweeping across the landscape. For the final song, *Vocalise*, Rachmaninov employs a soprano voice floating wordlessly above a quiet accompaniment, peaceful in the first half, but with troubling eddies of chromaticism in the second, followed by a short coda in which tranquillity is restored.

Rachmaninov made this orchestral version in 1915, giving the soprano's melody to the first violins.

Variations on a theme of Haydn, Op 56a

Brahms (1833-1897)

Brahms initially wrote these variations for piano duet, but he immediately realised that the tonal colouring he wanted could best be achieved by an orchestra, so he began work on the orchestral version at once.

The theme is probably not by Haydn, but, whoever wrote it down, it seems to have come from an ancient hymn sung by pilgrims on their journeys across central Europe. Brahms preserves this character by scoring the theme for woodwind, hinting at the sound of pilgrim pipes heard on mountain paths.

The theme consists of phrases with differing numbers of bars (5,5 – 4,4 – 4,4,3) and Brahms exploits these differences in the course of the variations, detaching the first bar of five to make the phrase seem like four. The first Variation has sinuous melodies, the second dramatic contrasts, and the fifth has skittering cross-rhythms of 2 against 3. There are joyful horn calls in the sixth Variation, followed by a gently-dancing siciliano. The finale starts quietly over a five-bar ground-bass, which reminds us of the baroque character of the original theme, and rises through a series of climaxes to a triumphant conclusion.

The Variations were an important stage in Brahms' development as an orchestral composer, encouraging him to return to work on his first symphony, which had existed for years in the form of drafts. The Variations were premièred in November 1873 by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and were very enthusiastically received by both audience and critics.

MCO is pleased to acknowledge the invaluable support of

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St. Mary's Church, Marlborough

Sound Knowledge, Marlborough

Making Music

The Performing Arts Service of the Wiltshire Library through which the orchestra has been able to borrow music

With special thanks to

Malcolm Webb for conducting two rehearsals

Richard Newman for writing the programme notes

Sue and David Birley for organising the bar

Clare Cookson for running the raffle

Edward Judge - leader

A retired IT professional, Edward rediscovered the violin after 25 fallow years and took lessons with Diana Levitas in Hertfordshire. Edward lives in Hungerford and now plays violin or viola with several local orchestras. As well as being a keen chamber musician he also enjoys playing saxhorn with the Ramsbury Silver Band.

About the orchestra

The Marlborough Concert Orchestra was formed in January 2006 and has since given regular concerts in the town. We warmly welcome new players, particularly violins, violas, horns and brass players of a suitable standard. If you are interested, please contact us at mco_secretary@mco.org.uk

Social media

You can follow MCO on Facebook (facebook.com/MarlboroughConcertOrchestra) and find out more information about past and future concerts by visiting our website at www.mco.org.uk

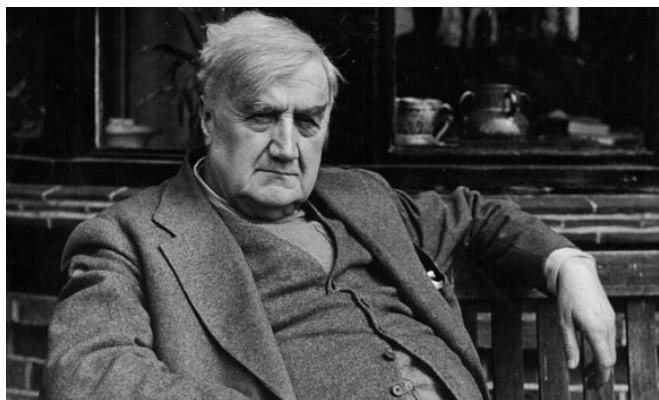
Concert bar and raffle

MCO is a registered charity (number: 1113775) run by volunteers and most of its costs are covered by members' subscriptions. However, additional funds are required to meet the expenses involved in presenting concerts, each of which costs about £1000.

We aim to make our concerts accessible to all by keeping our ticket prices low and we appreciate your generosity in supporting our raffle and concert bar. If you would like to support the orchestra further, please contact our treasurer Rob Napier on 01672 512333 or email rob.napier@clara.net

If you would like to offer support by helping out with front of house at concerts - selling raffle tickets, handing out interval drinks, and welcoming people at the door - then we would also love to hear from you. We offer a pair of free concert tickets to anyone who helps out in this way. Contact Anna Marsden at mcochairman@mco.org.uk if you are interested.

Date for your diary...



MCO's next concert

Saturday 25 March 2017 at 7.30pm

Overture to HMS Pinafore *Sullivan*
English Folk Song Suite (for orchestra)
Vaughan Williams
Symphony No. 4 *Beethoven*
Pavane pour une Infante Défunte *Ravel*
Waltz No. 2 from Jazz Suite No. 2
Shostakovich

Marlborough Concert Orchestra

Violin 1

Edward Judge
Kim Austen
Win Eyles
Emma Gardner
Roderich Heir
Laura Ingram Hill
Geoff Naylor
Karen Sancto
Sarah Till-Vattier
Ingrid Uden

Violin 2

Carol Irby
Clare Cookson
Barbara Edwards
Tara Edwards
Tony Jackson
Richard Newman

Viola

Rosemary Stanbury
Sue Birley
Charles Brookes
Margarete Lucas
Rowena Overend
Dave Richardson

Cello

David Edwards
Andrew Clark-Maxwell
David Cooper
Sarah Higgins
Robert Napier
Karen Smith

Double Bass

John Burgess
Anna Marsden

Flute

Sue Choules
Gillian Farkas-Blake

Piccolo

Gillian Farkas-Blake

Oboe

Susan Ousby
Steve Morris

Clarinet

Helen Pysanczyn
Gráinne Lenehan

Bassoon

Will Ingram Hill
Bridget Luke

Horn

Andrew Potter
Nicki Kinton
Phil Springate
Richard Cowdy

Trumpet

Clare Webber
Alex Arkwright

Timpani

Charles Giddings

Keyboard

Charles Brookes