

GORTON  
PHILHARMONIC  
SOCIETY

131st Year



C O N C E R T

STOCKPORT TOWN HALL

FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 1985

7.30 p.m.

Conductor Colin Touchin  
 Leader Elaine da Costa  
 Soloist Penelope Chalmers (soprano)

PROGRAMME

The National Anthem

Prelude to Act III 'Lohengrin' Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883)

At school in Leipzig, Wagner had a profound interest in drama and Beethoven's symphonies, and, before the age of twenty, having had some lessons in composition, had written several orchestral works. His real interest however, was in opera and he almost exclusively concentrated on that medium from thereon. 'Lohengrin' was first performed in 1850 and continued the success he had with 'Rienzi', 'Flying Dutchman' and 'Tannhauser'.

Four Last Songs Richard Strauss (1864 - 1949)

Fruhling (Spring)  
 September  
 Beim Schlafengehn (Time to sleep)  
 Im Abendrot (At dusk)

Richard Strauss composed his first music at the age of ten and thereafter music flowed from him. Opera, ballet, orchestral works and songs. Even in his eighties, he composed music for the film 'La Ronde'. His songs, of which he wrote some thirty sets, mostly with piano accompaniment, are rarely performed but these 'last songs' are considered to be amongst his best and are frequently heard in the concert hall.

There will be a short talk about this and the next item before the performance.

INTERVAL (fifteen minutes)

Variations on an original theme, 'Enigma' Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)

This work, one of the finest of Elgar's works and one of the few to achieve lasting fame outside the British Isles, was composed in 1899 when, at the age of forty-two he was still not widely known as a composer. The work is dedicated to 'my friends pictured within' and each of the variations depicts one of his friends whom he believed could be portrayed convincingly in music. Nevertheless he wrote later 'it is true that I have sketched for their amusement and mine the idiosyncrasies of thirteen of my friends, not necessarily musicians, but this is a personal matter and need not have been mentioned publicly'.

Variation 1: A warm and tender description of Caroline Alice Elgar, the composer's wife.

Variation 2: The figuration of this variation is reminiscent of the finger exercise of H.D. Stuart-Powell, a pianist who played trios with Elgar (violin) and Basil G. Nevinson (cello).

Variation 3: Richard Baxter Townshend, an amateur actor, had a voice capable of unusual changes in pitch, here reflected in distinctive use both the low and high woodwinds.

Variation 4: Strongly suggested in this variation are the characteristics of William Meath Baker, a man of considerable energy and decision.

Variation 5: Elgar's description of Richard Penrose Arnold, son of the poet, Matthew Arnold, portrays a man of frequently changing moods.

Variation 6: Miss Isobel Fitton, a pupil of Elgar's, played the viola; and accordingly, this variation prominently features that instrument.

Variation 7: Arthur Troyte Griffith, described as a refreshing but highly argumentative individual, is here vividly pictured.

Variation 8: The listener may assume that Miss Winifred Korbury, a local pianist who often accompanied Elgar in performance of sonatas, was a person of grace.

Variation 9: A portrait of Elgar's close friend, August Johannes Jaeger. At the beginning of this long and beautiful variation there is an allusion to the slow movement of Beethoven's Sonata Pathetique, of which Jaeger (Nimrod) was very fond.

Variation 10: Elgar describes here, his young friend, Miss Dora Penny, who was somewhat hesitant in her conversation.

Variation 11: This variation portrays the organist of Hereford Cathedral, George R. Sinclair, with his bulldog, Dan, on a stroll on the River Wye. One easily pictures the dog rushing about on the bank and paddling in the water.

Variation 12: The 'cello is the main instrument in this variation dedicated 'cellist Basil G. Nevinson.

Variation 13: Lady Mary Lygon was on a sea voyage when this lovely section was written, which is assumed to be the reason for the quotation (as a clarinet solo) from Mendelssohn's overture 'Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage'.

Variation 14: A brilliant self portrait of the composer, with reference to earlier variations.

PENELOPE CHALMERS was brought and educated in Worcester before reading languages at Bristol University where she obtained a B.A. Honours degree together with a Professional Social Workers qualification - a profession she followed until 1983.

She has sung at the Three Choirs Festival and is a member of the B.B.C. West of England Singers. She also founded Bristol Intimate Opera which has performed professionally for many years with Arts Council support.

Her first singing teacher was Mollie Petrie and later Hervey Allan. She now studies with Vera Rosza with coaching from Paul Hamburger.