

Cheltenham Remembers

Thursday 25th October 2018, Cheltenham Town Hall

This evening's concert commemorates 100 years since the end of World War I. It is interesting that the term WWI was not used until many years after 2018. The period of conflict from 2014-2018 was known initially as the Great War (or war to end all wars) as no one could envisage such a war, devastation and massive loss of life ever occurring again. It was not until there was unrest in Europe that the Times magazine coined the term World War One in June 1939. Our concert this evening will transport you back 100 years to the music of the era. We have chosen a programme of music that was both written before, during and after the war years. Local composers have also put pen to paper to compose music for this evening and to commemorate and remember the 100 years since the end of World War 1.

The Brigadier (Morris Harper)

Morris Harper wrote this march for the Gloucestershire Youth Wind Orchestra with this concert very much in mind. The Brigadier March receives its first performance this evening performed by the massed bands of the Gloucestershire Youth Wind Orchestra and the Gloucestershire Symphonic Wind Orchestra.

Firebird (Igor Stravinsky)

Igor Stravinsky's 'Firebird' was written before the war and first performed in 1910. Stravinsky then re-wrote the work in a second edition in 1918. The music's angular nature, dark harmonies and grand finale were a success with Parisian audiences and we choose this work tonight, so we may transport ourselves back over 100 years to the musical life of France. World War I also deeply affected Stravinsky who, due to the economic climate, became almost penniless in the years after WWI.

Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep (Philip Henderson)

Philip Henderson composed this setting of the Poem 'Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep' for unaccompanied choir. The poem asks us to think of the many that passed in The Great War but '*Do not stand at my grave and weep, I am not there: I did not die.*'

Cranham (Gustav Holst)

In the week leading up to Christmas day 1914, French, German, and British soldiers crossed trenches to exchange greetings and talk. In some areas, men from both sides ventured into no man's land, exchanged food and souvenirs, joint burial ceremonies and prisoner swaps, and carol-singing. Holst had composed Cranham (named after a village in Gloucestershire) in 1906 and would have been a popular melody for those at a time of year where they were miles away from family and loved ones.

Jupiter (Gustav Holst)

Holst composed his most famous work, The Planets during the war years 1914 - 1918. Jupiter (the bringer of Jollity) could arguably be seen as not the most appropriate of pieces to be played in a commemorative concert if it were not for the setting of Cecil Spring Rice's poem:

*I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.*

When We Stand Together (Nickelback)

We are delighted to be joined this evening by the Gloucestershire Deaf Association who have worked with Paul Whittaker to present their own commemorative contribution to this evenings concert. When we Stand Together (by Nickelback) is a fitting message as the lyric to the song says:

*We must stand together
There's no getting even
Hand in hand forever
That's when we all win
That's, that's, that's when we all win*

In Flanders Fields (Rob Wiffin)

The poem *In Flanders Fields* was written during the First World War by Canadian physician Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae (1872-1918). Rob Wiffin first set some of the words to music for the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance in 2014. It seems fitting to perform this in today's 100 years commemoration concert. This evening the Gloucestershire Symphonic Wind Orchestra is joined by Imogen Grover and Timothy G H Cater.

Prelude on the Hymn Tune Rhosymedre (Vaughn Williams)

Vaughn Williams was born in 1872 in the Gloucestershire Village of Down Ampney. Vaughn Williams suspended his compositional work during the war years and signed up to serve, first as a medical orderly and later as 2nd Lieutenant of the Royal Garrison Artillery. In 1916 he wrote to Gustav Holst of his fears of returning to civilian life: *'out of those 7 who joined up in 1914 only 3 are left.....I sometimes think now it is wrong to have made friends with people younger than yourself.*

Mars and Venus (Gustav Holst)

The Bringer of War and The Bringer of Peace form part of our second musical offering from Gustav Holst's The Planets'. These two movements seem the most fitting from a work written during the war years.

Severn Meadows (Jonathan Trim)

Jonathan Trim has used three Ivor Gurney poems and extracts in *Severn Meadows* including *Song* (Only the wanderer), *Photographs* and *To the Poet before Battle*. The main theme heard at the outset is based on a reworking of the competition melody by Isabel Beveridge with my own countermelodies and themes to create an extended composition. The work is framed by pastoral settings of *Severn Meadows* initially in the minor but eventually emerging in the major mode. The central section is an evocation of existence in the trenches of the Great War and the comradeship of the soldiers in the face of the horrors of that war. These are described beautifully in Ivor Gurney's *Photographs* and *The Poet before Battle*. This section climaxes in the *Last Post* before the *Severn Meadows* are brought again to mind, the work ending in optimism and the joy of these reminiscences of our beloved Gloucestershire countryside.

An extract from 'Song'

*Only the wanderer
Knows England's graces,
Or can anew see clear
Familiar faces.*

*And who loves joy as he
That dwells in shadows?
Do not forget me quite,
O Severn meadows.*

An extract from 'Photographs'

*Lying in dug-outs, joking idly, wearily;
Watching the candle guttering in the draught;
Hearing the great shells go high over us, eerily
Singing; how often have I turned over, and
laughed*

*With pity and pride, photographs of all colours,
All sizes, subjects: khaki brothers in France;
Or mother's faces worn with countless colours;
Or girls whose eyes were challenging and must
dance,*

*Smiles and triumphant careless laughter. O
The pain of them, wide Earth's most sacred
things!*

*Lying in dug-outs, hearing the great shells slow
Sailing mile-high, the heart mounts higher and
sings.*

An extract from 'To the Poet before Battle'

*Now, youth, the hour of thy dread passion comes;
Thy lovely things must all be laid away;
And thou, as others, must face the riven day
Unstirred by rattle of the rolling drums,
Or bugles' strident cry.*

