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# **PROGRAMME**

Conductor
Anne Kimber

Leader
Catherine Smith

Symphony No 6 - 'Pastoral' Beethoven

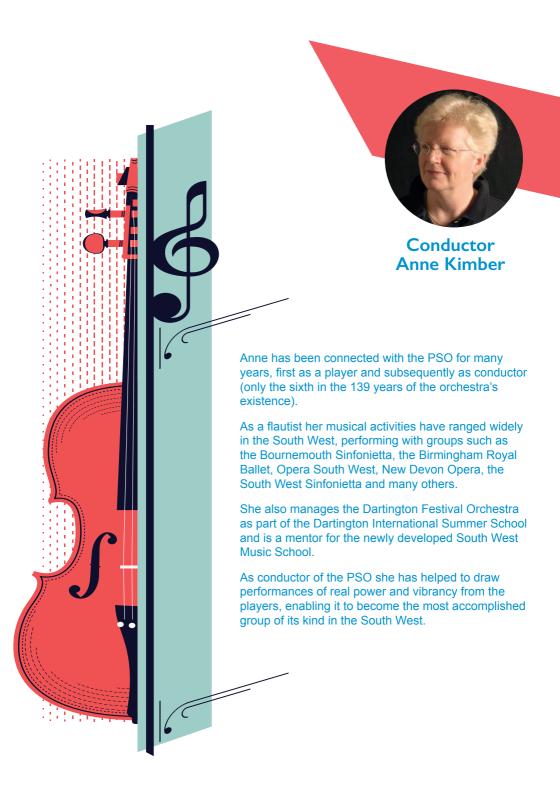
**INTERVAL** 

Fantasy Overture Romeo and Juliet Tchaikovsky

Adagio from *Spartacus* (Theme from The Onedin Line) Khachaturian

Finlandia Sibelius











Cath was born and brought up in Havant, near Portsmouth. Her father Tony is a keen amateur cellist, so she grew up surrounded by music. Cath took up the violin at the age of 9, starting initially with weekly lessons at school in a group of four. She 'got the bug', largely due to the enthusiasm of her teacher Graham Frewer who introduced her to the joys of ensemble playing.

Cath was fortunate to benefit from many other musical opportunities including membership of the Hampshire County Youth Orchestra, and chamber music coaching whilst she was still at school, which have provided a great foundation for her ongoing musical exploits. At 18, Cath left home for Birmingham to study Medicine, and managed to keep up her playing by joining the Birmingham Philharmonic orchestra. Qualifying as a doctor in 1995, after junior doctor jobs in Birmingham and Nottingham, Cath moved to Plymouth in 1997 and soon managed to track down the PSO. After playing for a couple of seasons, unfortunately on calls and medical exams meant that she was unable to keep up her PSO commitment. For the next decade her only sorties into classical music were to lead the annual Peninsula Doctors Orchestra concerts.

Having settled into her post as a consultant radiologist, and started a family, Cath was able to rejoin the PSO in 2013. 'I missed playing with the PSO – our programmes are varied, interesting and there is usually something to challenge and stretch us. The players are friendly and support each other. It's also a great way to unwind from my day job.'

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Matthew Watkinson

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### Percussion

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Steve Douglas (Wednesday)

Players interested in joining the PSO should contact the Musical Director, Anne Kimber on 01803 732550





Symphony No 6 in F (Pastoral), Op 68 BEETHOVEN (1770 –1827)

I. Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the country: *Allegro ma non troppo* 

II. Scene by the brook: Andante molto mosso

III. Merry gathering of country folk: *Allegro*, leading to

IV. Thunderstorm – tempest: *Allegro*, leading to

V. Shepherd's song – glad and grateful feelings after the storm: *Allegretto* 

'Pastoral symphony, or Recollections of country life: an expression of feeling rather than tone-painting' – this was Beethoven's own heading for his work. But since the titles he gave to the movements do suggest scenic tone-painting, and since the end of the second movement enshrines three named bird-calls, Beethoven's disclaimer is more intended to warn the listener against seeking too much for descriptive detail.

Orchestral depiction of birdsong, thunder and other sounds had long been common (chiefly in opera), and the 6/8 'rocking' rhythm was an accepted symbol for pastoral peace. But to incorporate a whole series of such things on a narrative basis into a fully worked-out Viennese symphony, this was something new. Beethoven departs from his norm here and writes five rather than four movements, the last three played without a break. It is in the key of F major, which the composer often used for his more cheerful music.

The symphony was first given on the same occasion as the Fifth Symphony. The basic classical orchestra is used for the first three movements, but because the prevailing mood is gentle, no trumpets are called for until the third movement and no drums until the fourth. In that fourth movement Beethoven bursts out of the classical frame: the storm calls for the extra excitement of a piccolo (in addition to the two flutes) and for the extra weight of two trombones (an exception to the general orchestral rule that trombones go in threes). The trombones then remain for the finale.

The 'happy feelings' make the first movement more serene, less assertive than Beethoven's first movements generally are. Its opening bouncy theme for strings, over a sustained pedal point in violas and cellos, might very well reflect Beethoven's own joy in the presence of nature. This theme is repeated continuously throughout the movement, though often in altered form. There is no second subject as such, nor even a formal development, but only a further repetition of fragments of this theme. After the exposition (repeated), a little falling phrase is passed with particular charm from instrument to instrument. The first fortissimo for all participating instruments does not arrive until the recapitulation. A coda makes a brief visit to another key before a quiet ending.

The second movement (in B flat) depicts the murmuring brook with a close-moving, undulating motion in the strings. Two cellos join in this effect while the others align themselves with the double-basses. Above the murmur, a smooth melody unfolds.



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Eventually, after an enriched return of the opening, Beethoven briefly lets the birds sing (overlapping each other): a nightingale (flute), quail (oboe) and cuckoo (clarinet).

The third movement (returning to F major) shows the expected lively 3/4 rhythm of a one-in-a-bar scherzo but applies it to a humorous evocation of clumsy, countrified music making. An oboe tune is accompanied by a seemingly inept bassoonist who appears to be restricted to three 'safe' notes. A central section changes to a rough dance-rhythm, before the scherzo returns, but there is a quickening and then an interruption . . .

... A trembling single note on cellos and double-basses indicates distant thunder and the full tempest eventually arrives. The key is now F minor, but as the storm abates there is a return to a happier F major, confirmed by a simple rising-scale on a solo flute . . .

... which passes straight into the 'thanksgiving' of the final movement. It begins with warmly-held chords over which the shepherd's call, or ranz des Vaches, is



heard from a solo clarinet, then solo horn, anticipating the 'true' principal theme of the movement which now rises from the violins. Beethoven dwells on the theme, expanding it with florid melody and hardly leaving it for a single bar. A muted horn gives a last echo of it as the symphony quietly closes.



Fantasy Overture, Romeo and Juliet TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Perhaps the most popular of all orchestral 'narratives', Tchaikovsky's 'Romeo and Juliet' did not immediately assume the form in which we now know it. After the first performance in 1870, the composer revised it, substituting a new opening at the urging of Balakirev, the older composer who had originally suggested the subject. In its revised version it was given in St Petersburg in 1872, and is substantially the version now known, though minor revisions were made later.

'Romeo and Juliet' is described as a 'fantasy-overture' – probably indicating its 'free' assembly of themes. It does not follow the strict form of a symphonic first movement, which so many composers had adopted for an overture. Here an introductory slow section precedes the principal fast section (from the beginning of the 'feuding' music) which progresses from minor to major. 'Overture' itself does not imply that it was intended for use in a theatrical performance of the play, but only that it is a substantial, single-movement work. The events of the play are not followed literally; the slow opening evokes



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## **NOTES**



Friar Laurence (Romeo's confidant, who performs the ill-fated marriage) on the organ-like tones of clarinets and bassoons.

A further calm passage suggesting benediction (with sequences of arpeggio harp chords) changes to agitation and a new, swifter tempo. Jagged, angry music represents the feud of Montagues and Capulets. At length the tumult is quietened for the love-theme – at first on solo cor anglais against sparse accompaniment, then swelling into throbbing, full-orchestral expression.

A central section corresponding to symphonic development represents the conflicts and their fatal consequence. Friar Laurence's theme is involved in the tension. When the return of the love-theme is suggested, unrest continues beneath. But for an ecstatic moment the love-theme soars forth in its passionate full-orchestral form. A further destructive outbreak leads to catastrophe: a timpani-roll thunders out, and then quietens. In slower tempo over a relentless bass note the tragedy is emphasized, with the harp arpeggio figures returning to offer a consolation as violins deliver a last, sad version of the love-theme.



Adagio from Spartacus KHACHATURIAN (1903-1978)

Aram Khachaturian, was born into an Armenian family in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, and studied at the Moscow Conservatory, where he was a pupil of Prokofiev's friend and mentor, Nikolai Myaskovsky. Using regional elements from his Armenian roots, he wrote in a tonal idiom

with richly coloured orchestration, and was opposed to the more radical experiments in harmony and writing that were going on around him.

His ballet, 'Spartacus', the score of which was completed in 1954, deals with the slave rebellion led by the eponymous hero against Roman domination. The historical Spartacus himself was Thracian by birth, a shepherd who became a robber. He was taken prisoner and sold to a trainer of gladiators in Capua, but in 73 BC he escaped, with other prisoners, and led a rebellion during the course of which he defeated the Roman armies and caused devastation throughout Italy. He was eventually defeated by Crassus, a general well-known for his wealth, and, together with his followers, was eventually crucified.







Plymouth's own Symphony Orchestra has been central to the musical life of the city for 139 years, and continues to perform challenging music, ranging from the traditional to the contemporary.

In 1875 a local teacher of music, Dr Samuel Weekes, brought together a group of musician friends and founded what was then known as an Orchestral Society: their first concert was presented in the graceful Tea Rooms of Plymouth's old Royal Hotel. The renamed Plymouth Symphony Orchestra can claim to be one of the longest-established orchestras in the country, with an amazing record of continuity: the founding conductor was succeeded by his son; his grandson, John Weekes, was a vice-president until recently! The present conductor, Anne Kimber, is only the sixth in 139 years.

The members of the orchestra travel from as far afield as Tiverton and Wadebridge to attend weekly rehearsals, although none receive payment for playing in the orchestra.

In its choice of programmes the orchestra aims to achieve a balance between established

masterpieces and an adventurous selection of less familiar music. Among the contemporary pieces performed in recent years have been several specially commissioned from local composers, including Judy Whitlock, who leads the double bass section

Many distinguished soloists have played concertos with the orchestra, including Nigel Kennedy, Peter Donohoe, the late Jack Brymer, Julian Lloyd Webber, Priya Mitchell, Anna Markland, Ralph Kirshbaum, Noriko Ogawa, Craig Ogden, Guy Johnston, Tasmin Little, Thomas Gould, Joanna MacGregor and BBC Young Musician of the Year, Jennifer Pike.

In addition to making appearances in Plymouth, an important feature of the orchestra's work is to present concerts in other centres which professional symphony orchestras rarely, if ever, visit, such as Liskeard, Totnes, Dartington, Christow and Buckland Abbey. But the purpose of Samuel Weekes in founding the orchestra has remained central to all its activities: to bring friends together once a week to make music.

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Khachaturian arranged three orchestral suites from the ballet between 1955 and 1957, before the revision of the score for the Bolshoi in 1968. The expressively-moving 'Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia', opens the second suite (1955), and achieved great popularity when it was used as the theme-tune for the BBC TV drama series, 'The Onedin Line', during the 1970s.



Finlandia, Op 26 SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

The first version of 'Finlandia' was written in 1899, but the work is today heard in the revision that the composer made in 1900. 'Finlandia' has had a dramatic career, closely tied in with Finnish history at the end of the nineteenth century. Intended by the composer as a reflection of the emotions of an exile returning to his native land, this stirring music owes its origin to the February Manifesto issued by the Russian government to abrogate the Diet and suppress free speech and press in Finland.

To raise funds to fight this tyrannical move, a group of Finnish patriots inaugurated a series of entertainments, for one of which Sibelius wrote a suite, 'Finland Awakes', in 1899 – the fourth movement was called 'Suomi', the Finnish name for Finland. After the performance, this fourth movement was divorced from the suite, rewritten, renamed 'Finlandia', and reintroduced on July 2, 1900, under the baton of Robert Kajanus, the most prominent Finnish composer before Sibelius, and an acclaimed exponent of the latter's music. This is the version

that has become world-famous. After that, through the years, 'Finlandia' became the musical voice of Finland, the expression of its aspirations and its spirit. The outside world came to identify it with Finnish idealism and its struggles for independence. Within Finland it did more, at the turn of the twentieth-century, to bring about Finnish freedom than any speech, pamphlet or published propaganda.

It is a vibrantly national piece of music, so much so that for a long time many believed that some of its melodies quoted folk sources. All the ingredients, however, are Sibelius's own. The stirring opening bars for the brass and the disturbed music that follows it immediately, all suggest the unrest of a proud people in the face of dark tyranny. There next comes a tender melody in the woodwind, almost like a supplication. A tonal storm erupts; the struggle for freedom has begun. Suddenly a melody, like a folk song, is heard in the woodwinds, sounding like a prayer for peace. This is the most famous melody in the score - indeed, probably the most famous Finnish melody ever written. The strings reply with another national theme, and the woodwind and strings proceed to alternate in a paean to freedom and truth. The composition grows climactically into a grandiose proclamation of the triumph of the people over the forces of oppression.

Programme Notes by Philip R Buttall www.philiprbuttall.co.uk

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# Horn concerto proves highlight of concert

By our Music Critic

ONE of the most delightful musical treats experienced in Plymouth for a long time was provided by the celebrated horn player Dennis Brain, when he played Mozart's Concerto No. 4 in E Flat for horn and orchestra at Plymouth Orchestral Society's Central Hall concert lest pight Central Hall concert last night. Son of the famous Aubrey Brain,

the finest horn player of his day, Dennis Brain proved an apt pupil of his father, and his rendering of the solo part of this concerto was an example of rare artistry.

Mozart seemed to write a concerto for every conceivable instrument.

### TONAL CLARITY

The horn is one of the heavier types and the composer, with his usual uncanny musical perception, knew exactly how to produce music for this instrument which would flow with the same easy fluency that characterises all his writing.

The horn concertos are no ex-ception. Their interpretation requires the utmost delicacy and technical accomplishment, and Mr. Brain tackled this lovely work with a skill and musicianship that was astonishing in its freshness and tonal clarity.

Each note was produced with admirable precision, and the beautiful fluidity of which the horn is capable was captured to its fullest

The subtleties of the music were evoked without blemish, and the result was a performance of impressive proportions.

### TRIUMPH

Mr. Brain was given splendid support from the orchestra, which seemed to sense the importance of the occasion with commendable insight, Mr. Auberry Pryor having coaxed his forces to concert pitch.

For the orchestra generally, the whole concert was something of a

triumph.

The playing throughout had the hallmark of quality, and apart from some untidy finishing and timorous leads—so rare as to be negligible—each item was presented in a most professional manner.

Opening with a vigorous performance of Cimarosa's Overture, "The Secret Marriage," there fol-lowed the suite "Amaryllis" with music arranged from Handel by Sir Thomas Beecham,

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