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Conductor
Anne Kimber

Leader Dawn Ashby

Wednesday 22nd November 2017 Plymouth Guildhall, 7.30pm



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# **PROGRAMME**

Conductor
Anne Kimber

Leader Dawn Ashby

**Prince Igor Overture - Borodin Adagio in G minor - Albinoni** 

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini - Rachmaninov Soloist: Alexander Ullman

**INTERVAL** 

**Symphony No.2 - Brahms** 







Conductor Anne Kimber



Anne has been connected with the PSO for many years, first as a player and subsequently as conductor (only the sixth in the 139 years of the orchestra's existence).

As a flautist her musical activities have ranged widely in the South West, performing with groups such as the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, the Birmingham Royal Ballet, Opera South West, New Devon Opera, the South West Sinfonietta and many others.

She also manages the Dartington Festival Orchestra as part of the Dartington International Summer School and has been a mentor for the renowned South West Music School.

As conductor of the PSO she has helped to draw performances of real power and vibrancy from the players, enabling it to become the most accomplished group of its kind in the South West.





Soloist Nexander Ullman



'..Ullman gave a towering performance.... as intelligently aware of the work's intricate architecture as he was dazzling in execution....

Nottingham Post / Royal Concert Hall / November 2016

'He heard the score with immense clarity and vision, and brought it to life as if the composer were watching over his shoulder....'

Huffington Post / Montréal Symphony Orchestra / June 2014 Born in 1991 in London, Alexander Ullman studied at the Purcell School, the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and the Royal College of Music, completing his Artist Diploma as the Benjamin Britten Piano Fellow in 2017 (awarded by The Philip Loubser Foundation).

In 2011 Alexander won 1st Prize at the Liszt Competition in Budapest. He was selected for representation by Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) in 2014.

Over the last year Alexander has returned to Wigmore Hall, given recitals in Perth Concert Hall, the Nottingham and SJE Arts Oxford International Piano series, and made his debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Manchester Camerata. Further afield he undertook tours of Argentina, Columbia and China and took part in the Chopin Festival in Majorca. In 2018 he records his first CD of Russian ballet music for Rubicon.

Alexander has given concerts across Europe, Asia and America, highlights including recitals at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Copenhagen), Archive Nationales (Paris), Auditorio de la Diputación de Alicante, Shanghai Oriental Arts Centre, Beijing NCPA and La Jolla Arts Festival (California). He continues to give recitals throughout the UK, and has collaborated with the Dover Quartet and cellist Michael Petrov

As a soloist Alexander has appeared with the Montréal Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra at the Mann Centre, the New Jersey and Fort Worth Symphony Orchestras, the Oxford Philharmonic, Southbank Sinfonia, Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana, Cardiff Philharmonic, Danubia and Budapest Radio Orchestras. He has been broadcast by BBC Radio 3, Radio France and MDR Classic.

During his studies Alexander won numerous awards including 1st Prize at the Lagny-sur-Marne International Competition (2013), the Tunbridge Wells International Young Concert Artists Competition (2012), and 2nd Prize at the Isidor Bajic Memorial International Competition (2014). His teachers have included William Fong, Leon Fleisher, Ignat Solzhenitsyn, Robert McDonald, Dmitri Alexeev, Ian Jones and Elisso Virsaladze.



Leader Dawn Ashby



Dawn has been playing with the PSO for over 20 years, originally at the back of the second violins and gradually working her way towards the front of the first violins.

She began learning the violin at the age of 8, after being offered lessons in primary school, and took full advantage of the many musical opportunities offered to her throughout her school career, culminating in membership of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony and Chamber Orchestras. Dawn chose not to pursue a full-time career in music, but after graduating from Plymouth with a degree in Environmental Science, continued to study the violin with Hans Kassier for over 15 years.

She has attempted to play many other stringed instruments, and even learnt the harp in school in order to escape hockey lessons, but has always wanted to play the cello. So during one late night eBay shopping trip she bought a viola, so she could learn the Elgar Cello concerto (arranged for viola by Tertis) without the need for cello technique! So, watch out cellists, if the PSO ever plays the Elgar, Dawn will be vying with you to play the solo part in rehearsals!

Dawn has led several local orchestras including the University of Plymouth Orchestra and South West Sinfonietta, where she played with several eminent soloists (including Craig Ogden, Natalie Klein and Julian Lloyd Webber) and performs regularly with several orchestral and chamber ensembles throughout the southwest.

She now shares the leadership of the PSO with two other members of the orchestra and will be found leading the viola section when not playing the violin.



Overture, Prince Igor Borodin (1833-1887)



Borodin was the illegitimate son of a minor Russian prince, and was well educated by his mother. He trained as a doctor and chemist and even founded a medical school for women, which he considered his greatest achievement, but posterity remembers him as a composer. His supreme musical accomplishment is his opera Prince Igor, which he worked on for 18 years, from 1869 until his death in 1887.

Borodin played the Prince Igor overture on the piano for his friends Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov, but by the time of his death the overture had yet to be fully orchestrated, leaving the pair to do this for at least about half of the score in order to bring it to production in St Petersburg in 1890. It was reported that Glazunov took to completing its orchestration from memory, utilizing his rare gift of eidetic memory – a highly-developed form of the photographic variety – to such a degree that the overture, as recorded by Glazunov, is still essentially Borodin's own.

Like so many Russian operas of its century it is strongly nationalist in feeling, and is based on the medieval Russian epic 'The Lay of Igor's Campaign'. Suggested to the composer by critic Vladimir Stasov, it is set in the twelfth century, when Prince Igor went to war against the Polovtsians, an Asian people speaking a Turkic language. The overture is a neat sonata-allegro movement that begins with a slow introduction in the minor key in the strings and winds. It is interrupted with glorious fanfares in the brass, leading to a bold Russian theme in the major, the particularly exciting brass scoring being, in fact, a real feature of the work throughout. Three easily-discernible melodies are heard during the exposition and which all appear in the opera itself. The fanfares mentioned above emanate from the Polovtsian scene, with other music coming from the duet between Igor and his wife Yaroslavna,

the hero's patriotic aria when he is held in captivity, and the theme of Konchakovna, the quasi-oriental melody first played on the clarinet. A fragmented but substantial development leads to a recapitulation of all the earlier themes and then a coda, rounding off one of the masterpieces of small-scale orchestral music from the late nineteenth century.

Adagio in G minor Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni (1671-1751)



Albinoni's Adagio has become one of the most iconic of musical backdrops, utilized in innumerable films, television programs and video games. But its story is much more complicated than that, and arguably ranks as one of the biggest frauds in music history.

The eldest son of a wealthy paper merchant, Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni was born in Venice in 1671. Showing an early proficiency as a singer and violinist, the young Tomaso eventually turned his talents to composition, producing both his first opera and instrumental music collection in 1694. Upon his father's passing in 1709, Albinoni – who referred to himself as a 'Dilettante Veneto' - was able to become a full-time musician and composer, producing both operas and instrumental works until his death in 1751. As his operas were never published. Albinoni was mostly revered for his ninety-nine sonatas, fifty-nine concertos and nine sinfonias, which were, at the time, compared favourably to those by his contemporaries Corelli and Vivaldi.

Following his passing, much of Albinoni's unpublished music made its way to the Saxon State Library in Dresden, where it was preserved before being all but completely destroyed in the Allied bombing raids of winter 1945. That same year, Milanese musicologist Remo Giazotto set out to write a biography of Albinoni and catalogue his remaining works, using what was left in the Dresden archives. Giazotto published his book, 'Musico di Violino Dilettante Veneto', soon after,



# **First Violins**

Dawn Ashby
Catherine Smith
Jessie Welbourne
Margaret Sampson
Sandra Sutton
Sharon Evans
Melanie Scullion
Christine Harvey
Andy Clarkson
Jonathan Stromberg
Eva Axelby
Madeleine Vickers

# Second Violins

Dave Adams
Alan Thomas
Maggie Willmott
Pam Pinder
Lorna Groves
Gill Healey
Lyndsey Pengelly
Neville Devonport
Stephen Macro
Doris Hildick

Vanessa Tyler

### **Violas**

Petra Stephenson Roger Waterfield Catherine Smart Rosalind Turner Colin McKay Rob Kellagher

# **Cellos**

Emma Batley
Susanna Campbell
Celina Cox
Debbie McMurran
Alicia Stolliday
Robert Taylor
Denise Hasshill
Kate Whyman
Diana Darwall
Ian Tunbridge

# **Double Basses**

Judy Whitlock Andy Tunbridge

## **Flutes**

Emma Jose Lucy Annetts

### Piccolo

Cathy Quinlan

### **Oboes**

Carolyn Haynes Tracy Senior

### Clarinets

Patrick Saunders Hannah Epps

### Bassoons

Ben Morrow Helen Simmonds

## Horns

Sue Durant Simon Keates Debby Cotton Catherine Garland

# **Trumpets**

Ben Dawson Bruce Fox Ivan Sidgreaves

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Matthew Watkinson

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Michelle Hiley

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and, to all intents and purposes, that would likely have been the last most outside classical circles heard of both subject and biographer. However, four years later Giazotto re-emerged, claiming he had recovered a piece of unpublished Albinoni from the Saxon State Library: a fragment of a manuscript, likely from the slow movement of a trio sonata or sonata da chiesa in G minor, possibly as part of his Op. 4 set (1708), which consisted of only the basso continuo, and six bars of melody.

Giazotto asserted he had completed Albinoni's single movement in tribute, copywriting and publishing it in 1958 under his own name with the mellifluous title 'Adagio in G Minor for Strings and Organ on Two Thematic Ideas and on a Figured Bass by Tomaso Albinoni'. Distinct for its descending baseline and earworm-inducing melody, it was guick to gain favour with baroqueinclined pop musicians and film-music supervisors, who were attracted to the simple melodic line and minor key gravitas. First appearing as the main theme for Alain Resnais's 1961 film 'L'année dernière à Marienbad', the Adagio became a mainstay in popular culture, popping up in a variety of popular and varied films, commercials and television programs. Many commentators have suggested that the piece is Giazotto's own composition but, recently, the existence of a bassline score (with the Dresden library's stamp) was confirmed. Irrespective, the poignant melody of this piece, with its hauntingly beautiful outline has still taken on a life of its own, regardless of its musical provenance.



Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op 43 Rachmaninov (1873-1943)



Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840) has preoccupied musicians for over two centuries. With his gaunt and emaciated figure cloaked in priestly black, he performed feats of violin sorcery, simply unthoughtof until he burst upon the European concert scene at the start of the nineteenth century. Not only were his virtuoso pyrotechnics unsurpassed, but his performance of even simple melodies was of such purity and sweetness that it moved his audiences to tears. Given all this, he was seen as almost superhuman, and perhaps this was to some degree responsible for rumours suggesting he did have special powers, indeed powers not of this earth. In fact this was largely fostered and spread by the composer himself, but did make for some fantastic PR both at the time, and subsequently.

Like most virtuoso instrumentalists of the nineteenth century, Paganini composed much of his own music. Notable among his output are the Caprices for Unaccompanied Violin, works so difficult that even today they are really accessible only to the finest exponents around. The last of the Caprices, No. 24 in A minor, served as the basis for compositions by Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, and others, and was also the inspiration for Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini – a series of variations on this theme. which is characterized as much by its recurrent rhythm (five short notes followed by a longer one) as by its melody. Taking his cue from the Paganini legend, Rachmaninov combined another melody with that of the demonic violinist, the Dies irae (Day of Wrath) from the Requiem Mass for the Dead. This ancient chant had long been connected not only with the Roman Catholic Church service, but also with musical works containing some diabolical element, such as Berlioz's Witches' Sabbath from his Symphonie fantastique, Liszt's Totentanz (Dance of Death), Saint-Saëns's Danse macabre. and Rachmaninov himself in his earlier Isle of the Dead.





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The Rhapsody, a brilliant showpiece for virtuoso pianist, is a set of twenty-four variations, and begins with a brief, eight-bar introduction, a skeletal outline of the melody, reminiscent of the pizzicato opening of the finale of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony, before the theme itself is stated by unison violins, with the piano now swapping to reinforce the melodic contours. The title 'Rhapsody' might lead listeners to expect great freedom in the treatment of Paganini's theme, but here Rachmaninov, somewhat ironically, fashions the most classically-shaped of all his compositions. Each variation is complete in itself, and has a clearly-marked, and unmistakeable link back to the original. True, the treatment as a whole becomes freer as the work progresses, but that is entirely consonant with classical practice. The first six variations maintain strict tempo, stay in the same key (A minor) as Paganini's caprice, and even hint at Paganini's own set of variations. The first major change in character comes with the seventh variation, in which Rachmaninov introduces the Dies irae plainchant as a second theme, heard first in sustained chords in the piano against thematic segments in bassoon and cellos. It will go on to play a substantial role in the score, perhaps as Rachmaninov alludes to the albeit contrived and exaggerated tales of Paganini's supposed demonic connections.

Through the tenth variation, the music stays firmly in Paganini's home key of A minor. But the eleventh variation, which functions as a kind of reflective solo cadenza with a mysterious accompaniment, leads off to a new key and the beginning of a middle section in which the tonality is freer. The most famous variation, of course. is the eighteenth, in the lushly romantic key of D flat major. On first hearing, this sounds as if Rachmaninoff had decided to cast Paganini to the winds, seeking instead the kind of rich Russian melody that had made his Second and Third Piano Concertos so popular - and yet this theme, in the composer's most eminently popular style, is derived from Paganini's by the simple device of turning its notes upside-down, playing them more slowly, and incorporating a heightened sense of emotion. The result is an outpouring of lyric melody that soars climactically and then dies gently away.

The remaining five variations return to the home key for a suitable Paganini-like 'finale' of great brilliance, then turning to hints of the satanic, with a dark march erupting in a piano cadenza and a variation (No. 23) in which the soloist begins in the unlikely key of A flat. But the orchestra promptly takes matters into its own hands by jerking the soloist up to A and continuing into the last variation, with a kaleidoscopic outburst of fireworks and a final reference in the brass to the Dies irae. Then, just as Rachmaninov seems to be building to his mightiest declamation yet, the work ends with the wittiest touch of all – one quiet, and almost cheekily final nod in the direction of Signore Paganini.





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Symphony No 2 in D, Op 73 Brahms (1833-1897)



Allegro non troppo Adagio non troppo Allegretto grazioso, quasi andantino Allegro con spirito

Brahms's symphonies, a series which he delayed launching until he was over forty, are 'classical' in the context of his time. They inherit the structures and melody-types bequeathed by Beethoven, and they move cautiously forward from Beethoven's and Schubert's harmonies, not making the big jump into chromatic language with Liszt and Wagner. The Beethoven legacy may not have been without its burden. When challenged on the resemblance of the main theme of the finale of his first symphony to the 'Joy' theme of the finale of Beethoven's Ninth, Brahms is said to have replied: 'Any ass can see that!' Brahms's symphonies do, however, avoid the Viennese minuet or its successor, the scherzo in 3/4 time, seeking some other light contrast to set between the slow second movement and weighty finale.

After delaying until his mid-career to launch his first symphony, Brahms was sufficiently confident to begin writing his second immediately after. On 30 December 1877 it received its successful first performance, under Hans Richter's baton in Vienna. Away from the gravity and portentousness of his First Symphony, this is a sunny work and there has even been the suggestion that it represents 'Brahms's Pastoral symphony'. A tuba is added to the orchestral force required for the previous symphony.

The first movement opens with a three-note phrase on cellos and double-basses, D-C sharp-D, which appears merely introductory but in fact gives a pointer to much of what happens later in this close-packed music. A 'Romantic' horn-call follows as the principal theme, and later a tune emerges in F sharp minor for violas and cellos in thirds, a special warmth of tone being felt from the fact that

the cellos take the upper line. Density of texture and continuity of flow are achieved within a sonata-form frame, with an unmistakable feeling of repose at the coda in the smooth singing of horns and strings.

A subtle first movement is followed by an equally subtle second (in B major), begun by a slow, outpouring theme on the cellos. A later theme in lighter vein with syncopated accents moves on into a more stormy section, and finally a variant of the first part returns.

Not called a scherzo, the third movement in G major is nevertheless light, melodious and rhythmically engaging. A graceful section in 3/4 time (oboe solo, with a notable pizzicato accompaniment for the cellos) is succeeded by a contrasting section (trio) in 2/4. The first section, varied, returns and is followed now by a different trio in 3/8 and then by yet another return. But in all these sections a permutation of the same musical germ may be found.

A sonata-form structure makes a powerful finale for the symphony, starting sotto voce on strings alone with a theme which uncurls towards mighty deeds, followed by a broader second subject. In the development Brahms indulges in the most dextrous contrapuntal tricks: themes are inverted, combined, or shaped anew. All these feats of inspired craftsmanship, never artificially contrived, lead to the recapitulation and to the intensely dramatic and wonderfully effective coda. With his well-honed and notorious sense of cutting irony, Brahms wrote to Eduard Hanslick, the eminent critic: 'So many melodies fly about, one must be careful not to tread on them'

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

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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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# Symphony Orchestra



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