



EDINBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Gerard Doherty

Leader: Sheena Jardine

Winter Concert

**Saturday 30th November 2024
7.30pm Greyfriars Kirk**

Programme Notes

www.edinburghsymphonyorchestra.co.uk

Richard Wagner (1813 -1883) - Prelude to Parsifal

Wagner's opera Parsifal was written during the years 1878-1882. It concerns the quest for the Holy Grail, to redeem Amfortas, who succumbed to the temptations of a woman Kundry. The task of recovering the Grail falls on Parsifal, a naïve young boy who stumbles amongst the knights after killing a swan. The opera caused a scandal as it depicted a Eucharist-like ceremony, which Wagner called a love feast, at the end of the first act. It was first performed at Bayreuth in 1882. The prelude has been described as one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written. It begins with a theme in A-flat major, containing three motifs depicting the Eucharist, the suffering of Amfortas and a spear motif. After a climax, the brass sound the famous Dresden Amen which was also used by Mendelssohn in his Reformation symphony. A fortissimo statement of another motif, associated with Faith, follows. Then after a repetition of the Grail motif, the first part of the prelude ends in D major. The second part of the prelude concerns itself with the suffering of Amfortas, making use of a chromatic variation of the spear motif. This is followed by a series of anguished passages and the prelude ends with the harmony unresolved, as the curtain rises on the first act.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791) Piano Concerto No 21 in C Major K467 (Elvira Madigan)

I Allegro Maestoso, II Andante, III Allegro vivace assai

This piano concerto was completed by Mozart in March 1785, shortly after his D minor concerto K466. It is scored for a classical orchestra, including trumpets and timpani giving it a slightly militaristic flavour. A march-like figure opens the first movement which quickly moves to a more lyrical melody. The soloist enters after a return to the march theme, introducing new material that begins a transition to the dominant key of G major. There is an abrupt shift to G minor, in a passage which foreshadows the main theme Mozart's 40th symphony. This is then followed by a

statement of the second main theme in G major. The rest of the movement consists of a development section, followed by a recapitulation, culminating in a cadenza at the end of the movement.

The Andante movement is in the subdominant key of F major and is an aria like movement that has a dream-like quality to it. It was used as background music in the Swiss Film *Elvira Madigan*, giving the concerto its current nickname. A short lively rondo in C major, ends the concerto. In contrast to the D minor concerto, this is a joyous piece that epitomises Mozart's piano concertos.

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896) Symphony No 5 in B-flat major WAB 105

I Adagio-Allegro

II Adagio Sehr langsam

III Scherzo Molto Vivace

IV Finale Adagio-Allegro Moderato

This symphony was composed by Bruckner in 1875 shortly after he had moved to Vienna. It was a time of great stress for Bruckner, who was struggling with poverty and legal disputations. The symphony makes extensive use of pizzicato strings and is sometimes referred to as the Pizzicato symphony. The first movement begins with a majestic slow introduction, which explores various keys leading to a climax in A major. The texture thins out until only a violin tremolo remains. Then two further key regions are explored; F minor and D-flat major. After a series of harmonic explorations the coda begins in B-flat minor and then the home key of B-flat major is finally reached. The Adagio in D minor alternates between two thematic sections, the first of which combines a 4/4 rhythm with a 6/4 rhythm, the second consisting of a chorale played by the strings. The Scherzo shares thematic material with the Adagio, but at a faster tempo. The movement makes use of the 'Bruckner rhythm' namely a duplet followed by a triplet. The finale is a massive fugal work, where Bruckner

demonstrates his contrapuntal skills, culminating in a chorale. The structure of this movement was used by Mahler in his fifth symphony. Bruckner never heard the symphony played by an orchestra, being too ill to attend the first performance by Schalk in Graz in 1894. It gradually became more widely known and is a fitting work to commemorate the bi-centenary of Bruckner's birth.

Programme Notes - Chris Finlay November 2024.

RHEA FITZGERALD



Having just turned fourteen this month, Rhea started learning piano with David Sced at the age of five and has studied with Peter Evans since 2018. A memorable holiday in Vienna inspired her to take up the violin when she was seven; she has been studying since with Uli Evans.

Rhea has won a number of medals in the Edinburgh Competition Festival for piano and violin, including the 10-minute piano recital class. In 2019 she also won the Junior medal in the James Waterhouse Piano Competition. She has performed Schumann's Piano Concerto with the Meadows Chamber Orchestra (MCO) in St Cuthbert's Church in October 2023.

Rhea may be the only musician to have reached the final of the ECFA Concerto Competition on 2 different instruments. In 2020, at the age of 9, Rhea made her debut in the Queens Hall as the youngest finalist of the Open Concerto class in the Edinburgh Competition Festival, playing two movements of Mozart's A major Concerto K414, accompanied by the Friends of the Festival Orchestra. She also performed the first movement of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor in the Open Concerto class final in March 2024. She is currently preparing for a March 2025 performance of the whole concerto with the MCO.

A member of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland (NYOS) violin section since she was 8, Rhea led the NYOS Junior Orchestra in 2022 and the NYOS Development in 2024. She achieved her ABRSM Diploma in violin with Distinction in June 2023.

GERARD DOHERTY



Gerard Doherty studied violin and conducting at the Royal Scottish Academy. He studied conducting at post graduate level with Martin Brabbins at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire and also won a scholarship to study for two seasons at the American Academy of Conducting, Aspen, with Murry Sidlin, David Zinman, Jorma Panula and James Levine.

Gerard's natural gift as a conductor first came to prominence when he conducted the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) in Debussy's La Mer in the presence of Walter Weller. With Weller's highest recommendation, Gerard made his debut as a conductor,

which led him to conduct the RSNO on numerous occasions, including when he had to step in during a recording session, as the conductor was indisposed, to complete a recording of opera arias, which were highly acclaimed.

His conducting has taken him to the United States, Europe and the Middle East. Gerard is currently Principal Conductor of the Glasgow Sinfonia and the Edinburgh Symphony Orchestra and he also guest conducts a number of other Scottish ensembles.

He has conducted a wide range of choral and symphonic works and is much admired for his natural musicianship, clear understanding, integrity and breadth of repertoire, which spans baroque to contemporary. His reviews have described his music making as "thrilling", "exhilarating", "triumphant" and "vibrant". He is also a well-established conductor of choral music having spent 20 years as conductor of the Ayr Choral, conducting many major symphonic and sacred choral works as well as 'A Capella' repertoire.

His wide experience and in-depth knowledge of orchestral technique and repertoire are also in demand with the next generation of musicians. He was for 10 years Principal Conductor of the Strathclyde University Symphony Orchestra. He has been course director and conductor of the NYOS repertoire course on three occasions and has also conducted the Symphony Orchestra of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music, the Orchestra of the University of Castel Branco, Edinburgh University Chamber Orchestra, Renfrewshire Schools Symphony Orchestra, West of Scotland Independent Schools Orchestra and Glasgow Schools Symphony Orchestra, the National Youth String Orchestra of Scotland. He is at present conductor of the East Renfrewshire Schools Symphony and Senior String Orchestras, winning numerous awards.

He played violin for all of the major orchestras in the country, including 23 years as first violin in the RSNO. He is also a renowned violin teacher.

THE EDINBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Edinburgh Symphony Orchestra was the brainchild of its first conductor, Donald James – then the Head of Music at Edinburgh Academy – and gave its first concert in aid of Oxfam at the Reid Concert Hall in June 1963. Since then, for over 60 years, it has given amateur players the opportunity to perform a symphonic repertoire to a high standard under the batons of Donald James (1963-67), Henry McGlone (1967-72), Neil Butterworth (1972-73), Leon Coates (1973-85), Alasdair Mitchell (1985-2004) and Gerard Doherty, the present conductor.

Many young soloists in the early stages of their professional careers have been given the opportunity to play with the ESO, and the work of local composers has been commissioned. The repertoire includes not only the best-known pieces, but also music which is not so regularly performed. The Orchestra has, on occasion, combined with choral societies and in May 2005 was invited to accompany a huge choir of volunteers from all of Scotland in a charity performance of Verdi's Requiem in the Usher Hall. There are usually 3 or 4 performances each year: normally in Greyfriars Kirk. ESO is a subscription orchestra managed by an elected committee. The orchestra is always pleased to hear from amateur musicians who would like to play. Anyone interested in joining the orchestra should contact esoenquiries@gmail.com

Date for your diary

Saturday 8th March 2025 – 7:30 Greyfriars Kirk
Tchaikovsky, Strauss and Rachmaninoff

Violin 1

Sheena Jardine
Helen Adamson
Sheila Beattie
Karen Campbell
Una Fairley
Adam Hamer
Claire McLean
Caroline Mortimer
Arthur Moss
Verena Schwarze
Iain Scott
Claire Shortt
Aimee Truesdale
Graeme Wilson

Violin 2

Nigel Hambly
Morven Baker
Kaye Brewster
Helen Downes
Miriam Duncomb
Christina Homer
Jessie Jungels
Song-Su Oh
David Scott
Emma Waite de Kalaf

Viola

Kay Smith
Gillian Cloke
John Halliday
Alison Lucas
Jennifer Meakin
Eleanor Merton
Anne Parker
Cello
Gerard Delaney
Tim Andrews
Ingrid Bols
Mike Evans
Murdo Homewood

Alison McMillan
Alice Paine
John Tanner
Emma Veitch

Double Bass

John Wilkinson
Angela Dimmock
Patrick Sturt
David Wilson

Flute

Stella Henzell
Simon McCann
Anna Williams

Oboe

Jo Watts
Lizzie McCall
Hannah Wasson
Anne Wilson

Cor Anglais

Anne Wilson

Clarinet

Vaughan Townhill
Hilary Saunders
Nadine Thompson

Bassoon

Minjee King
Andrew Hazard
Rainer Thönnies

Contrabassoon

Kathy Humphry

French Horn

Marian Kirton
John Forbes
Hamish McRitchie
Gary Nichol
Victoria North

Trumpet

Elliot Longworth
Rhona Carse
Adam Farrant
Cameron Sutherland

Trombone

Glenn Shepherd
Hannah Goldie
Ruth Andrew

Tuba

Arnold Myers

Timpani

Russell Wilson