



# NEWSLETTER

Registered Charity No. 507268

JUNE 2009

WWW.WSO.ORG.UK

Issue No. 44

## Chairman's Notes from Malcolm Rowson (tel: 01926 491785)

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### Angela Richey

Earlier this year the death was announced of Angela Richey, leader of the WSO from 1972-85. Angela was the first professional leader to attend all the rehearsals as well as play in each concert and her contribution to the development of the orchestra was immense. Angela left the WSO because of travel difficulty after she moved to Worcestershire. She continued playing until very recently with her own long established quartet and the Volante Ensemble which she founded some years ago.

### Colin Rowlatt

Sadly Colin, who had been responsible for the print set up for all our newsletters and had been a loyal member of the front of house team for many years, died after a short stay in hospital. We send our sympathy to his wife Margaret who worked with Colin at all our concerts.

### Guy in Orlando Florida

Earlier this year Guy Woolfenden was invited to the University of Central Florida by its Orchestral Studies Director, Lazlo Marosi. During his time there he gave lectures, broadcasts and attended and gave performances of his own compositions including *Gallimaufry*, the *Illyrian Dances*, *Suite Française* and *Clarinet Concerto*. The visit was an unqualified success with one of the audiences exceeding 1200! A full report on his visit is to be found in *Winds*, the magazine of the British Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles.

## Mendelssohn Bicentenary

In celebration of the two hundredth year of Mendelssohn's birth, the WSO will devote the first half of its concert at the Guy Nelson Hall, Warwick on 10 October to two of the composer's best known works, the *Overture Ruy Blas* and the *Violin Concerto in E minor*.

Felix Mendelssohn, born in Hamburg in February 1809 came from a wealthy Jewish family who soon moved to Berlin. In 1816 his father converted to Christianity, adding Bartholdy to the family name in order to distinguish them from the rest of their relations. Felix Mendelssohn who showed a precocious musical talent was afforded excellent teaching and gave his first public recital at the age of 9. At 10 he began writing music and in his short life he was both a prolific composer and a seasoned European traveller. He made numerous visits to England, the final one being during the penultimate year of his life when he came to Birmingham Town Hall in 1846 to give the first performance of his oratorio, *Elijah*.

*Ruy Blas* was written at the request of the Theatrical Pension Fund of Leipzig as an overture to Victor Hugo's play of the same name. Mendelssohn regarded Hugo's play as "detestable and beneath contempt" but nevertheless complied with the request; and in 1839, in just three days, he composed a piece as a musical introduction which according to some had no dramatic connection with the play at all! Nevertheless on its own it has achieved huge success ever since.

The *Violin Concerto* was conceived around the same time as *Ruy Blas* but Was not premiered until 1845.



It was one of the first great violin concertos of the Romantic era and arguably the most popular. Full of exuberance and youthful vitality it is fitting that it should

be played by a young violinist and that will be the case on 10 October. Callum Smart, the virtuoso soloist, is only 13 years old! He began studying the violin at the age of 6 and at 9 entered the Menuhin School to study with Maciej Rakowski. When the latter moved to Manchester, Callum followed and now attends Chetham's School of Music. Callum has already performed many recitals and several concertos. He played the Mendelssohn with the Liverpool Mozart Orchestra earlier this year and his performance was stunning.

The October concert ends with a much later romantic piece, *Symphony No 3* by Rachmaninov which was composed between 1935 and 1936, some thirty years after his previous symphony. It was greeted as so different from his earlier works that it took some time before it gained its rightful place in the orchestral repertoire. Its première was given by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski with the composer present. The critics were unsympathetic and a depressed Rachmaninov wrote the following to a friend, "One review sticks painfully in my mind that I didn't have a Third Symphony in me anymore. Personally I am firmly convinced that this is a good work. But – sometimes composers are mistaken too!" Fortunately the composer's first thoughts were later justified.

## Deux baguettes à Villebon (Two batons in Villebon)

Following the hugely supported concert on 14 March in St. Mary's Church Warwick the WSO prepared for the repeat concert two weeks later in Villebon, France. Most players chose principally to travel by Eurostar, with some members making their own way by car and one other travelling by air. Special arrangements were made with regard to transporting the larger instruments by two indomitable double bass players who saw to this by hiring a van and seeing to careful packing and sound satellite navigation. The Eurostar passengers, were met by coach at Paris Gare du Nord on the Friday evening and the only delay on the seven hour journey from the Midlands was the Paris traffic & 'les plots' [the bollards] on arrival at the Centre Culturel Jacques Brel in Villebon. These bollards prevented high vehicles from entering and the coach party had to wait until someone on the other end of an intercom agreed to lower 'les plots' and permit the English invasion to enter safely and be welcomed by host families.

The hospitality for the WSO visit was 'par excellence'. It began and ended with food, wine and warmth. On the Saturday morning a visit was arranged to Dourdan a small historic & picturesque French town, not far from the forest of Rambouillet. A well refreshed party of players then rehearsed in the Jacques Brel Hall prior to the evening concert which began at 8.30 pm. All arrangements went

smoothly except for those involving the sound and lighting engineers who seemed impervious to the fact that there might be a language problem and insisted on broadcasting loud instructions to the orchestra in fast French and grew increasingly impatient because there was little or no response. Apart from a lighting hitch at the beginning the concert went well, the first half with Sibelius' *Symphony No 2* followed by *Finlandia* under the inspiring baton of Guy Woolfenden; and the second, conducted by Dominique Dumont and memorable for a superb baritone solo by Paris Conservatoire's Heng SHI, in the Fauré *Requiem*. After the concert the sides of the auditorium were miraculously cleared, tables set out and a glorious buffet arranged. This went on well into the following morning and apparently ended in 'music' with members of the Choeur Josquin des Prés singing *The Saints go Marching In & Auld Lang Syne* to the accompaniment of two WSO trombones and a trumpet!

Sunday was a day of relaxation with a rather cold trip along the river Seine followed by a convivial lunch in one of the numerous, Hippopotame Paris Restaurants and a brief visit to Notre Dame Cathedral. Tired but 'on a high' the players reached the Gare du Nord at 4.00pm and were home by 10.00pm.

An enormous amount of organisation had gone into making the visit a success but all agreed it had been well worth while, the journey had been quick and comfortable and the welcome unsurpassable.

### WSO Subscribers

The new WSO brochure for the 2009 -10 season comes out shortly. We hope that many of our audience will become subscribers and benefit from the discounted tickets available when booking for at least 3 out of the 4 concerts. Details will be on our web site [www.wso.org.uk](http://www.wso.org.uk) or from our ticket secretary **Mrs. Diana Billington, on 01926 850385, or 21 Fishponds Rd, Kenilworth, CV8 1EX**

#### WARWICKSHIRE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA COMMITTEE

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Jeremy Ballard

**The Volunteer Front of House Team**  
Bill Talbot, Margaret Rowlatt

**Stage Manager** - Paul Heskett



### Beyond the Stave!

"Not many composers have ideas. Far more of them know how to use strange instruments which do not require ideas."

George Gershwin - *The Composer in the Machine Age* 1930