

HELIX

ENSEMBLE

www.helixensemble.co.uk

Musical Director: Kenneth Woods

Emmanuel Church
Loughborough

Saturday 2nd July 2005
7.30 pm



Programme

Barber: Summer Music

Ives: Symphony No 3

----- Interval -----

Barber: Adagio

Piston: Sinfonietta

Helix Ensemble

Formed in 1992, the Helix Ensemble is a flexible group of experienced players from the East Midlands. Programmes aim to explore rarely performed chamber or small orchestral works alongside more traditional items for this combination. The Helix Ensemble also aims to introduce a variety of contemporary works and has given a number of first performances by composers in the region. In recognition of this programming policy, the Performing Right Society has twice awarded Helix an Enterprise Award.

The Helix Ensemble is grateful for the continued support of Arts Council England East Midlands, and Making Music who have made it possible to work in rehearsal with a variety of internationally-renowned soloists and conductors, including Ken Woods on this occasion. Thanks are also due to Emmanuel Church for their continued enthusiasm and support for our concerts at this venue.

Samuel Barber (1910 - 1981) Summer Music for Woodwind Quintet

At the age of nine, Samuel Barber wrote to his mother informing her that he was 'meant to be a composer'. In that letter, he begged her to not make him play football because he was 'not meant to be an athlete'. Barber spent his early years in West Chester, Pennsylvania in a largely conservative community where (at that time) musicians were looked upon with suspicion. In spite of this, Barber's family insisted on piano lessons for their children and Barber showed early talent, composing his own melodies at just six years old.

'Summer Music', written in 1956, was first performed at the Detroit Institute of the Arts in March that year. Originally it was commissioned by the Detroit Chamber Music Society as a septet (three wind, three strings, piano) to be performed by the principal players of the Detroit Symphony. Although Barber accepted this commission (because it was for a 'new' combination of instruments) he was actually greatly influenced by the New York Woodwind Quintet and chords: sonorities considered to be difficult to tune or 'sound' properly when played by an ensemble for combinations of wind instruments.

In composing 'Summer Music', Barber draws on the 'wind quintet' etudes written by Barrows (the French horn player in the New York Woodwind Quintet) as well as thematic material from 'Horizon', an orchestral piece with Arabian themes that he had written for NBC's Standard Oil Hour in 1946.

'Summer Music' is written in one movement rather than the usual three or four movement style of the day. It is a romantic and lyrical, 'nocturnal' sounding work with clever rhythmic shifts and sharp sounding harmonics.

Charles Ives (1874-1954) Symphony no. 3 'The Camp Meeting'

Piston and Barber were both masters of melodic writing, and each wrote innumerable memorable tunes in his career. Ives, however, seemed almost phobic about coming up with musical ideas and either in spite of, or because of this, became one of the most prolific innovators in the very innovative 20th Century.

Throughout his adult career he built songs, symphonies and suites over and over again out of patchworks of popular songs, hymns, folk songs, burlesque tunes, patriotic anthems and, occasionally, quotes from his earlier work. The Third Symphony is a case in point - much of it is based on earlier organ pieces Ives had written but discarded, called 'Prelude', 'Postlude', and 'Piece for Communion', all from 1901. Within a year he had begun the process of transforming these fragments into a full-length symphony which, it is believed, he finished in 1904 although Ives' habit of constantly revising and rather haphazard record keeping make that date somewhat uncertain. It is known that

in 1910 he prepared a new version, which Mahler (living in New York at the time) took home on his last trip to Austria before his death.

The first movement, called 'Old Folks Gatherin'' is based partly on three hymn tunes, 'Aznon', 'Erie' and 'Woodworth'. Aznon is a region south of the Promised Land in the Bible, and some critics believe that Ives also saw the camp meeting in this work as a place of deliverance and peace after an arduous journey. Ives was a church organist, and certainly knew traditional contrapuntal forms. It is no surprise that much of the movement is a fugue.

The second movement 'Children's Day' is also based on hymns, 'Naomi', 'The Happy Land' and 'Fountain'. Ives himself had a life-long fascination with the psychology of childhood, and this playful movement is one of many he wrote that seems to try to capture the freedom and excitement of true child's play.

The third and final movement, 'Communion' is based on the same thematic material as the first movement, creating a strong sense of structural unity in the work as a whole. Here, Ives seems to be exploring all of the many implications of the movement's title, from the Catholic symbolism of the Eucharist to the simple act of shared reflection and spirituality represented by the camp meeting. It is one of his most lyrical and spiritual works.

The Third Symphony was Ives' first major work to receive a public performance on April 5th 1946, 42 years after it was finished. The work won the Pulitzer Prize for composition that year and launched Ives to recognition as one of America's most important composers.

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Adagio for Strings

This well-known work is one part of a larger and very little-known one, his first String Quartet. This was written in 1936 for the Pro Arte Quartet, one of the great ensembles of the early 20th Century with a particularly great legacy in the music of their time. The original line-up, led by the Belgian violinist Alphonse Onnou, premiered quartets by Ravel, Bartok and Bloch as well as the Barber. Later, Rudolph Kolisch, a disciple of Schoenberg and leader of the Kolisch Quartet, took over first violin duties and the group took up the world's first-ever string quartet residency at the University of Wisconsin School of Music. Now under leadership of their fourth first violinist, the group is still in residence there today.

Seen through the prism of its origins as a quartet, the work appears as a more disciplined and thoughtful work than it is often perceived. Beneath its deeply moving and lyrical surface the piece has a formidably coherent structure. It begins with a long, melancholy melody in the first violin, underpinned by a chorale-like harmonization that gives the melody a rather antique quality. The first violin is then answered with the same melody in the viola, played a fifth

down, and gently commented on by the first violin. This statement of the melody is much more elaborate and fully developed than the first but eventually is followed by yet another statement of the theme, back in the original key, by the cello. The music builds in intensity as the second violin takes up the melody. The climax of this great arch is very powerful. Barber, who certainly knew his late Beethoven, has composed a great, harmonized fugue, built on one a subject so long and discursive that one might hear the work many times before realizing how it is put together. The mournful coda is built around a final statement of the original theme, this time (and this time only) scored with the first two voices, violin one and viola, playing in octaves in the original key.

Walter Piston (1894-1976)

Sinfonietta

An American composer and teacher, born in Rockland, Maine, Piston studied at Harvard, and in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, joining the faculty of Harvard in 1926 and becoming a Guggenheim Fellow in 1934. Piston, a neo-classicist composer, used traditional forms with sure technique and intellectual style. His works, often incorporating masterful counterpoint, include symphonies, suites for orchestra, a concertino for piano and orchestra, a violin concerto, a viola concerto, a toccata and a concerto for orchestra, a ballet, string quartets and other chamber music. For much of his life he taught composition, and was widely influential as an author of such books as *Principles of Harmonic Analysis* (1933), *Harmony* (1941, rev. ed. 1962), *Counterpoint* (1947), and *Orchestration* (1955).

In spite of his central position in American musical life during his career, and his close collaboration with many of the great conductors and performers of his day,

Piston remains a widely misunderstood and underappreciated figure nearly thirty years after his death. He was the author of eight major symphonies, and his achievements in these works alone show that he was a truly towering figure in American music. A consummate master of every aspect of compositional technique, his music is also distinguished by a rich melodic gift and a true sense of architecture and drama.

The Sinfonietta, premiered in Boston, was written in 1941 for the conductor Bernard Zighera. The first movement is typical of Piston's warm melodic style and sense of motion; the second is very dark and mysterious with a mournful solo for the oboe. The finale is truly virtuosic, with hints of neo-classical Stravinsky and maybe Hindemith. Still, it is his distinctive melodic voice that makes the strongest impression, and the work ends joyfully.

Kenneth Woods - Biography

Hailed by the Washington Post as an "up and coming conductor" and a "true star" of the podium, Kenneth Woods is Music Director and Conductor of the Oregon East Symphony and Chorale, and Principal Conductor of the Lancashire Chamber Orchestra. Recently completing three years as Music Director of the Grande Ronde Symphony Orchestra, his tenure included the orchestra's first broadcasts on radio and television. He has also been a member of the conducting staff at the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, serving as Conducting Assistant for the 1998-1999 season.

He has worked with many orchestras of international distinction including the National Symphony Orchestra, the Cincinnati Symphony, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Budapest Festival Orchestra and the State of Mexico Symphony Orchestra, where his most recent performance was filmed for broadcast on Mexican television. He has also appeared at some of the world's leading music festivals, including Aspen, Lucerne, Round Top and Scotia.

In 2001, Kenneth Woods was selected by Leonard Slatkin as one of four participants in the Kennedy Center National Conducting Institute. At the completion of the Institute, he led the National Symphony Orchestra in a debut concert, drawing great critical acclaim and a return invitation from the NSO. In 2000, David Zinman selected Kenneth Woods to be a fellow in the inaugural class of the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen. Toronto Symphony Music Director Designate Peter Oundjian has praised Woods as "a conductor with true vision and purpose. He has a most fluid and clear style and an excellent command on the podium... a most complete musician."

Kenneth Woods' activities as a conductor include symphonic concerts, opera, ballet, new music and pops. He conducted the Cincinnati Contemporary Music Ensemble on their 1998 tour to Portugal, including their appearance at the 100 Days Festival, where he was also featured as a cellist. Woods' activities as an active proponent of contemporary music include collaborations as a conductor or cellist with such figures as John Corigliano, Krystopf Penderecki, Peter Lieberman, Oliver Knussen and many others

As a cellist he has been recipient of the Aspen Fellowship (Mr. Woods has received the Aspen Fellowship as both a cellist and conductor), the Dale Gilbert Award (the only musician to win this award in consecutive years), the Strelow Quartet Fellowship, the National Endowment for the Arts Rural residency Grant and has recorded and toured extensively as soloist and chamber musician.

HELIX Ensemble

Forthcoming Helix Ensemble Concerts:

Musical Director **Kenneth Woods**

Violin	Matt Byrne Andrew Chadwick Sarah Cresswell Karen Eveson George Fletcher Sarah Mozley George Sutcliffe Morag Thomson	Flute	Jane Bevan Jo Conquest
		Oboe	Sophie Hebden Ian Watson
		Clarinet	Susan Lansdale Andy Piper
Viola	Pete Johnston Mark Lansdale Elin Roddy	Bassoon	Sophie Hassleman Shelagh Thomson
		Horn	Julian Haslam Roger Swann
Cello	Pete Brien Margaret Chadwick Vivien Williams	Trombone	Alex Hewins
Bass	Arwyn Jones		

Saturday 24 September 2005

**All Saints' Church,
Cotgrave**

Bartok Divertimento for Strings
Elgar Elegie
Spohr Nonet

Conductor: David Greed

Saturday 12th November 2005

**St Andrew's Church,
Kegworth**

Sunday 13th November 2005

**Beth Shalom
Holocaust Centre,
Laxton**

‘Words and Music to Remember’

Cohen Serenata Malinconica
Elgar Elegie
Schoenberg Chamber Symphony No 2

Conductor: Jacques Harry Cohen



If you would like any further information about the Helix Ensemble, and future concerts, please visit our regularly updated website at:

www.helixensemble.co.uk