



AN ENGLISH ROMP

Friday, May 21, 2021 at 7:30 pm • Saturday, May 22, 2021 at 7:30 pm
Sunday, May 23, 2021 at 2:30 pm

ALLEN-BRADLEY HALL

Ken-David Masur, conductor



RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Concerto Grosso for String Orchestra

- I. Intrada
- II. Burlesca Ostinata
- III. Sarabande
- IV. Scherzo
- V. March and Reprise

EDWARD ELGAR

Serenade in E minor for String Orchestra, Opus 20

- I. Allegro piacevole
- II. Larghetto
- III. Allegretto

GUSTAV HOLST

St. Paul's Suite for Orchestra

- I. Jig
- II. Ostinato
- III. Dance
- IV. Finale (The Dargason)

ERIC EWAZEN

Colchester Fantasy

- I. The Rose and Crown
- II. The Marquis of Granby
- III. The Dragoon
- IV. The Red Lion

Dietrich Hemann, horn
Matthew Ernst, trumpet
David Cohen, trumpet
Megumi Kanda, trombone
Robert Black, tuba

The Reimagined Season is sponsored by the **United Performing Arts Fund**.
The Classics Series is sponsored by **Rockwell Automation**.

AN ENGLISH ROMP

Program Notes by J. Mark Baker

The picturesque “land of hope and glory” inspired its composers to create music that reflected their country’s beauty. The lush – but often vivacious – sounds of Elgar, Holst, and Vaughan Williams are joined by American composer Eric Ewazen’s *Colchester Fantasy*, a brass quintet whose four movements are named after four pubs in that English hamlet.

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Born 12 October 1872; Down Ampney, England

Died 26 August 1958; London, England

Concerto Grosso for String Orchestra

Composed: 1950

First performance: 18 November 1950; London, England

Instrumentation: strings



Ralph Vaughan Williams was the most important English composer of his generation – that between Elgar and Britten – and a key figure in the revival of English music. His voluminous compositional output includes nine symphonies and other orchestral pieces, operas, songs, choral music, film and theater music, and chamber music, as well as Christmas carols and hymn tunes. Among his best-known works are *The Lark Ascending*, *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, *Fantasia on “Greensleeves,”* and the Symphony No. 1 (“A Sea Symphony”).

World War II made Vaughan Williams more determined than ever that people should have access to music, both as listeners and as amateur performers, supporting lunchtime concerts and the continuation – on a reduced scale – of music festivals. In the years after the war, he kept up his habit of practical music-making, fulfilling several commissions for large-scale community events. The Concerto Grosso for String Orchestra was one of these, premiered at the Royal Albert Hall by a massed orchestra of over 400 student players – under the auspices of the Rural Music Schools Association. Eschewing the spot offered him in the Royal Box, Vaughan Williams chose to sit among the second violins. Sir Adrian Boult was on the podium.

The Concerto Grosso divides the players into three groups: Concertino, a group of advanced players; Tutti, requiring third position and simple double stops; Ad lib., for less experienced players, including special parts for those using only open strings. Though its purpose was largely educational, the work is distinguished in its own right. In choosing the title Concerto Grosso, Vaughan Williams was borrowing a term from the Baroque era, a type of concerto in which a small group of instruments (concertino) is contrasted with the main body of players.

Cast in five movements, the work as a whole projects good spirits and jocosity. The opening Intrada (introduction) is set in D major, with divided strings providing a richly hued tonal palette. In the Burlesca Ostinato, Vaughan Williams alternates between D minor and D major, using an obstinately (ostinato) repeated tonic-to-dominant-to-tonic bass-line, above which he fashions an amusing, sprightly movement. The central G-minor Sarabande takes its inspiration from one of the most popular of Baroque-era instrumental dances; slow and dignified, it is the emotional heart of the concerto. The Scherzo – by turn energetic, lyrical, and witty – feels almost like an out-of-breath waltz. The final March is back in the opening key of D major, and a verbatim reprise of the Intrada follows.

Edward Elgar

Born 2 June 1857; Broadheath, England

Died 23 February 1934; Worcester, England

Serenade in E minor for String Orchestra, Opus 20

Composed: 1892

First performance: March 1892;

Worcester Ladies' Orchestra Class

First public performance: 21 July 1896; Antwerp, Belgium

Instrumentation: strings



In 1889, Edward Elgar and his new wife Alice moved to London from provincial Malvern. His goal was to establish himself as a composer, but his music went largely unperformed. No students came. He felt defeated and somewhat humiliated. In June 1891, they retreated to Malvern, where he began to make a reputation more steadily with choral/orchestral works such as *The Black Knight*, *The Light of Life*, *King Olaf*, and *Caractacus*. His steady growth as a composer across the 1890s paved the way to his fully formed original style, one that would encompass such renowned works as the *Enigma Variations*, the two symphonies, and the oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*.

The Serenade for String Orchestra was written in 1892, but it is almost certainly a reworking of Three Pieces, now lost, that he composed in 1888: Spring Song; Elegy; Finale. These titles seem to align well with the movements of his Opus 20. The opening Allegro piacevole (piacevole = pleasant, agreeable) is cast in a lilting 6/8 meter; sighing phrases rise and fall above a gently undulating accompaniment. The C major Larghetto seems to presage the "Nimrod" movement of the *Enigma Variations* (1899); the violins sing their *molto espressivo* melody above yearning harmonies. Set in G major, the final Allegretto eventually segues to music that opened the work, and comes to rest on a hushed E major triad.

Throughout his life, Elgar cited the Serenade as one of his favorite works, perhaps because it had been inspired by his beloved Alice. After submitting the work to the British publishing firm Novello, the manuscript was returned with a note that said "...this class of music is practically unsalable." Thankfully, the German publisher Breitkopf was more foresighted and accepted it. It became Elgar's first full score in print. With a twinkle in his eye, he once described it as "really stringy in effect," and it was one of the last pieces he recorded.

Gustav Holst

Born 21 September 1874; Cheltenham, England
Died 25 May 1934; London, England

St. Paul's Suite for Orchestra

Composed: 1912-13

First performance: c1913; London, England

Instrumentation: 2 flutes; oboe; 2 clarinets;
horn; timpani; strings



Born into a musical household, Gustavus Theodore von Holst's family tree had its roots in Scandinavia, Russia, and Germany. (He anglicized his name in the course of WWI.) In his teens, he entered London's Royal Academy of Music, where he studied composition with C.V. Stanford. There, he met fellow student Ralph Vaughan Williams. The two immediately became fast friends and began the lifelong habit of playing their newest works-in-progress to each other. In addition to his well-known suite *The Planets*, Holst's compositional catalogue boasts other fine orchestral music, several operas, chamber music, songs, and a plethora of sublime choral music.

Throughout his adult life, Holst was a teacher – and an influential one. That profession took up most of his time, allowing him to compose only on weekends and in August, when he worked undisturbed in his soundproof music room at St. Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith. Appointed director of music there in 1905, it was the only teaching post he kept to the end of his life.

Since there were few worthwhile school music compositions to be found in publishers' catalogues, Holst had to provide his own material. His best-known student work is the *St. Paul's Suite*, originally scored for string orchestra. He wrote it as thank-you for the soundproof studio the school had built for him. As he later explained, "By the time it was finished and copied, the orchestra possessed wind instruments. Parts for the latter were added." It is this orchestral setting that we will hear on this concert. (His daughter Imogen wrote that he happily continued to add optional wind parts to the piece to accommodate students who wanted to play in the school orchestra.)

The opening Jig sets a vivacious mood, alternating 6/8 and 9/8 rhythmic patterns. The fast, feather-light Ostinato features a relentless eighth-note figure and pizzicato bass. Above the muted strings, a solo violin sings out a waltz-like theme; a middle section in duple meter provides charming contrast. In the Intermezzo (Dance), slow lyrical sections alternate with agile, rhythmic dancing. The Finale is based on a folk dance entitled "The Dargason." It is cast in 6/8 meter against which, after several variations, Holst counterpoints "Greensleeves" in 3/4. It wasn't the last time the old boy would employ such a trick – and it works wondrously well here.

Eric Ewazen

Born 1 March 1954; Cleveland, Ohio

Colchester Fantasy

Composed: 1987; revised 2006

First performance: 24 February 1988; New York, New York

Instrumentation: horn; 2 trumpets; trombone; tuba



Ohio native Eric Ewazen has received numerous composition awards and prizes. His works have been commissioned and performed by many soloists, chamber ensembles, and orchestras in the United States and abroad. A graduate of both the Eastman School of Music (BM) and The Juilliard School (MM, DMA), his teachers include Milton Babbitt, Samuel Adler, Joseph Schwantner, and Gunther Schuller. He has been on the composition faculty of The Juilliard School since 1982.

Colchester Fantasy was composed for the American Brass Quintet in the summer of 1987, when Ewazen was teaching at the Estherwood Music Festival in Colchester, England. Each movement of the suite is named after an old pub there. The composer has supplied the following program notes:

Colchester is the oldest recorded town in Britain. It has an old Roman wall, a massive Norman castle, picturesque homes and churches, and, as in all decent English towns, colorful old pubs...

The first movement, "The Rose and Crown," is filled with bright, sonorous chords, energetic rhythmic patterns, and constantly changing and fluctuating motives. The second movement "The Marquis of Granby" (a name I associated with a distant, faded aristocracy) is a stately, chorale-like movement with somber, plaintive themes.

The third movement, "The Dragoon," brings forth the sounds of battle with dissonant, clashing harmonies, agitated rhythms, and fragmented melodies. To close the work, the fourth movement, "The Red Lion" (a name with its intimations of royalty and nobility) is a resonant fugue, propelled forward with motoric motion, and a rapid, spinning fugue theme. These old English pubs of Colchester were a fine source of inspiration. Their names brought to my mind images of ancient and historical traditions, and impressions of the grandeur and majesty of time past. The beer was good, too!

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In memory of Todd Levy's Mother

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In memory of Hans Schwark

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In memory of Eileen M. Sukawaty

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In honor of Peter Thomas

Susi and Dick Stoll

In honor of Emily Wacker Schultz

Kathy and Russ Schultz

**In honor of Barbara Weigner in celebration
of her 84th Birthday. And our 70 years of
friendship, initially nurtured by our mutual
participation in high school orchestra**

Marjorie Sutton

In memory of Mary Lee Winnie

Ms. Rebecca R. Winnie

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**MYSO, Progressions, Photo by Ron Oshima.
Skylight Music Theatre, Andrew Varela,
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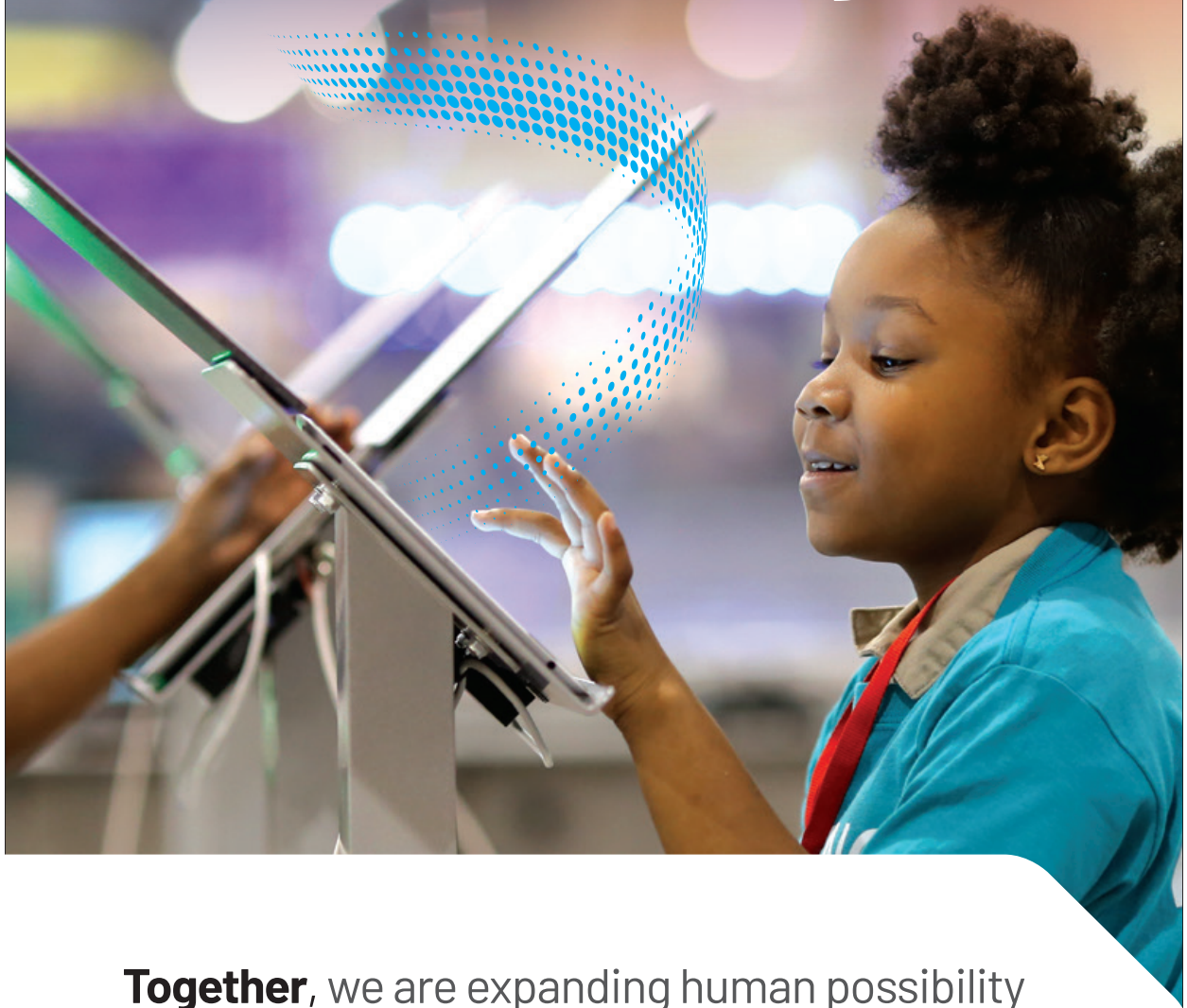
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