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Benjamin Powell

## Benjamin up for university concert

LEADING pianist **Benjamin Powell** joins the University of Hertfordshire's resident orchestra, the **de Havilland Philharmonic**, at a concert on Sunday.

Benjamin, winner of the prestigious 2010 British Contemporary Piano Competition, will join the

orchestra to perform **Shostakovich's** uncharacteristically cheerful *Piano Concerto No. 2*.

Equally at home in chamber music, song and solo recitals, Benjamin has performed across the UK and Europe in venues including the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore

Hall and Bridgewater Hall.

The concert opens with **Rachmaninov's** symphonic poem *Isle of the Dead*, considered a fine example of late romanticism from the early 20th Century.

It will close with **Stravinsky's** *Rite of Spring* which dates from 1913 and has been described

as one of the most groundbreaking works of the last century.

The concert starts at 7.30pm in the **Weston Auditorium** in Hatfield. Tickets priced between £6 and £20 are available from the UHArts box office on 01707 281127 or online at [www.herts.ac.uk/artsandgalleries](http://www.herts.ac.uk/artsandgalleries)

# All the components come together for orchestra

WHEN an orchestra consistently performs at the standard achieved by **Amadeus**, the St Albans Chamber Orchestra, it is clear that it is made up of fine individual musicians.

And to emphasise the point, the orchestra's concert at **St Peter's Church** in St Albans on Saturday was designed to show off some of its very best artists.

Central to a delightful programme were two works which really displayed the qualities of some of the members, **Haydn's** fine *Sinfonia Concertante in B flat major* and **Gounod's** delightful *Petite Symphonie for Wind*.

The *Sinfonia Concertante* is a real showpiece for the orchestra's leader, violinist **Jennifer Wigram**, together with section leaders, bassoonist **Colin Beak**, oboist **Sarah Devonald** and cellist **Vivian Williams**.

The work is a delightful conversation between the four instruments and also between them and the rest of the orchestra and under conductor **Simon Thompson**, the result was a tremendous success.

The four soloists each gave top-class performances worthy of far more prestigious concert halls than St Peter's Church and the overall support from the orchestra was at exactly the standard one has come to expect from Amadeus.

Gounod's *Petite Symphonie*, written for a wind octet – pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns plus a flute – is another dazzling showcase for the musicians, and in particular once more for Sarah Devonald who lead the group and flautist **Judith Hill** who, between them, produced some very fine duets and solo moments.

Wrapping around the two showpiece works were **Benjamin Britten's** outstanding, but all too rarely heard *Simple Symphony for Strings*, with its happy pizzicato second movement and the beautiful *Sarabande* which makes up the third movement and, at the end of the concert, **Mozart's** *Symphony No 39 in E flat major*.

The Mozart symphony is the least popular of the three he wrote in 1788 but nonetheless it is a fine work and, along with the *Simple Symphony*, Amadeus's members gave a first class performance.

It is always a pleasure to listen to a performance by Amadeus and Saturday's concert was all the sweeter for the exposure it gave to some of the individuals in this group of very talented and able musicians.

JOHN MANNING



James McVinnie

## Lunch with James

ASSISTANT Organist of Westminster Abbey, **James McVinnie**, is giving next Wednesday's lunchtime concert at **St Peter's Church** in St Albans.

He has held organ scholarships at St Albans Abbey and Clare College, Cambridge, where he read music.

In 2006 he became Organ Scholar and then acting Sub-Organist of St Paul's Cathedral. He teaches the organ at Tonbridge School and Cambridge University and is also Director of Music at St Andrew's, Holborn.

Last year James accompanied the St Albans Abbey Girls' Choir on their extended tour of the USA.

The concert starts at 1pm and there will be a retiring collection in aid of Grove House Hospice.



Five Star Swing are at Harpenden Public Hall next Sunday

## Star will be shining bright at Public Halls

**THE FIVE Star Swing** experience heads back to **Harpden Public Halls** next Sunday, February 13, following their recent appearance at Dame Vera Lynn's charity ball in London.

The show entitled **In The Mood** features a host of classic big band/swing songs from artists such as Frank Sinatra and Glenn Miller through to Jools Holland-style jazz.

Appearing are former Ivy Benson musician Simone Smith and her husband Chris from the band of Glenn Miller's brother Herb.

Chris said: "I've been brought up with this style of music as my father, Chris Smith Snr, played trombone for Frank Sinatra on his European tours.

## Everything from B to B for chamber choir

**BRAHMS to Britten** – and several composers in between – are at the heart of the third concert in the current season by **Carillon Chamber Choir**.

It is being held at 7.30pm next Saturday, February 12, at **St Peter's Church**, St Albans, and the choir is welcoming back **Andrew Parnell** as conductor.

The former Assistant Master of the Music at St Albans Abbey is now a freelance musician.

**Brahms to Britten - A Musical Lineage**, opens with Brahms's *Geistliches Lied* for chorus and organ followed by his motet *Warum ist das Licht gegeben?* for

unaccompanied chorus which is generally regarded as his finest choral piece and one of the choral masterpieces of the 19th Century.

The choir will then move on to the work of **Charles Villiers Stanford** who was influenced by Brahms and Wagner amongst others. They will perform his rarely-heard *Three English Motets* for unaccompanied choir.

Carillon are also turning their attention to **Frank Bridge** who studied with Stanford at the turn of the 20th century and is chiefly known for his orchestral works, chamber music and songs. They will be singing an adaptation of *A Prayer*, one of his very few

choral pieces written for chorus and orchestra which will be performed for chorus and organ.

The final items will be the *Festival Te Deum* and the *Hymn to St Peter* for chorus and organ by **Benjamin Britten** who was Frank Bridge's most distinguished pupil.

The organ accompanist will be **Tom Winpenny**, current Assistant Master of the Music at the Abbey, who will also play organ solos by Stanford and Bridge.

Tickets are £12 with students and pensioners £10, available in advance by calling 01582 763774 or on the door on the night.

## Choirs to join forces

TWO choirs are joining forces next Saturday, February 12, to put on a concert at **St Albans Abbey**.

**The Aeolian Singers** and **The Hardyngs Choir** will be joined by St Albans violinist **Ellie Fagg** to perform the **Mozart** *Violin Concerto in A Major* at the concert which starts at 7.30pm.

It is the first time the two choirs have combined to put on a major concert at the Abbey and they will be singing under the musical directorship of **Stephen Jones** from the Aeolian Singers.

The concert will open with the **Haydn** *Te Deum* followed by the *Violin Concerto* which has often been called an opera in concerto guise. The programme will finish with the **Mozart** *Mass in C Minor*, a religious musical work for chorus and orchestra.

The choirs will be joined by the **Herts Classical Orchestra** and the soloists will be **Elizabeth Cragg**, soprano, **Frances Bourne**, soprano, **Anthony Gregory**, tenor, and **Edward Grint**, bass.

Tickets are £25, £20 and £15 reserved and £5 unreserved. Accompanied under 16s are £3 and tickets can be obtained from either 01442 871598 or 01582 763113.

## New singers welcome

A CHOIR for women over 60 is looking for a few more members when it goes back into rehearsal after a well-earned rest.

The **Senior Singers Choir** have most recently sung at St Luke's Church, Marshalswick Baptist Church and the Old Folks Welfare Centre and will be starting their spring term on later this month.

The choir is accompanied by **Simon Gargrave** and the conductor is **Valerie Robertson** who has been with them since the outset.

They meet from 10am until midday every Thursday morning at **St Albans Music School** in Townsend Drive and new members are welcome to go along.

## Acting up for Austen

ACTRESS **Rebecca Vaughan**, who lives in St Albans, is performing in the play **Austen's Women**, which she also adapted, at the **Old Town Hall Theatre** in Hemel Hempstead High Street next Wednesday, February 9.

Looking at the question of how life has really changed for women since Jane Austen created some of literature's most celebrated characters, Rebecca revisits the most rewarding moments from all six major novels including *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* as well as lesser works such as *Juvenilia* and the unfinished *Sanditon*.

In scenes of both comedy and pathos Rebecca, who has done both TV and film work, deconstructs the souls of Emma Woodhouse, Lizzy Bennet, Mrs Norris, Miss Bates and nine other of Austen's women.

The show was a sell-out success at Edinburgh in 2009 and in Adelaide in 2010 and is directed with another St Albans favourite **Guy Masterson**, whose credits include the Olivier Award-winning *Morecambe*.

The performance begins at 8pm and tickets are £12 with concessions £10, available from the box office on 01442 228091 or online at [www.oldtownhall.co.uk](http://www.oldtownhall.co.uk)