

# **REDBRIDGE MUSIC SOCIETY**

## **‘INTRODUCTION TO THE HARP’**

**OLIVER WASS (harpist)**



**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2016 8 pm**

**Churchill Room, Wanstead Library  
Spratt Hall Road, Wanstead E11 2RQ**

## PROGRAMME

Spanish Dance No.1 from <i>La Vida Breve</i>	Manuel de Falla (1876 – 1946)
Lute Suite No.1 BWV 996	J.S. Bach (1685 – 1750)
Suite for Harp in C major Op.83: (i) Overture (ii) Toccata	Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)

## INTERVAL

Jeux d'eau	Maurice Ravel (1875 – 1937)
Romeo and Juliet: (i) Friar Lawrence (ii) The Young Juliet (iii) Romeo bids Juliet Farewell	Serge Prokofiev (1891 – 1953)
The Carnival of Venice	Wilhelm Posse (1852 – 1925)

## PROGRAMME NOTES

**Manuel de Falla** (1876 – 1946) is regarded as one of the most influential of Spanish composers. It was during his studies with Felipe Pedrell in Madrid that he became interested in native Spanish music – music that influenced much of his work. His short opera *La Vida Breve* (*The Brief Life*) was first performed in 1913 and although seldom performed today, arrangements of orchestral sections from the opera, such as the *spanish dances*, are popular at concerts of Spanish music.

**J.S. Bach** (1685 – 1750) J S Bach is generally regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time and revered by generations of composers that followed him. Brahms famously said “Study Bach! There you’ll find everything”. He composed his *Lute Suite No.1 in E minor*, BWV 996 between 1708 and 1717 probably intending it for the lute-harpsichord (not a very common instrument). The work consists of six movements: prelude: (passagio – presto), allemande, courante, sarabande, bourrée and gigue. (The bourrée is especially well known in an arrangement for guitar).

**Benjamin Britten** (1913 – 1976) As a composer, conductor and accompanist, Benjamin Britten was a major figure of 20th-century British classical music and was known particularly for his opera *Peter Grimes* (1945), the *War Requiem* (1962) and *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* (1945). The *Suite for Harp* is a key work in the canon of harp compositions. Traditionally, works for harp are famed for roulades, cascades, rolled chords etc but in the

*Suite for Harp* Britten eschews these features and presents the harp in a unique way. The *Suite* is a very demanding and taxing piece for the harpist. It was written in 1969 and premiered in the same year at the Aldeburgh Festival by Britten's friend, the Welsh classical harpist Osian Ellis.

The suite has five movements. This evening we hear the first and second of these – overture and toccata.

**Maurice Ravel** (1875 – 1937) *Jeux d'eau* ("Fountains or " "Playing water" ) was originally written for solo piano. It was dedicated to Ravel's teacher Gabriel Fauré and was first publicly performed in 1902 by pianist Ricardo Viñes. It is an evocative and atmospheric piece that was inspired by the sounds of sprays and cascades of running water. It was also inspired by Liszt's *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este*. On the original manuscript Ravel quoted from Henri de Régnier's *Cité des eaux* - "The River God laughing as the water tickles him.....". Tonight Oliver Wass will play his own transcription of the work

**Sergei Prokofiev** (1891 – 1953) Prokofiev wrote the music to his ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (based on the Shakespeare play) in 1935 and subsequently reused music from the ballet in three suites for orchestra and a solo piano work *Ten Pieces for Piano, Op.75*. We will hear three items transcribed for harp (i) Friar Lawrence (ii) The Young Juliet, and (iii) Romeo bids Juliet Farewell.

**Wilhelm Posse** (1852 – 1925) was a German harpist and composer. He received his early musical training from his father, a military bandmaster, and taught himself the harp before taking lessons from the harp virtuoso Louis Grimm, principal harpist in the Royal Musical Establishment in Berlin. Posse taught at the Berlin Musikhochschule and his advice on the technical aspects of writing for the harp was sought after by composers such as Richard Strauss; he was held in the highest regard by Liszt. His variations on the folk tune *The Carnival of Venice* is a popular piece for the harp.

## BIOGRAPHY

Oliver graduated from the University of York with a First Class Honours degree in Chemistry and is currently in his first year of a Masters Degree at the GSMD (Guildhall School of Music & Drama) for which he was awarded a full scholarship to study with Imogen Barford.

In May 2016, he became the first harpist ever to win the Guildhall Gold Medal, the Guildhall's most prestigious prize. (Previous winners of the competition include Jacqueline de Pré, Bryn Terfel and Tasmin Little). He is an experienced soloist and has performed numerous concertos, including directing the Handel Harp Concerto in the Barbican Hall. He has also performed concertos at the London Handel Festival, the City of London Festival, with the Oxford Sinfonia, and with the World Chamber Orchestra (where critics called his performance 'divine').

Oliver recently won both the Grand Prize and the Audience Prize at the St Martin-in-the-Fields Chamber Music Competition with his flute-violin-harp trio, *The Pelléas Ensemble*. They have also won 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the British Harp Chamber Music Competition, and have been selected for representation by the Tillett Trust. They have upcoming concerts at St John's Smith Square, the Two Moors Festival, and for the United Kingdom Harp Association.

Oliver competed in and won music festivals throughout his childhood. He studied with Charlotte Seale at the Junior Department of the GSMD, where he became the only harpist to have been a prizewinner in the prestigious Lutine Competition, and he was Principal Harp in the National Youth Orchestra. He is a 2016 St John's Smith Square Young Artist, and will be giving recitals throughout the 2016/17 season. Oliver will make his Wigmore Hall debut in November 2016.

Recently (13<sup>th</sup> May 2016), Oliver played his own transcription of Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* on the Radio 3 programme 'In Tune' presented by Suzy Klein. To hear this, go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03v0qdy> (ctrl + click)

Oliver is very grateful for support from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust, and Help Musicians UK, where he holds a Fleming Award.

### ***Redbridge Music Society 2016-17 Season***

*For the forthcoming 2016-17 season, Redbridge Music Society will present eight live monthly recitals from October 2016 to May 2017 at the Lambourne Room (Ilford) and Wanstead Library venues. Details will be announced on our website <http://redbridgemusicsociety.org.uk>*

*For further information about the society and for details about membership, please contact either: Malcolm Billingsley (Secretary) Tel: 020 8504 6340 Email: [vitaphone16@gmail.com](mailto:vitaphone16@gmail.com) or David Bird (Membership Secretary) Tel: 07511 888 520 Email: [bird.d@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bird.d@tiscali.co.uk)*

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