

Program

Notes

Brook Green Suite

Gustav Holst (1874 - 1934)

The Brook Green was written in 1933 when Gustav Holst was staying in the hospital; a chamber composition written for his students at St Paul's Girls School where he was the music teacher for twenty years.

Gustav Holst was born in 1874 in Cheltenham, England. He studied composition with Charles Stanford at the Royal College of Music who found him hardworking but not at all gifted in his craft, and their lessons were not often enjoyable. He later met Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1895 and they quickly became close friends. While he was at college, he also learned Sanskrit and developed a serious interest in the language. He was also an accomplished trombone player and earned a living playing in the Carl Rosa Opera Company and later Scottish Opera. More popular Holst's compositions include the St Paul's Suite, The Planets, Lyric Movement for solo viola and orchestra, among others.

We do not know how Holst came up with name Brook Green Suite but it is believed that he named it after the location of his wedding to his wife, Isobel, in 1901; or it could well have also been named after the brook near his school, St Paul's Girls' College. The suite has three movements: *Prelude, Air and Dance*. The Prelude is predominated by descending C major scales in both the violas and the cellos. The melody of the Air reminds listeners of some English folksong but it was actually an original Holst's tune, same as the melody in his choral work "*This Have I Done For My True Love*". The final movement is a gigue (a dance written in 6/8 metre) and the melody was based on music he heard while he was in Sicily. Holst heard the premiere of this composition in March 1934 with the St Paul's Girls School orchestra performing, the final concert that he attended before he died in May of the same year.

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Notes

Serenade for Strings, Op.22

Antonin Dvorak (1841 - 1904)

Antonin Dvorak was born in Nelahozeves, near Prague, and spent most of his life there except for three years (1892-1895) where he was the Music Director at the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. Dvorak was a musical genius who could play the organ, violin/viola and for a while, he was a violist in the Bohemian Provisional Theatre Orchestra.

Dvorak's music has a very distinctive Slavic flavour and this is probably the reason why he is considered as one of the more prominent nationalistic composers of his native land. His other major compositions include numerous Slavonic dances for orchestra, nine symphonies, the famous B minor cello concerto, the "*American*" string quartet and the "*Dumky*" trio, among others.

Dvorak's Serenade for Strings was written in 1875 and it was rumoured that he wrote it in twelve days. It was premiered in Prague on December 10, 1876 under the direction of Adolf Cech with musicians from Czech and German theatre orchestras.

There are five movements in this serenade: Moderato, Tempo de Valse, Scherzo, Larghetto and Finale: Allegro Vivace. The work begins with a lovely melody in the cellos and then gradually transforms into a dance-like middle section and returns to the opening cello melody to conclude the movement. The second movement is a Valse (Waltz) with a Trio middle section and once again, the return of the Valse brings the movement to an end. The Scherzo movement is a very lively and energetic movement which keeps the listeners on their toes. The main theme of the slow movement, Larghetto, is idyllic and mellow. The theme of the third movement keeps reappearing in this movement. A powerful Finale concludes the serenade with themes from previous movements taking turns in their reappearances. In general, each movement is written in binary (ABA) form.

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Notes

"La Bizarre" Suite Georg Philipp Telemann (1681 - 1767)

Georg Philipp Telemann was born in Magdeburg, Germany, and grew up in an upper-middle class family. But unfortunately, his mother was not supportive of his desire to pursue a career as a musician /composer. In fact, he attended law school for a while before he decided to totally dedicate his life to music. According to music scholars, Telemann was considered to be the most prolific composer of all time with more than a thousand cantatas attributed to him (many more were either lost during World War II or, still hidden in library archives in Europe). He was even more popular and in demand as a composer than Bach was, during his lifetime.

Telemann taught himself how to play many different instruments such as the organ, violin, recorder and even the bass trombone. His major compositions include the popular Tafelmusik, Viola Concerto in G Major, and numerous orchestral suites and concertos for various instruments.

"La Bizarre" Suite is one of many orchestral suites written by Telemann. It has nine movements with an opening overture followed by a number of French Baroque dances. The reason why Telemann named this suite "La Bizarre" is because of the irregular rhythmic patterns that he has incorporated in the music. For example, there are passages in the opening movement where the violins and the orchestra's accompaniment are playing in different metres; a very unusual composition technique in the 18th century. Another "Bizarre" moment was the way that he used the seventh chords - a very unconventional practice in Telemann's time. However, the definition of *"bizarre"* is very different than what we consider it is today. Unfortunately, it is not an easy task for listeners to identify Telemann's clever craftsmanship in this composition unless you are either part of the ensemble or following the score while the music is playing.