

NAXOS

HOLST

Double Concerto

St Paul's Suite • Brook Green Suite

Janice Graham, Violin • Sarah Ewins, Violin

Andriy Viytovych, Viola • Anna Pyne, Flute

Philip Harmer, Oboe

English Sinfonia • Howard Griffiths



**Gustav
HOLST**
(1874-1934)

	Brook Green Suite, H190	6:01
1	Prelude	1:37
2	Air	2:04
3	Dance	2:20
4	A Song of the Night for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 19, No. 1/H74	8:14
	St Paul's Suite, Op. 29, No. 2/H118	12:26
5	Jig: Vivace	3:12
6	Ostinato: Presto	1:57
7	Intermezzo: Andante con moto - Vivace	3:58
8	Finale (The Dargason): Allegro	3:18
9	Lyric Movement for Viola and Chamber Orchestra, H191	11:32
	A Fugal Concerto for Flute, Oboe and Strings, Op. 40, No. 2/H152	8:26
10	Moderato	2:09
11	Adagio	3:18
12	Allegro	2:58
	Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestra, Op. 49/H175	11:54
13	Scherzo: Allegro	4:45
14	Lament: Andante	4:53
15	Variations on a Ground: Allegro	5:16

Gustav Holst (1874-1934): Brook Green Suite • Lyric Movement • Double Concerto St Paul's Suite • A Song of the Night • A Fugal Concerto

The English composer Gustav Holst was the son of a musician and descended from a family of mixed Scandinavian, German and Russian origin that had settled in England in the early nineteenth century. His childhood was spent in Cheltenham, where his father supervised his study of the piano. A later period at the Royal College of Music in London brought a lasting friendship with Ralph Vaughan Williams, an association that was to the advantage of both in their free criticism and discussion of one another's compositions.

It was in part a weakness in health, as well as financial necessity, that prompted Holst for a time to earn his living as a trombonist, touring with the Carl Rosa Opera Company and playing with the Scottish Orchestra. Eventually he decided to devote himself, as far as possible, to composition. Teaching positions, and particularly his long association with St Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith, and his work as director of music for the enthusiastic amateurs at Morley College, allowed him some time, at least in the summer holidays, but the relatively even tenor of his life, which suited his diffident character, was considerably disturbed by the great popular success of *The Planets*, which had its first complete public performance in 1920. His later music never achieved such a lasting triumph with the public, although his Shakespearian opera *At the Boar's Head* aroused respectful interest at the time, while other works generally had a mixed critical reception, including his 1927 *Egdon Heath*, published as a tribute to Thomas Hardy. His *St Paul's Suite*, written for the well known girls' school in Hammersmith, retains a firm place in string orchestra repertoire, as does the later *Brook Green Suite*, and the 1917 *Hymn of Jesus* for choruses and orchestra has an honourable position in English choral music.

Holst's later years brought engagements that overtaxed his strength, not least a stimulating and busy period in the United States, where his music was welcomed and where he conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a series of three concerts of his own works and taught and composed during a short period at Harvard, lecturing on Haydn at the Library of Congress in Washington. He also took the opportunity to visit his younger brother Emil, established in America as an actor under the name of Ernest Cossart. By June the following year, 1932, he was in England again, able to entertain his brother, with whom he visited scenes from their childhood. His time in America had brought a temporary break in hospital, and when he returned to England his health was uncertain, leading to further periods in hospital. He succeeded, however, in completing the *Brook Green Suite* and the *Lyric Movement* for viola and orchestra. He died on 25th May 1934, after a major operation, and is buried in Chichester Cathedral, where his music had often been heard, near the grave of his favourite Tudor composer, Thomas Weelkes.

Holst wrote his *Brook Green Suite* during the last year of his life during a period in hospital. It was dedicated to the St Paul's Girls' School Junior Orchestra and scored primarily for strings, with optional additional parts for flute, oboe and clarinet. As so often with Holst there is a prevailing suggestion of English folk-song in each of the three movements, the first of which, *Prelude*, presents its principal theme over a pattern of descending scales, at first for cello and double bass, and then also for viola. The first violin melody of the *Air* is accompanied initially by the plucked notes of the other instruments, before the viola takes up the theme. A secondary melody, marked *Poco*

animato, is introduced, before the principal theme is heard again from the cello, followed by the first violins. The viola takes up the *Poco animato* theme before the brief closing section. The third movement, *Dance*, is said to be based on a melody heard in Sicily, but is presented in very characteristically English form.

A Song of the Night, for violin and orchestra, was written in 1905. Originally designated *Opus 19*, it became *Opus 19, No. 1*, after the composition of *Invocation, Op. 19, No. 2*, for cello and orchestra, written in 1911 and at first bearing the title *A Song of Evening*. *A Song of the Night* was first published fifty years after Holst's death. The work starts with a violin cadenza, with the French horns and lower strings entering in accompaniment before an *Andante* theme is stated, a melody prefigured in the initial cadenza. The solo violin offers increasingly elaborate material, while the wind instruments of the orchestra, followed by the strings, present their own version of the thematic material from which the whole piece is woven. A more animated passage in octaves for the solo violin moves on with increased urgency, leading to a *Maestoso* statement from the trumpet, a dramatic climax, and the *pianissimo* return of the *Andante* solo violin theme, now in a higher register. The work ends with a reminiscence of the opening cadenza, ascending ethereally to the heights.

Holst completed his *St Paul's Suite* in 1913, dedicating it to the St Paul's Girls' School Orchestra. The suite starts with a *Jig*, its opening leading to a contrasting secondary jig theme, first presented by the second violins, and followed by the emphatic return of the main theme. The secondary material is heard again briefly before the movement comes to an end. *Ostinato* starts with the recurrent pattern that gives the movement its title, the principal melody introduced by a solo violin, later to return in the second violins, while the *ostinato* continues throughout. A solo violin introduces

the principal melody of *Intermezzo*, an *Andante con moto* to which a following *Vivace* provides a contrast of key and mood. The last movement introduces the melody known as *The Dargason*, used elsewhere by Holst, who here goes on to combine it with *Green Sleeves*, one providing a skilful counterpoint to the other.

The *Lyric Movement* for viola and small orchestra also dates from 1933 and was dedicated to Lionel Tertis. It opens with the solo viola, *senza misura*, followed by the flute, before the entry of the orchestra with material suggested in the opening passage. The *senza misura* returns, and the viola adds its own embellishment to the muted strings, leading to a *Poco adagio* passage, a cadenza and a hushed conclusion to a composition described by Imogen Holst as exemplifying her father's desired 'tender austerity'.

After the success of *The Planets* Holst felt able to return to his predominant interest in counterpoint. In 1922 he wrote his *Fugal Overture*, intended as an introduction to his opera *The Perfect Fool*. The following year brought *A Fugal Concerto*, scored for solo flute and oboe, with strings. The fugal subject is introduced by the strings in unison, followed by the solo entry of the oboe, answered by the flute and then followed by the cellos and double basses, completing the fugal exposition. The subject is heard in inversion and re-appears again in this form, as the strings present the original version of the theme. The flute starts the slow movement, offering a fugal subject answered by the oboe. Contrasting contrapuntal material is introduced before the violas re-introduce the original subject, answered by the oboe and then the flute. The final *Allegro* has the strings proposing the theme with its uneven rhythm. This is the material of the fugal subject announced by the oboe, answered by the flute. Brief cadenzas follow for each solo instrument, after which the strings offer an increasingly emphatic version

of the theme, before the flute introduces the familiar old English dance tune 'If all the world were paper', treated contrapuntally and then combined with the original fugal subject. The final trill of flute and oboe brings a *pizzicato* rhythmic echo of the subject in a quiet conclusion.

Holst wrote his *Double Concerto*, for two violins and orchestra, in 1929. It opens with a *Scherzo*, a *molto staccato* broken rhythm appearing immediately in cello and bass, before clarinets, bassoons and violas introduce a contrasting thematic element. The entry of the solo first violin, marked by uneven rhythm of the opening, is followed by the second soloist, with the viola providing a third contrapuntal entry, and the cello an incomplete fourth entry. A more familiar lilting rhythm is established, before a shift to bitonality between the two solo instruments, which continues until the return of the principal thematic material. The second

solo violin brings back a secondary lilting thematic element, heard earlier from the first violin, which ends the movement with a version of the second violin's earlier excursion into bitonality. The *Lament*, in 5/4, allows the solo first violin to present a theme, imitated by the second violin, both solo instruments moving into overt bitonality before the entry of the orchestra, with muted strings. *Variation on a Ground* has the first solo violin present the ground, followed by the second, after which it provides an accompaniment to the plucked notes of the second solo violin, before rôles are reversed. The very uneven ground on which the movement is based provides chances for cross-rhythms and leads at its height to a passage in 7/4 and further explorations of bitonality before the ground is heard in conclusion.

Keith Anderson

Sarah Ewins

Sarah Ewins has been Co-leader of the English Sinfonia since 1998 and also holds the position of Associate Leader of the Hallé Orchestra. As well as recording for radio and television, she has given numerous recitals and concertos both in this country and abroad. Passionate about chamber music, she is a founder member of the recently formed ModeArt Ensemble. She plays a 1693 Hieronymous Amati violin.

Philip Harmer

On leaving the Royal College Of Music in 1992, Philip Harmer was appointed Principal Oboe with the English Sinfonia. Since then he has worked as guest principal with most of the leading British orchestras, and is currently also Co-principal Oboe with the English Chamber Orchestra.

Anna Pyne

Anna Pyne studied the flute with William Bennett at the Royal Academy of Music and went on to perform as Guest Principal Flute and soloist with orchestras in London and the rest of England. She became Principal Flute with the English Sinfonia in 2000 and since 2005 has also been a principal with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Andriy Viytovych

Andriy Viytovych is recognised as one of the finest and most versatile British performers. Before becoming Principal Viola of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 2000 he was appointed by the London Symphony Orchestra as Co-principal Viola. He has toured as a soloist, appearing with distinguished orchestras in Spain, Italy, Switzerland, France, Ukraine, Russia, Japan, the United States and Argentina. His repertoire is extensive both in concerts and recital. He has played principal viola with many orchestras, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, English Sinfonia, London Sinfonietta, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Berlin Philharmonic, working with eminent conductors including Mstislav Rostropovich, Pierre Boulez, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, Bernard Haitink and Sir Georg Solti. His enthusiasm for chamber music has led to collaboration with different chamber groups including Camerata Lysy Gstaad, the London Symphony Orchestra Chamber Players, Razumovsky Ensemble, Russian Chamber Orchestra of London and Soloists of the Royal Opera House. He is also a Principal Viola of the English Sinfonia and is a Professor of Viola at the Royal College of Music in London.

Janice Graham

Janice Graham took up her position as Leader of the English National Opera Orchestra in January 2007, combining this with a varied solo and chamber career. She has been the Leader of the English Sinfonia since 1995 and became Artistic Director in 2005. Her previous positions as Leader of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Assistant Leader of the London Symphony Orchestra involved numerous solo broadcasts for BBC Radio 3, chamber performances with Tim Hugh, Moray Welsh, Yuri Bashmet and André Previn and a chamber series for EMI. Early musical influences came from the Purcell School, David Takeno at the Guildhall and Glenn Dicterow at the Juilliard School in New York. She won the Gold Medal of the Shell/LSO competition in 1990 which led to concerto appearances at the Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican and other major London concert venues. Her solo work elsewhere in the United Kingdom has included Symphony Hall, St David's Hall and Bridgewater Hall. She is a sought after Guest Leader of many British orchestras and ensembles and is a professor at the Royal College of Music.



Howard Griffiths

Howard Griffiths was artistic director and chief conductor of the Zurich Chamber Orchestra for ten years, becoming freelance in 2006. He was born in England and studied at the Royal College of Music in London. Since taking up residence in Switzerland in 1981, he has performed as guest conductor with many leading orchestras worldwide including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London, the Orchestre National de France, the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra of the Moscow Radio, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Finland, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Montpellier, the Warsaw Philharmonic, the Symphony Orchestra Basel, London Mozart Players, Orquesta Nacional de España, Slovakian Radio Symphony Orchestra, NDR and SWF orchestras in Germany and the Polish Chamber Orchestra. From 1994 to 1997 he was principal guest conductor of the Oxford Orchestra da Camera. Howard Griffiths collaborates on a regular basis with the English Chamber Orchestra and the Northern Sinfonia of England, with whom he has given many concerts, made many recordings and undertaken several tours. With the Collegium Novum Zurich, which specialises in contemporary music, first performances by Howard Griffiths include the Swiss première of Hans Werner Henze's *Requiem* in the presence of the composer. He has also worked closely with Sofia Gubaidulina, George Crumb, Arvo Pärt and Mauricio Kagel. More than sixty recordings so far by Howard Griffiths under various labels bear witness to his extremely broad artistic profile. These include, for example, works by contemporary Swiss and Turkish composers, as well as first recordings of rediscovered eighteenth and nineteenth century music. In the annual New Year's Honours List of Queen Elizabeth II, Howard Griffiths was awarded "Member of the British Empire" (MBE) for serving music and the community in Switzerland.



English Sinfonia

Founded in 1961, English Sinfonia is one of the earliest established chamber orchestras in the United Kingdom; in its earlier years Sir Charles Groves was the name most closely associated with the orchestra, a relationship which produced recorded cycles of all the main canons of the chamber orchestra repertoire which are still available commercially. English Sinfonia's operational basis is as a chamber orchestra with a membership of 28 players drawn mainly from the major London orchestras, all performing on modern instruments, an ensemble expanded to include percussion, trombones, and keyboard in order to perform music from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. The orchestra is based in Hertfordshire, thereby enabling it to take full commercial and artistic advantage of its proximity to London and the availability of many of the best freelance musicians nationally. In 2005 the distinguished violinist Janice Graham was appointed Artistic Director.



English Sinfonia

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The English composer Gustav Holst served for many years as director of music at St Paul's Girls' School in London, and it was for the pupils there that he wrote his *St Paul's Suite*, his most famous work for amateurs and, shortly after, his *Brook Green Suite*, with its prevailing suggestion of English folk-song. The infrequently performed *Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestra* begins with a 'fugal' scherzo, followed by a very beautiful duet for the two soloists.



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| 13-15 | Concerto for Two Violins
and Orchestra, Op. 49/H175 | 14:54 |

Janice Graham, Violin¹ • **Sarah Ewins, Violin**²
Andriy Viytovych, Viola³ • **Anna Pyne, Flute**⁴
Philip Harmer, Oboe⁵

English Sinfonia • Howard Griffiths

A detailed tracklist can be found on page 2 of the booklet

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