

PRESS RELEASE

18th April 2012

MUSICAL TREATS FOR THE JUBILEE

Premières of important works by Vaughan Williams, Moeran, Gurney and even Elgar are among the treats in store at this year's English Music Festival, which takes place in and around Dorchester-on-Thames in the South Oxfordshire countryside over the Diamond Jubilee holiday weekend.

This sixth EMF (1–5 June) is very much a celebratory Festival; with the nation marking Her Majesty's sixty glorious years on the British throne, the 2012 Festival very much has our royal heritage at its heart.

Tickets are on sale now and many concerts are expected to sell out quickly, building on the runaway success of last year's EMF.

A not-to-be-missed fixture of the 2012 Festival is a world première concert performance of Elgar's incidental music for Laurence Binyon's play *Arthur* (based on Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*). The play was first performed at the Old Vic in 1923 and Elgar himself conducted the orchestra. At the EMF, in Dorchester Abbey on Jubilee Sunday 3 June, the distinguished actor (and EMF Vice-President) **Robert Hardy** will narrate excerpts from the play, while **Ben Palmer** conducts the **Orchestra of St Paul's**. Continuing the Arthurian theme, the concert will also feature Purcell's *King Arthur* and Britten's *Sword in the Stone*.

Other highlights include the opening night (broadcast live on Radio 3) when the **BBC Concert Orchestra** conducted by **Martin Yates** with **Mark Bebbington** as soloist will give the world première performances of Vaughan Williams's *Piano Fantasia* and E.J. Moeran's Second Symphony; a concert entitled *Garlands for the Two Elizabeths*, in which the **Joyful Company of Singers** contrasts 'Elizabethan' music of the 16th and 20th centuries; and the final-night gala concert with the **ESO** playing Parry's much-loved *English Symphony*.

The EMF will be featuring two British composers in particular, John Ireland and Frederick Delius, who are both being commemorated nationally this year. Fifty years after John Ireland's death, the English Music Festival will be programming a selection of some of Ireland's best works, including the Cello Sonata, *Legend for Piano and Orchestra*, *Concertino Pastorale* and *A Downland Suite* for

Brass Band, with the aim of introducing it to those unfamiliar with his music; while on the final day of the Festival the programme will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Delius with several rarely-heard works.

In *A Late Lark*, we find Delius in accord with the idea of the transience of life as reflected in a poem by W.E.Henley where the lark's song accompanies the serene final passing of the poet. The work will be performed by the soprano **Elena Xanthoudakis** with the ESO. Also included in this programme are his evocative *Seven Danish Songs* of 1897, inspired by the wide expanses of Scandinavia, and the ever-popular *Irmelin* Prelude. There will be the opportunity to hear Delius's Cello Sonata earlier in the day, performed by **Richard Jenkinson** and **Benjamin Frith**.

For full details of what promises to be an eventful and memorable festival of some of Britain's most exquisite and evocative music, visit <http://www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk>.

Press tickets are available directly by contacting the Festival's Director, Em Marshall-Luck, at em.marshall@btinternet.com.

Press are also invited to attend the opening night VIP reception held in the Manor House opposite Dorchester Abbey (1 June, 6p.m.), and to the launches of two EM Records discs, on Friday 1 June and Tuesday 5 June at 9.30p.m. EMRCD005 features the **Bridge Quartet** and **Michael Dussek** performing Norman O'Neill's chamber works; and EMRCD006 presents **Rupert Marshall-Luck** and **Matthew Rickard** playing Holst's *Five Pieces*, Vaughan Williams's Violin Sonata and Walford Davies's Violin Sonata in E-flat. Contact Em Marshall-Luck at em.marshall@btinternet.com for tickets to any of these events.

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