***MUSIC at WESLEY***

**St. JOHN’S FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA**

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 2nd 2025, 7.30 pm

**THE WESLEY CHURCH CENTRE, ST JOHN STREET, CHESTER CH1 1DA**

***Conductor : Philip Sharp***

## *Leader : Mark Lansom*

***Mezzo Soprano : Jess Conway***

***Piano : Brian Heald***

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| **Scena di Berenice Hob. XXIVa:10** | **Haydn (1732 – 1809)** |
| **Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat major K595**   1. *Allegro* 2. *Larghetto cantabile* 3. *Allegro scherzando* | **Mozart (1756 -91)** |
| *Interval* | |
| **Symphony No. 2 in D major Op. 36**   1. [*Adagio molto*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tempo#Italian_tempo_markings)*–*[*Allegro*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tempo#Italian_tempo_markings)*con*[*bri*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_musical_terminology#B)*o* 2. [*Larghetto*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tempo#Italian_tempo_markings) 3. [*Scherzo*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scherzo)*: Allegro* 4. *Allegro molto* | **Beethoven (1770 - 1827)** |

**Philip Sharp** has performed as a piano soloist at venues including Wigmore Hall, St Martin-in-the-Fields, and St John's, Smith Square, at international festivals including the 'Festival Pianistico Bartolomeo Cristofori' in Italy, and has given several live broadcasts on BBC Radio 3. In 2017, he was selected to be a Park Lane Group Artist, leading to several high-profile London recitals. Philip was also the only British pianist selected for the 2020 Orléans Piano Competition. Inheriting a keen love for new music from his tutor Dr Murray McLachlan, Philip has given several world premieres of works by some of the rising stars of British contemporary music, and has appeared with much-lauded contemporary music group Hebrides Ensemble. As of April 2022, Philip is a tutor at St Mary’s Music School in Edinburgh, Scotland’s specialist music school.

**Mark Lansom** is a very experienced string player, teacher, composer and conductor and has played in the St John’s Festival Orchestra for over thirty years.  He is one of our regular team of conductors and is Head of Strings at the King’s School in Chester.

**Jessica Conway** is a Scottish mezzo soprano, performing as a soloist and consort singer across the UK and internationally. She has worked with groups including Manchester Camerata, Dunedin Consort, Kantos Chamber Choir, Manchester Baroque, Eboracum Baroque, London Voices and the Edvard Grieg Kor in Bergen, Norway. She enjoys touring regularly to Italy with L’offerta musicale and Ad Parnassum and has appeared at the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International Festival. She also co-directs award-winning vocal octet Octavoce, which recently toured to the renowned Korkyra Baroque Festival. Recent highlights include Messiah solos with Manchester Camerata and a staged Hildegard Von Bingen project touring Italy. Jessica received a distinction for her Masters from the Royal Northern College of Music studying with Hilary Summers where she was the recipient of the Annie Ridyard Scholarship. As an opera singer, she has performed a wide range of roles over the years, including Dido in Dido & Aeneas (Eboracum Baroque), Despina in Così fan tutte (Opera dei Lumi), Jo in Little Women (RNCM Opera Scenes) and the Countess in The Marriage of Figaro (Edinburgh Studio Opera). [www.jessicaconwaymezzo.com](http://www.jessicaconwaymezzo.com/)

**Brian Heald** read natural sciences and chemical engineering at Pembroke College, Cambridge. He holds performance diplomas in piano (ARCM) and organ (LRSM). He has been organist at Wesley since 1976 and is accompanist for The Vale Royal Singers. Brian has performed piano concertos by Mozart (K271, K466, K467 and K488), Beethoven (Nos. 1 to 5), Mendelssohn (No.2), Franck (Symphonic Variations) and Schumann, all in Chester. He accompanies his wife Claire, contralto, and performs in duos with his pianist son Jeremy, cellist Lionel Clarke, trumpeter John Bush and various chamber music groups.

**Programme Notes by Adam Davies**

**Haydn – Scena di Berenice**

Composed on the second of Haydn’s two visits to London, this work was first performed by Brigida Giorgi Banti, for whom the work was written, in May 1795, as part of his final benefit concert in England. The concert also featured Haydn’s ‘Military’ and ‘London’ symphonies and was a huge success. The scene is taken from a libretto setting of Metastasio’s *Antigono*, in which Berenice – betrothed to Antigono, but in love with his son, Demetrio – laments her fate and longs to die alongside her beloved, who has resolved to take his own life, torn as he is in his romantic predicament. Haydn’s music is filled with dramatic contrasts and fiery outbursts.

**Mozart – Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat major K595**

This work is the last of Mozart’s 27 piano concertos. The manuscript is dated 5th January 1791, exactly 11 months before Mozart’s death, though its composition may have been a few years earlier. Uncertainty similarly presides over the date of its first performance: it may have been by Mozart himself at Jahn’s Hall, Vienna, in March of that year – which would have been Mozart’s final public concert appearance – or by his student Barbara Ployer in January. The piece is scored for a lighter orchestra than most of his later piano concertos, which involve trumpets and timpani, and its sunny disposition is reflected in the major tonality of all three movements. The opening *Allegro*’s first rising theme is interjected by fanfare-like descending arpeggio interjections in the woodwind, which feature repeatedly throughout the movement. As in the finale, later thematic material alludes to darker moods in the minor key, and in the middle development section, drama ensues, exploring rather remote keys. In this movement and the finale, Mozart wrote his own cadenzas. The middle movement *Larghetto*, in E-flat major, exudes serenity and simplicity, yet tinged with shades of melancholy, especially in the beautiful soaring melodic lines of the main theme’s closing material. This gives way to an altogether more dance-like final Rondo in 6/8 meter, in which soloist and orchestra weave playfully together as they romp towards the final bars.

**Beethoven – Symphony No. 2 in D major Op.36**

Written in 1801-2, mostly during Beethoven’s stay in Heiligenstadt, the Second Symphony was born of a period of considerable turmoil in the composer’s life. The work was premiered in 1803 alongside his Third Piano Concerto and Oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* when Beethoven was already 33 years old. At this point, he was aware that his deteriorating hearing may be incurable, as he wrote to his brothers in the famous Heiligenstadt Testament, in which the composer even contemplated suicide. Certainly, in the first of the four movements, this inner strife is never far from the surface. The movement opens, as in the First Symphony, with a slow introduction, rather strikingly with a rapidly repeated tonic chord with the full force of the orchestra. As the movement progresses, vibrant major-key themes are increasingly interrupted by the stark visions of a darker fate. But always, the music returns to its optimistic disposition. The second movement opens with an aspiring upward arpeggio. This is one of the longest of Beethoven’s symphonic slow movements, and its pastoral character foreshadows the Sixth Symphony. Playful dialogue between the various sections of the orchestra abounds in the Scherzo movement, and the middle-section Trio features a charming oboe theme against the backdrop of an Austrian dance. Similarly to the first movement, the rather frenzied *Allegro molto* final movement reveals a darker minor-key layer hidden not very far beneath the chirpy exterior. But the music races along furiously with many rapid string passages to an exhilarating conclusion.

***Forthcoming Tuesday Lunchtime Concerts at Wesley: 12.45 to 1.35 pm (retiring collection)***

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| Feb 4th: | Chetham’s School of Music Instrumentalists |
| Feb 11th: | Juanjo Blazquez (piano) |
| Feb 18th: | Roth Guitar Duo |
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