



## BEDFORD SINFONIA

Conductor: Ian Smith

Leader: Alex Collins

Soprano soloist: Carolyn Sampson

Saturday 2 May 2026

St Paul's Church, Bedford, 7:30pm

### Programme notes

#### **Franz Schubert (1797–1828): *Symphony No. 3 in D Major***

In 1815, the 18-year-old Franz Schubert was employed as a full-time schoolteacher, whilst additionally taking twice-weekly composition lessons with Antonio Salieri and doing some private music teaching on the side. Yet he somehow managed to compose over 200 works, including four operas, two masses, two symphonies and 145 songs, a productive explosion that has had music historians shaking their heads for generations. He began his *Symphony No. 3* on 24 May and finished it on 19 June. In those 26 days, he also wrote some songs, liturgical music, and an operetta.

The *Symphony No. 3* is notably concise, and shorter than Schubert's first two symphonies, but it also foreshadows ideas that would expand the scale of the symphony. The rushing scale passage of the first movement's slow introduction is turned into the second theme of the allegro, contrary to the standard practice of making the allegro contrast with the introduction by not having them share any musical elements. Schubert would revisit the idea to great dramatic effect a decade later in his 'Great' C-major Symphony.

Like the Seventh and Eighth symphonies Beethoven was writing at about the same time, Schubert's *Symphony No. 3* has no real slow movement. Instead, there is a lightly scored (without trumpets and timpani) allegretto in ABA form. It has an ambling principal section, and a middle section with a jaunty little clarinet tune.

The third movement is marked 'Menuetto', but the name is rooted more in tradition than reality. In his late works, Haydn liked to spice his minuets with odd accents that would have confounded any dancer. Schubert does the same here, with rudely accented upbeats: the

phrases all begin on the third beat, not the first. The middle section, scored for solo oboe and bassoon and strings, without cellos, is more a Ländler than a minuet.

The finale, in the rhythm of the tarantella, is marked 'presto vivace' (quick, lively), about as clear an instruction to avoid going slowly as a composer can write. The sheer fleetness of the themes creates enormous momentum, but Schubert adds a few sly pauses to keep us guessing. The movement owes much to the frenetic drive of comic opera overtures.

*Programme notes: Howard Posner*

## ***Interval 1***

### **BOS Young Composers' Competition 2026 winners' presentation and performance**

The Young Composers' Competition 2026 was open to students aged 14-19 who are educated or resident in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton Borough and the City of Milton Keynes. Students were asked to compose and notate a short piece, in any musical style, to be performed by Bedford Sinfonia or an ensemble taken from Bedford Sinfonia players.

Entries were received from all four local authorities, from state-funded and independent schools, from female and male pupils, from students in all year groups from Year 9 to Year 13, and from first year undergraduates.

The competition was judged by a panel including Mark Phillips (chairman), Paul Whitmarsh (Guildhall School of Music), Ian Smith (Conductor, Bedford Sinfonia), and Bedford Sinfonia players Kate Knight and Debbie Saunders. Panel members made their decisions based solely on anonymised scores and recordings, without knowledge of the composers' names, ages, local authorities, genders or schools/colleges attended.

From a strong field, the panel chose three overall winners for performance in tonight's concert. The winning pieces are:

- *Cerulean*, composed by Seth Garner
- *A New Discovery*, composed by Elias Demetrius-Louisy
- *St George and The Dragon*, composed by Ezra Bail

#### ***Cerulean* – Seth Garner**

Seth Garner is a Year 13 student at E-ACT Ousedale School in Newport Pagnell.

*Cerulean* started life as a composition for solo piano, which was then orchestrated for the BOS Young Composers' competition. Inspired by a hike for the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, the music takes the players and listeners through the changing terrain of that journey.

Competition panel members were captivated by the way that a single motif, first played by a solo flute, is developed through the delicate use of orchestral colours, reminiscent of the sound palettes used by Debussy, Ravel and Mahler; and by the composer's 'ingenious use of cross-rhythms and meters' – all capturing the beautiful clear air, blue skies and landscapes enjoyed by the walker.

#### ***A New Discovery* – Elias Demetrius-Louisy**

Elias Demetrius-Louisy is a Year 11 student at Bedford School.

*A New Discovery* is composed for string orchestra. It was inspired by the composer's experiences playing in the North Bedfordshire Youth Chamber Orchestra, and particularly his discovering the music of Sibelius.

Competition panel members were struck by the richness and range of the string writing in this piece, and by the 'effortless modulation' between sections. They very much appreciated the reflections of English composers such as Vaughan Williams (who was also an admirer of Sibelius, of course!) and Purcell (particularly in the use of the ground bass that builds to the work's climax, where the orchestral texture gradually expands from five to nine parts).

### ***St George and The Dragon – Ezra Bail***

Ezra Bail is a Year 13 student at Stantonbury School in Milton Keynes.

Written as a celebration of St George's Day, this composition tells the story of the hero St George, his horse, and their fight against the dragon.

Competition panel members particularly enjoyed the sheer energy and 'joyous mayhem' of this piece. There are challenges for every section of the orchestra (and the conductor!), with Stravinsky-esque rhythms, fast chromatic scales, and rasping woodwind/brass trills. Alongside the thunder of the battle, however, sit some more lyrical, pastoral moments, and the work makes full use of structural devices such as canon and countermelody. It is a real rollercoaster – hold on tight!

## ***Interval 2***

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791): *Exsultate, jubilate*, K. 165**

*Allegro: Exsultate, jubilate*

*Recitativo: Fulget amica dies*

*Andante: Tu virginum corona*

*Allegro: Alleluja*

When Mozart was sixteen, he visited Milan with his father for the premiere of his opera *Lucia Silla*, K.135, and was overwhelmed with the castrato Venanzio Rauzzini who starred in the title role of Cecilio. '*He sang like an angel*,' Mozart declared. Three weeks later Mozart produced *Exsultate, jubilate* to display Rauzzini's talent, and it was performed on 16 January 1773 in the Church of San Antonio.

The composer called his new work a motet, defined in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as a 'piece of music with words'. In the Renaissance, the motet became more elaborate with contrapuntal textures, and the genre had two formats: sacred and secular. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was defined as a 'sacred Latin solo cantata' by the contemporary flautist and composer, Johann Quantz. The first movement is, so to speak, a concerto piece for voice. It is followed by a short recitative, translated as 'The friendly day shines bright'. The ensuing andante is a blissful hymn to the Virgin, and at its close the music leads without pause to the famous 'alleluja', arguably one of the most joyous conclusions to any work.

*Programme notes: Compiled from notes by Ivor Keys and others*

## Carolyn Sampson, soprano

Equally at home on the concert and opera stages, Carolyn Sampson has enjoyed notable successes in the UK as well as throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

Born in Bedford, she studied music at the Birmingham University. During her studies, she performed as a member of the choir Ex Cathedra, winning an Arnold Goldsbrough Prize for Baroque music. She made her operatic debut singing the part of Amore in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* at English National Opera. In 2006 she performed in Montpellier, both as Susanna in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and as Adina in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*. Sampson sang the title role in the Boston Early Music Festival's production of Lully's *Psyché* in June 2007. Jeremy Eichler of the Boston Globe wrote that she 'gave a radiant and pure-voiced performance'. The opera was subsequently recorded, and received a nomination for the Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording in December 2008.

Having begun her career in the early music world, Carolyn has forged long-standing relationships with many renowned groups among them Bach Collegium Japan, the Academy of Ancient Music, The Sixteen, and Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. Last season marked an incredible achievement for Carolyn as she celebrated her recording legacy with the release of her 100<sup>th</sup> album as a featured solo artist. Over the last twenty-five years of her career, she has sung with countless world-class musicians, and these recordings serve as testament to both her versatility as an artist and the scope of her repertoire. In 2024 she was also awarded an OBE in the King's New Year Honours, and was elected an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music.

Recent performance highlights include her debut at Berlin Staatsoper singing Créuse in a new Peter Sellers production of Charpentier's *Medée* conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, Mahler's 8<sup>th</sup> Symphony (soprano 1) with NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester under Semyon Bychkov, Bach's Passions with the Netherlands and Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, and concerts with the Česká Filharmonie, Budapesti Fesztiválzenekar, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks and a European tour with Bach Collegium Japan including a return to the BBC Proms. She presented recitals at Wigmore Hall, Queen's Hall Edinburgh, the Muziekgebouw as part of the Grote Zangers series for Leeds Lieder, and for International Lied Festival Zeist. This season she looks forward to Haydn's *Creation* with both the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris under Masaaki Suzuki at the Paris Philharmonie and with the CBSO under Kazuki Yamada, another European tour with Bach Collegium Japan, solo programmes with La Scintilla at Opernhaus Zürich with Riccardo Minassi with the Freiburger Barockorchester, and returns to the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks and the Dresdner Philharmonie.

Carolyn also cherishes her relationships with some of the world's finest symphony orchestras. She has been a regular guest with the Concertgebouw Orkest, Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, Gürzenich Orchester Köln, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the BBC Scottish and BBC Philharmonic as well as the Boston Symphony, San Francisco Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra to name but a few. Recent additions to her repertoire have included Strauss' *Vier Letzte Lieder* and Dutilleul's *Correspondances*, which she has performed in the UK, The Netherlands and Croatia. She is proud to be part of the Minnesota Orchestra's Mahler series, with whom she recorded

both the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> symphonies with Osmo Vänskä for the BIS label. Carolyn has also had the pleasure of working with other inspiring conductors such as Harry Bicket, Ivor Bolton, Riccardo Chailly, Jonathan Cohen, Andris Nelsons, Yannick Nezet-Seguin, Trevor Pinnock, Donald Runnicles and Ludovic Morlot. She is a regular at international festivals such as the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh, Schleswig Holstein and Dresdner Musikfestspiele.

On the opera stage her roles have included the title role in Semele and Pamina in *The Magic Flute* for English National Opera, various roles in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* for Glyndebourne Festival Opera (released on DVD), and Anne Truelove in *The Rake's Progress* and Mélisande in *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Sir David McVicar's productions for Scottish Opera. In the 21/22 season she sang Cleopatra in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* at the Palau de la Musica in Barcelona. She has also appeared at Opéra de Paris, Opéra de Lille, Opéra de Montpellier and Opéra National du Rhin, and sang the title role in Lully's *Psyché* for the Boston Early Music Festival, which was released on CD and subsequently nominated for a Grammy in 2008. A consummate recitalist, Carolyn Sampson appears regularly at Wigmore Hall, and has given recitals at the Oxford International Song Festival, Leeds Lieder, Saintes and Aldeburgh Festivals, as well as at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Barcelona, Freiburg, Oper Frankfurt, Pierre Boulez Saal Berlin, Vienna Konzerthaus, Carnegie Hall, and on tour in Japan.

Carolyn has had a celebrated song partnership with pianist Joseph Middleton for over a decade. Their debut recording *Fleurs* was released in 2015 on the BIS label and was nominated in the solo vocal category of the Gramophone Awards, as is their most recent album *But I Like to Sing*.

### **Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga (1806–1826): *Symphony in D***

*Adagio*

*Allegro vivace*

*Andante*

*Menuetto*

*Allegro con moto*

Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga died at the age of 19, and yet his output included an opera, cantatas, chamber and orchestral works, and many shorter pieces. At 18 when this, his first and only symphony, was written, he was already an assistant professor at the Paris Conservatoire where he had studied violin under Pierre Baillot, counterpoint with Luigi Cherubini, and harmony with François-Joseph Fétis. Indeed, this symphony shows no trace of youthful immaturity. The long, slow introduction has an almost Beethovenian authority, and leads to an equally powerful faster section that sustains the mood of high seriousness. The sorrowful slow movement contains expressive writing for woodwind, and the flute has an important part in the brief syncopated minuet and trio. The final scherzo is marked *Allegro con moto*, and it has all the melodic and rhythmic drive of the earlier movements. Other echoes of the earlier movements include passages in minor keys casting chilling shadows over the musical narrative. The smoothly classical grace that marks many of Arriaga's other works is replaced in the symphony by music as dramatic and compelling as anything that followed it in the early Romantic period.

Arriaga was well supported during his four years in Paris by his father, but the intensity of his commitment to his studies at the Conservatoire and his meteoric rise may have taken a toll on his health. He died in Paris ten days before his twentieth birthday of a lung ailment, possibly tuberculosis. He was buried in an unmarked grave at the Cimetière du Nord in Montmartre.

*Programme notes: Phillip Huscher (Chicago Symphony Orchestra Roy Brewer and others. Several of these notes were supplied through the Programme Note Bank of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies, and from other sources.*

## Composing: creativity, knowledge and evolution

**Mark Phillips** (Music Education Consultant and BOS Young Composers' Competition Chair) considers what is meant by 'musical knowledge' and explains the importance of composing in musical education.

Tonight's concert is a celebration, not only of teenage composers but also of musical teaching and learning. Music education teaches us the techniques of playing instruments and of notation. As we are introduced to new and diverse repertoire, we build an increasingly complex schema of musical knowledge including an understanding of how structures and devices such as scales and chords give shape and order to musical expression. Sometimes that knowledge is learned through direct teaching, and sometimes it is learned tacitly through experience of just being involved in and around music. By 'musical knowledge' we do not mean isolated words, facts and dates about music, or silent music theory; we mean procedural knowledge of the music itself, aural understanding of the sounds that are ordered and combined to make a musical, expressive discourse. And for all of us, when we first hear a piece of music - even if it is centuries old - this knowledge is, in the words of one of our young composers, a new discovery.

Throughout history, the finest works have been created through composers' aural imagination and inspiration, but they have also been underpinned by the composers' application of their musical knowledge. That is why, when you hear music by **Beethoven**, for example – inspirational and individual as he was – you will hear structural and technical influences of **Mozart** and of Beethoven's teacher, **Haydn**. In turn, Beethoven's music – and that of **J S Bach** – bore enormous influence on the development of **Brahms**' individual composition voice.

When we listen carefully to the organic way that composers through the ages - in any style, genre, or tradition - have built on music of the past, we understand how music has developed over time. This is how the 'history of music' evolves. Knowing that also helps us understand how we learn to compose and how our own compositions are part of the story of music.

**Mozart**, **Schubert**, and **Arriaga** all grew up surrounded by music and musicians who bore influence on their emerging, individual compositional styles. This evening, you are going to hear new works by three young composers who are following in that tradition, drawing on their developing knowledge of music from the past but also from their present.

Composing is an important part of classroom music in schools because it gives pupils the opportunity to apply their growing knowledge of music in a creative and individual way. While teachers can plan a curriculum around correct performance techniques, accurate explanations of how music is constructed, and exposure to different musical styles and traditions, pupils' responses to composing tasks cannot be planned. They are often unexpected, and sometimes astonishing. That is why composing can be so exciting to teach and learn.

So, as we celebrate the inspiration and imagination shown in these new pieces – and we are sure you will be as impressed as we were when we first heard them - we also celebrate the opportunities and encouragement that all the young composers in our competition have been given by their schools, communities and families, to build their musical knowledge and develop their own musical voices. There is no doubt that, nationally, music education has challenges. Lack of funding is often mentioned but that is not the only reason. School leaders' low prioritisation can be a key factor, along with limited understanding of how effective musical teaching and learning really works. It is, therefore, heartening to know there are schools in our region where musical education is valued highly and supported well, and where young people can achieve high musical standards. To those schools' headteachers, governors and trustees, and to all music teachers – especially **Mark Couldrick** (E-ACT Ousedale School), **Thomas Rooke** (Bedford School), and **Andrew Cormican** (Stantonbury School) - we offer our sincere thanks. Thanks, too, to our local authority music hubs, which provide the tuition and ensembles that give so many formative musical experiences.

Tonight is a special concert for **Bedfordshire Orchestral Society**. It is also a proud occasion for our three young composers, their schools, their friends, and their families. Their compositions are creative but also technically assured and full of musical knowledge. We are privileged to perform and hear them this evening alongside music by **Mozart**, **Schubert**, and **Arriaga**.

To **Seth**, **Elias** and **Ezra**, we all say: *thank you, extremely well done, and congratulations!*