

Benjamin Frith & Heidi Rolfe – ‘The Planets’

Friday May 23rd

2.00 pm

Ludlow Assembly Rooms

Erik Satie

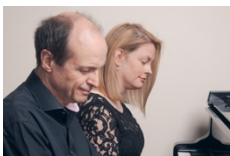
Three Pieces in the Shape of a Pear

Gustav Holst

The Planets Suite

- I. MARS (The Bringer of War)
- II. VENUS (The Bringer of Peace)
- III. MERCURY (The Winged Messenger)
- IV. JUPITER (The Bringer of Jol)
- V. SATURN (The Bringer of Old Age)
- VI. URANUS (The Magician)
- VII. NEPTUNE (The Mystic)

Programme shown may be changed without notice



Benjamin Frith is one of the most versatile, respected and engaging pianists in the UK with over 80 critically- acclaimed recordings including a classical chart-topping John Field Piano Concerto cycle (Gramophone’s ‘Disc of the Year’). Gold Medal winner of the Artur Schnabel Piano Masters International Competition, Tel Aviv, and Top Prize Winner in the Busoni International Piano Competition,

Frith has performed with many of the world’s finest orchestras and conductors including : Zubin Mehta with the IPO and Mosche Atzmon with the Warsaw Philharmonic.

He enjoys a busy and varied career: as pianist in the Gould Piano Trio he has toured extensively throughout North America; and as guest pianist in the illustrious Nash Ensemble he has performed and recorded to critical acclaim. Solo tours have taken him to America, Europe, the Middle East and Far East and he has solo tours to Japan coming up.

Heidi Rolfe spent time riding racehorses, both in the UK and Italy, before returning to continue her musical studies. Graduating with a Masters degree in Piano Performance, Heidi was singled out for many concerto performances and was awarded the gift of a Grand Piano.

For many years Heidi, together with her husband Benjamin Frith, has enjoyed exploring the wonderful piano duo repertoire (for four hands at one piano and in two piano works) in recitals throughout the UK. Heidi’s varied repertoire includes works by female composers and much contemporary music An interest in combining music and drama has led to award-winning performances which have been broadcast by the BBC.

Programme notes

Three Pieces in The Shape of a Pear – Erik Satie (1866-1925)

Erik Satie was a joker: often filling his compositions with parody and critique (e.g. the inclusion of motifs from Chopin's Funeral March and parodies of Puccini's operas).

He left elaborate (and, at times, ridiculous) directions above bars in many of his scores using his wit to poke fun at standard musical practice.

Three Pieces in the Form of a Pear is one of Satie's biggest jokes.

Firstly, there are not three pieces here but seven.

The title for the work was a response to Debussy who supposedly told Satie that his compositions lacked shape.

Satie then presented this piece to Debussy saying that it could not lack shape as it was in the shape of a pear - in name and form.

The Planets Suite - Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Holst's fame rests largely on his orchestral suite 'The Planets' which he composed before and after the First World War while he was the Director of Music at St Paul's Girls School in Hammersmith.

Unlike many orchestral pieces, subsequently reduced for piano, The Planets was first written on piano, with orchestration following. Holst composed the Suite writing by hand as two pianists (and fellow staff members at St Paul's) Nora Day and Vally Lasker, played the score back to him.

As the first full private orchestral performance of 1918 drew nearer their ability to reproduce a pianistic performance of the complete work that became ever more vital to Holst during this wartime period in which expensive orchestral resources had become scarce.

But the two-piano arrangement of The Planets was not a version of the work that Holst ever sought to promote. It only started to appear in print some fifteen years after his death - as separate movements. It was not until 1979 that the publishers, J Curwen & Sons Ltd, eventually collated and re-published the two-piano arrangement of the entire work.