



**Saturday 14 June 2025
at 7.30 pm**

**All Saints' Church
Priory Terrace
Leamington Spa
CV31 1AA**



Night on a Bald Mountain

Danse Macabre

Symphony No. 5

Mussorgsky

Saint-Saëns

Mahler

Roger Coull - *conductor*

Tickets: wso.org.uk

WARWICKSHIRE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Ticket Secretary: Anne Ransford

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The WSO has been performing in Leamington and Warwick since 1940, and as the Leamington Orchestral Society before that. Its players are drawn from all over the county and beyond. The orchestra performs in many venues including Warwick Hall, All Saints Church and the Royal Spa Centre in Leamington, and Coventry Cathedral.

Over the years, the orchestra has worked with many illustrious soloists such as Peter Donohoe and Nadine Benjamin, and young performers including Gillian Blair, Louise Braithwaite and Callum Smart. The orchestra appointed Roger Coull as permanent principal conductor in 2014, to succeed Guy Woolfenden; he has enhanced the WSO tradition of achieving the very highest musical standard.

The WSO's repertoire includes popular classical pieces and concertos, the annual family concert with associate conductor Paul Leddington Wright, working with choirs such as the Royal Leamington Spa Bach Choir and the Coventry Cathedral Chorus, and ambitious and major works such as Holst's *The Planets*, Elgar, Mahler and Shostakovich symphonies, Stravinsky's *Firebird* and Verdi's *Requiem*.



Our 25-26 Concert Season

Saturday 18 October 2025 at 7:30 pm

Warwick Hall, Warwick School,
Myton Road, Warwick, CV34 6PP

Coriolan Overture Beethoven
Cello Concerto in B Minor Dvořák
Symphony No. 5 in D Major Vaughan Williams

Andrew O'Reilly - *Cello*

Roger Coull - *Conductor*

Sunday 23 November 2025 at 3 pm

Royal Spa Centre, Newbold Terrace,
Leamington Spa, CV32 4HN

FAMILY CONCERT: WINTER WONDERLAND

A selection of music for all members of the family,
featuring Howard Blake's **The Snowman**

Paul Leddington Wright

Conductor and master of ceremonies

Saturday 14 March 2026 at 7:30 pm

All Saints' Church, Priory Terrace,
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Fanfare for the Common Man Copland
Overture on Russian themes Rimsky-Korsakov
Violin Concerto in D Major Brahms
Symphony No. 7 in A Major Beethoven

Callum Smart - *Violin*

Richard Jenkinson - *Conductor*

Saturday 13 June 2026 at 7.30 pm

All Saints' Church, Priory Terrace,
Leamington Spa, CV31 1AA

Fantasia on Greensleeves Vaughan Williams
Lyric Movement for Viola Holst
Romanze for Viola Bruch
Symphony No. 2 in E Minor Rachmaninov

Jonathan Barritt - *Viola*

Roger Coull - *Conductor*

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Leamington Music Autumn Season 2025



Friday 26 September • 7.30pm

Unitarian Chapel, Warwick

Penelope Appleyard soprano

Jonathan Delbridge square piano

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Jane Austen's 250th anniversary.

Friday 10 October • 7.30pm

Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington

Marmen String Quartet

Haydn • Bartók • Debussy

Tuesday 21 October • 7.30pm

St Mary's Church, Warwick

Stile Antico

A Golden Renaissance

Tuesday 4 November • 7.30pm

St Mary's Church, Warwick

The York Waits

Fortune My Foe – music and readings
from the time of the Gunpowder Plot

Friday 14 November • 7.30pm

Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington

Gildas String Quartet

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Tuesday 4 December • 7.30pm

Unitarian Chapel, Warwick

The Mellstock Band

The Christmas Hearth

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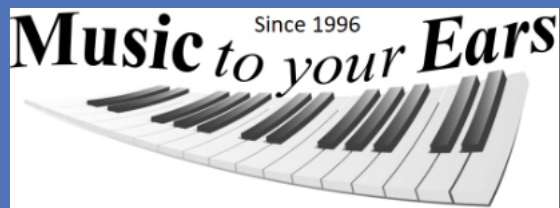
Tuesday 16 December • 7.30pm

St Mary's Church, Warwick

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From the Chair

Chris Voss

Chair, Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra

It is with great sadness we report two deaths. Seb Farrall, our percussionist, died suddenly in April. The multi-talented Seb was behind a multitude of musical activities in the Midlands. He had played percussion with the Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra since 2020, when he took over from Huw Thomas. His presence will be greatly missed by all in the orchestra. Our hearts go out to his wife Fran and their daughter Maisy.

Earlier this year Huw Thomas passed away. He led the percussion for over 38 years and has been a major contributor to the Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra. He had been a valued and treasured member of WSO for many years and a major contributor to the Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra both through his playing and bringing together the wide variety of percussion needed in many of our concerts. He had always been highly committed to the WSO even when held back by illness. As a member of the programme planning team, he provided knowledge, wisdom and perspective. Sadly he was no longer able to play with us, but his ever reliable and sensitive playing have kept us firmly on the beat. His wife Isobel, posted on Facebook; *"I know he would want to say a Huwj thanks to all of you for your friendship, love and support"*.

We are planning to remember them both at a future concert.

Chris Voss

Chair, Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra



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Danse Macabre Op. 40

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 - 1921)

Saint-Saëns was a master of creating pictures in music. The Danse Macabre, or “Dance of Death”, has been a regular theme in European art and literature since the fourteenth century. A common image is that of Death as a skeleton, dancing with everyone at their end.

Danse Macabre was composed in 1874 for orchestra, reworking an earlier song vividly describing the figure of Death scraping on his violin at midnight, cold winds blowing, as dancers leap. The vocal part became a solo violin accompanied by an orchestra including a xylophone evoking rattling bones.

The harp opens with twelve strokes of midnight followed by the solo “fiddle” of Death. The violin is retuned by lowering the top E string to an Eb which gives the famous *diabolus in musica* (Devil in music), or tritone. This dissonance is heard in both the harmony and melody. Two themes are used as the basis of the piece: the first is a dancing motif which is announced on the flute, and the second is a descending scale in the violin, until the *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath) from the Requiem Mass is heard. Here it is unusually played as staccato (short and detached) in the woodwinds. The frenzied dance continues, when dawn is announced by the oboe depicting the cock’s crow. The solo violin now plays a sadder melody, and the skeletons return to their graves - until next time.

Night on a Bald Mountain

Modest Mussorgsky (1839 - 1881)

Night on a Bald Mountain is probably Mussorgsky’s most familiar work. Mussorgsky offered it to his colleague Balakirev, who was very critical of the work. Consequently, Mussorgsky withdrew it, never to work on it again. Because Mussorgsky had a chaotic life, and many of his scores remained incomplete, master orchestrator Rimsky-Korsakov virtually re-composed the work. This is the version heard almost exclusively ever since. Although better ordered than the original, it still displays ferocious, rhythmic dynamism looking forward to Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*.

The story is set on the feast day of St. John the Baptist. In the Christian world, the eve of this date was thought of as the sphere of the Devil and his minions. The following description appears above the published score: *“Subterranean sounds of unearthly voices – appearances of the spirits of darkness, followed by Satan (Tchernobog) himself in glorification of the Black Gods and the celebration of the Black Mass – a Witches Sabbath, interrupted from afar by the bells of a village church, whereupon the spirits of darkness disperse – Dawn breaks”*.

The opening of the work evokes an eerie, supernatural atmosphere and the revelry begins with a savage Russian dance, starting quietly, but developing into demonic wildness. The excitement subsides and a quieter dance is played by the woodwind and strings, but it is not long before the demons rise again until the climax of the piece is reached. There is a sudden pause as the church bells sound. Finally, muted violins suggest the departure of the evil spirits, and the clarinet announces the approach of dawn. Morning has come.

Interval

Symphony No. 5

Gustav Mahler (1860 - 1911)

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Part One | I. Trauermarsch (Funeral March). In gemessenem Schritt. Streng. Wie ein Kondukt (In measured steps. Severe. Like a conductor) |
| | II. Stürmisch bewegt, mit grösster Vehemenz (Stormy and with great vehemence) |
| Part Two | III. Scherzo. Kräftig, nicht zu schnell (Powerful and vigorous) |
| Part Three | IV. Adagietto. Sehr langsam (Very slow) |
| | V. Rondo-Finale. Allegro (Fast and lively) |

Gustav Mahler died in 1911 at the age of fifty-one, his life cut short by heart disease. He had enjoyed an enviable life and career, was respected as an opera conductor, and his leadership of some of the world’s best symphony orchestras had set new standards. His compositions were beginning to enjoy success, and he was married to one

of the most talented and vivacious women in Europe. However, after ten years leading the musical life in Vienna, he was hounded out of the court opera and the Vienna Philharmonic by virulent antisemitism. He had a brief career at the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic but eventually succumbed to his illness. His music was ridiculed, his daughter had died at only four years of age, and his wife Alma Schindler Mahler, had openly betrayed him. His life was a series of profound successes and terrible disappointments, with little in between. After his death his music was championed by a few determined admirers, including Bruno Walter, Bernstein, Solti and Haitink, aided by the development of 33rpm records to carry his often very long works.

Mahler was a driven man, experiencing great fear and ecstatic joy, writing the banal and the sublime juxtaposed into his music. His musical style includes motifs and themes that draw from popular tunes, often sounding like parody and burlesque; the beauty of many of his slow movements is the opposite. These contradictions shaped his perceptions of the world and in his music. His nine symphonies are large works, whose length is made possible by his mastery of musical architecture, expanded tonality, and a delay of musical resolution.

Symphony No. 5 was begun during the summer of 1901 and was finished the following summer, immediately after his marriage. The first movement opens with a famous solo trumpet fanfare, but it is not the noble rallying call that it may at first appear, setting up the funeral march which follows. Beginning a symphony with a complete slow movement is rare. After some dark brass chords the solemn march is heard, but the violins present some subtle Viennese dance hall allusions. Then, the score indicates "Suddenly faster, impassioned, wild." After this, a brief reference to the opening fanfare sees the return of the sentimental salon music disguised as a funeral march. The trumpet's "bugle calls" mark the end.

The second movement is marked "Stormy", but a broad melody in the strings is accompanied by gentle woodwind calls. The alternation of these two moods continues, interspersed with the occasional reference to a march. A dramatic Mahler moment arrives as the brass section plays a chorale. But this mood is short lived as the storm returns, this time winding down quickly, although with brief references to the short motif that has been so important. The solo tuba gets the last word and the storm is over.

The third movement is an extended graceful Viennese Waltz. It begins cheerfully, weaving melodies and ideas together in a clear texture. There are some more serious moments as it proceeds, but unlike the earlier movements they are not dark or stormy. Finally, a passage for solo brass - notably the obbligato first horn solo - signals the end, followed by a rush to the close of the movement by the whole orchestra.

The fourth movement, "Adagietto" is perhaps Mahler's most well-known music. It is the added movement in the symphony. A simple view is that it is a love offering to Alma, who he worshipped, and was written immediately after their marriage. Although she had notorious affairs, in this moment there was happiness.

After all the turmoil, passion, and terror, the last movement is cheerful. After solos from both the woodwinds and brass, the bustling, happy Finale begins using a Rondo form. The texture is generally lighter enabling us to follow the entwining melodies. Outbursts in the brass and timpani reveal a growing tension underlying the end. A short, peaceful interlude featuring the woodwinds, provides a break before the final drive where overlapping melodies build. Mahler controversially brings back the brass chorale from the second movement, to soar over busy strings. After this glorious moment there is a frenzied drive to the finish, whilst continuing to include small references to earlier material. Mahler, the craftsman to the end.

Jayne Stafford

Alison Wakeley - Horn



After graduating from Birmingham Conservatoire with first class honours, Alison then completed her Masters, with distinction, at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. During her freelance career, she was co-principal horn of Orchestra of the Swan, principal horn of Mid-Wales Opera and toured the UK for nine months with the 50th anniversary tour of West Side Story. Later, she studied at the University of Reading to achieve her PGCE. She now combines teaching music and PSHE in the secondary classroom with her life as a horn player and as a mum of three young children!

WSO Player Profile: Helen Pugh, French Horn player



Imagine 15 eight-year-olds playing the trumpet in a school classroom, all at once. That is a scene from Helen's teaching. She works for Warwickshire Music – the county music service, teaching all brass instruments, at 12 schools in the central area of the county. Trumpet is the most popular choice, but there is pleasure for Helen in having 9 horn pupils at King Edward VI School in Stratford. There are overall not very many young horn players coming forward. Young people have so much else they can do, but good playing opportunities await those who take it up.

Helen grew up in Alcester. She began playing the piano aged 5, and added the horn at age 7, influenced by a family friend. Helen's parents enjoy music, with her father singing with the CBSO chorus and playing the tuba until recently. After school, she went to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff for a music degree. There she met future husband Dave, a trumpeter from Swansea. After college, Dave was the first to find a job, at Stratford High School, so Helen moved with him back to this area. Dave is now Head of Music at Kenilworth School.

Helen, encouraged by Paul Godman and Nigel Braithwaite, soon started playing in local orchestras. She first joined the WSO in 2005 and has been a regular member since then. There are typically 4 horn parts in big orchestral works, and Helen has played all 4, but prefers 4th horn and its lower register. Particular WSO highlights have been the Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony in Coventry Cathedral, Holst's Planets Suite, and Bernstein's West Side Story. Helen's other music includes a brass quintet organised till recently by the sadly departed Julian Smith. Husband Dave also played in the quintet. Helen has accompanied many local choirs including Alcester Male Voice Choir, Espresso, Sing It Loud, the Hadland School of Dance and, more recently, Village Voices.

There is also music at home. Elder daughter Ffion plays the flute (but actually prefers drama), and younger daughter Rose sings well.

The horn is not easy to play. Its range is over 3 octaves, up to the top of the soprano range, and the upper register requires use of harmonics which are close together. This needs great control of lips and breathing, which can become harder for some as time passes. As a reward, the horn's melodious sound is used more than other brass instruments, fitting in well with the woodwind. You will normally see horn players with one hand held in the bell of the horn. Doing so provides support for the weight of the instrument, and allows fine tuning of the intonation, which can be required at the upper and lower ends of the range.

Helen uses the same horn and mouthpiece she has had for many years. She thinks it will need replacing before very long. They don't last for ever.

And why is it called "French" horn? It is because French makers were prominent in the late 17th century in making the circular hoop-shaped horns popular for hunting, and which began to be used in orchestras. The French name is "cor de chasse", or horn of the hunt. British hunting horns were a different size and not used as musical instruments, while the "cor anglais" is not a horn but a type of oboe. A tiny bit confusing. The tubing of a French horn, if stretched straight, would be around 17 feet long.

Mahler was a great lover of the horn, and you will have a good opportunity to hear Helen and the other horn players at today's concert.

As described to H. James Hunt

Roger Coull - Conductor



Roger Coull, a renowned violinist and conductor, has been principal conductor of the Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra since 2014. His international performance experience and musical versatility have earned him invitations to conduct for various orchestras, including the Beauchamp Sinfonietta, the Guernsey Symphony Orchestra, the Helix Ensemble, and the Crendon Chamber Orchestra. He also conducts the Kammermusik Chamber Orchestra in Santa Fe, New Mexico annually.

Roger Coull's musical journey began at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied violin and formed the Coull Quartet. They quickly gained recognition as one of Britain's leading string quartets. In 1977, they were appointed as the quartet-in-residence at the University of Warwick, a position they held for four decades. The Quartet has performed in concerts and radio broadcasts across Britain, Western Europe, and the USA, and has toured to places like India, the Far East, Middle East, South America, Australia, China, Brazil, Berlin, Poland, Iceland, and Singapore.

The Coull Quartet boasts an extensive discography, featuring the complete Schubert Quartets on Upbeat Classics, the complete Mendelssohn Quartets on Hyperion Records (the recommended choice of BBC Radio 3's Record Review), and a recording of quartets by Walton, Elgar, and Bridge which was voted 'Record of the Year' by the BBC Music Magazine. The Quartet has a broad repertoire and is committed to contemporary music, commissioning works from eminent British composers such as Robert Simpson, Nicholas Maw, and Edward Cowie. Their recording of Sibelius quartet and piano quintet was Editor's choice in the Gramophone magazine. Their recent CDs include Alan Ridout's Six Quartets on the Omnibus Classics label, and the piano quintets by Amy Beach and Henrique Oswald for Somm with pianist Clelia Iruzun. Their latest CD, on Somm, features voice and string quartet with Roderick Williams, James Gilchrist, and Sophie Bevan.

In addition to his work with the Quartet, Roger is a member of the Warwick Piano Trio and performs in a violin and piano duo with Lynn Arnold. He is also a respected teacher, giving masterclasses internationally, and is a regular guest at Britain's music colleges as a teacher, examiner, and adjudicator. He was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Music for his services to professional music making.

George Ewart - Leader



George studied with the Hungarian pedagogue Bela Katona. In 1983 he was first prize winner of the Sascha Lasserson International Violin Competition and afterwards gave solo debut recitals at the Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room.

George has wide orchestral experience playing with the Royal Opera House Orchestra Covent Garden from 1976-81. During his time at the opera, George worked with leading conductors including Carlos Kleiber, Sir Colin Davis, Zubin Mehta, Bernard Haitink and Sir Georg Solti.

George was appointed Principal Violin with the English Symphony Orchestra in 2000; he has performed as soloist with the orchestra and appeared as leader on numerous occasions.

He is currently leader of the Cheltenham Chamber Orchestra and the Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra. He performs with Orchestra Pro Anima, also appearing as a soloist with the orchestra. In 2023 George was appointed leader of the New English Concert Orchestra for their Battle Proms concert series.



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Mike Robins
Phil Sparke
Jo Wale

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Cameron Gregor
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Ed Rushton

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Susan Black
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Gavin Brown
Sara Coldicott
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Justine Doe
Stan Shire
Mark Starling
Natalie Williams

Flute

Celia Mills
Lindsay Martin
Alison Cooley
Emma Kendrick

Piccolo

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Emma Kendrick

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Christine Griggs

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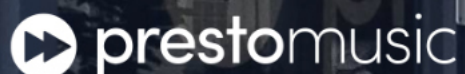
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