

# Soundbites

Christopher Benham

I am pleased to give details of the Summer season of concerts and musical events at All Saints. I hope you found plenty to interest you last season and during Holy Week. We invite you to join us regularly to enjoy the current musical programme in the lovely setting of All Saints' Church. As usual, we are most grateful to our sponsors, Waitrose, for their very generous support.

As mentioned in my last newsletter, Elgar's music will feature in several concerts as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of his birth on 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

Edward Elgar began life in the small village of Lower Broadheath outside Worcester. He was the fourth of six children born to William and Ann. As a child he was surrounded by sheet music and instruments in his father's shop in Worcester, and he would frequently take manuscripts into the countryside to study them. Thus there began for him a strong association between music and nature. He left school at fifteen and embarked on a musical career, giving piano and violin lessons. He went on to play in the first violins at the Worcester and Birmingham Festivals.

During the 1890s Elgar gradually built up a reputation as a composer, chiefly of works for the great choral festivals of the Midlands, but it was only in 1899 at the age of 42, that his first major orchestral work, the *Enigma Variations* was premièred in London and established Elgar as the pre-eminent British composer of his generation.

Between 1902 and 1914 Elgar enjoyed phenomenal success - his *First Symphony* was given one hundred performances in its first year, the *Violin Concerto* was commissioned by the world-renowned violinist Fritz Kreisler, and in 1911, the year of the completion of his *Second Symphony*, he had the Order of Merit bestowed upon him. He also held the post of Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham from 1905 to 1908.

Although Elgar's musical legacy is primarily orchestral and choral, he did write for soloists

and smaller instrumental groups. A number of these works will make appearances in our Soundbites programmes. Firstly, Christine Petch will include the five *Sea Pictures* in her recital on the 6th June. Although written with orchestral accompaniment these songs work very well in the piano arrangement we will use. Martin Penny will perform the *Vesper Voluntaries* as part of his recital on 20th June - Elgar wrote a small body of organ music having served as organist at St. George's Church in Worcester. On 11th July, I will be joined by four string players in a performance of the *Piano Quintet Op 84*, a late work, written at about the same time as the *Cello Concerto*. As we move into the Autumn Season the *Violin Sonata* and *1<sup>st</sup> Organ Sonata* will each make an appearance.

Throughout this season there are also programmes devoted to the music of Bach, Beethoven, Dvorak and Mozart and, as usual, there is a mixture of familiar faces and newcomers. We are also pleased to welcome back the Albeni String Quartet who will perform an evening concert on 12th May (*Mozart, Beethoven, Ravel*).

I do hope you will be able to join us regularly to enjoy fine music, tasty food and a warm welcome.

**Wednesday May 2<sup>nd</sup>** Anything Goes – String Quartet and Christopher Benham – Piano  
*Piano Quintet Op 81* Dvorak

**Wednesday May 9<sup>th</sup>** John Coulton – Trumpet,  
David Dunnett – Organ

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May** Katy Bircher – Baroque Flute,  
James Johnstone – Harpsichord  
*Flute Sonatas* J.S.Bach

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May** John Banks – Medieval Instruments

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May** All Saints' Choral Scholars

More information can be found at our website:  
<http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/allsaintshertford>