



BIRMINGHAM
SYMPHONIC
WINDS

PRESS RELEASE

Revised 21 April 2015

world-wide-woolfenden international event
RSC Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon
Sunday 24 May 2015, 3.00pm

...a celebration of the music of Guy Woolfenden

British composer Guy Woolfenden OBE was Head of Music at the Royal Shakespeare Company for 37 years, working with some of the company's finest actors and directors. He wrote over 150 scores for numerous RSC productions and adapted some of this music for performance in the concert hall. Guy Woolfenden's wind band scores are widely recognised as appealing and memorable to conductors, players and audiences alike. With his imaginative orchestration and the wit and pathos of the magical Shakespearean influences, Guy's music is enormously popular all over the world and, once heard, lives within us forever.

Sir Trevor Nunn, former Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, said: "Guy wrote wonderfully original, galvanising and haunting melodies that audiences yearned to hear again; music to be treasured, recorded and turned into suites and performed in concert halls."

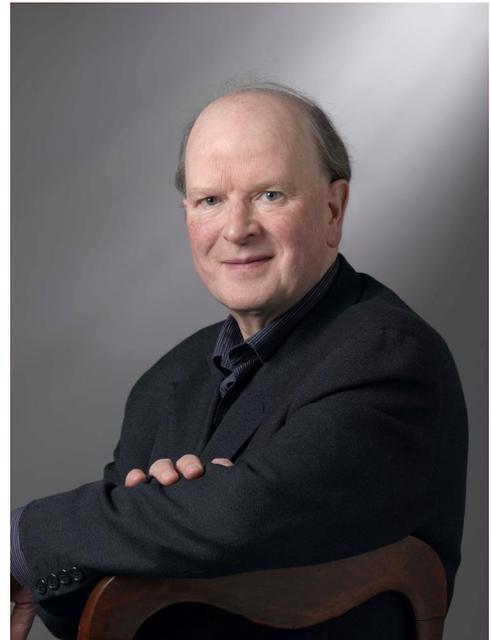
Sadly, Guy was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. In celebration of Guy's lifetime of music-making, Birmingham Symphonic Winds will perform all 14 of Guy's pieces for wind band in the presence of the composer on Sunday 24th May 2015 in the RSC Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon at 3.00pm. The concert, which is being recorded for YouTube and will be a Guinness World Record attempt, also features Linda Merrick, Principal of the Royal Northern College of Music performing solo clarinet in Rondo Variations. There will be a large screen behind the orchestra which will show archive footage throughout the performance of Guy working on RSC productions with some of the country's finest actors and directors. The concert will raise funds for the Alzheimer's Society.

In order to make this a true world-wide celebration of Guy's music in 2015, bands across the world have been invited to read-through or rehearse, workshop or programme a Woolfenden work. A dedicated website has been set up (www.world-wide-woolfenden.com) where all performances will be listed, together with further information about the project and Guy Woolfenden.

Tickets

Tickets are available from:
Royal Shakespeare Company Box Office
Telephone: 0844 800 1110
Website: www.rsc.org.uk
Prices £10 - £35

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Images available on request
www.world-wide-woolfenden.com



Note to editors

Guy Woolfenden OBE, MA (Cantab), FBSM, Hon LCM, LGSM

Guy Woolfenden has composed more than 150 scores for the Royal Shakespeare Company, where he was Head of Music for 37 years. He has also written music for film, radio, television and for the concert hall, and has composed three musicals and a children's opera. His musical version of *The Comedy of Errors*, written with Trevor Nunn for the RSC, won the Ivor Novello and Society of West End Theatre Awards for the best British musical.

Guy completed the Shakespeare canon with his score for the 1991 production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and has now written music for every Shakespeare play in productions with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Among highlights of his long and productive career with the RSC are scores for Peter Hall's legendary history cycle *The Wars of the Roses*, Trevor Nunn's 1972 Roman season, the award winning musical version of *The Comedy of Errors* and Nunn's productions of *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, which opened the Barbican Theatre in 1982. With Terry Hands, Guy collaborated on celebrated productions of *Henry V*, *Merry Wives of Windsor* and the complete History cycle. Other notable productions for which Guy wrote the music include *Hamlet* starring Kenneth Branagh, directed by Adrian Noble, and Bill Alexander's productions of *Richard III* and *The Merchant of Venice*, with Antony Sher.

Guy Woolfenden's theatre credits also encompass a large number of non-Shakespeare productions including Greek theatre, Jacobean, Restoration, and nineteenth and early twentieth century classics. He has also composed scores for many contemporary plays.

Outside the RSC, Guy has written music for Terry Hands' productions at the Comedie-Française, Paris, (*Richard III*, *Pericles*, *La Nuit des Rois* and *Le Cid*), for the Teatro Stabile, Genoa (*Donne attente alle donne*), for Den National Scene in Bergen, Norway, (*Vikingene*), and for the Norwegian National Theatre, Oslo (*Lystige Koner i Windsor*, Ibsen's *Kongsemnerne* for the International Ibsen Festival, and Chekov's *The Seagull*).

In collaboration with choreographer André Prokovsky, he arranged and composed music for two three-act ballets commissioned by Australian Ballet, *Anna Karenina* and *The Three Musketeers*, which he has subsequently conducted in productions with The Australian Ballet, The Royal Ballet of Flanders, Hong Kong Ballet Company and Asami Maki Ballet, Tokyo. Guy conducted the acclaimed Russian première of *Anna Karenina* with the Kirov Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. With André Prokovsky he also created a ballet based on *La Traviata* for London City Ballet and, in October 1994, *The Queen of Spades* for Ballet West in the USA.

As a conductor, Guy has worked with many of the major British symphony orchestras. His operatic work includes three productions with Scottish Opera and, in London, the first British productions of Nielsen's *Saul og David*, Tchaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans* and Liszt's *Don Sanche*. Guy conducted Verdi's *Falstaff*, *Simon Boccanegra* and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* with Chelsea Opera Group.

With the enormous success of his wind music, much of it based on music originally composed for the theatre, Guy has enjoyed many opportunities to conduct, coach and adjudicate ensembles all over the world. He was conductor of the Birmingham Conservatoire Wind Orchestra, which in July 2001 represented Britain at the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles Conference in Lucerne, Switzerland, playing and broadcasting concerts of British wind music. Much of his music for wind orchestra has been recorded on CD. Guy's *French Impressions*, inspired by paintings of Seurat, was commissioned by the Metropolitan Wind Symphony of Boston, Massachusetts and has been commercially recorded on the Klavier label. *Bohemian Dances* was commissioned by the University of St Thomas, St Paul, Minneapolis and received its first performance and was recorded there in May 2005. *Claremont Canzona* was commissioned by Cheadle Hulme School as part of its sesquicentenary celebrations and received its first performance at the RNCM, Manchester in March 2006. *Sounds and Sweet Airs - A Shakespeare Journey*, for soloists, chorus and orchestra received its first performance in October 2006, and his *Divertimento for Band* was given its first performance at the Conference of the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles in Killarney in July 2007. More recent works include *Reflections: Serenade No 2* for wind dectet and *Penumbra* for solo flute.

For BBC Radio 3 Guy presented programmes about *The Beggar's Opera*, Walton's *Façade*, and a programme about the composer Roberto Gerhard. He chaired the popular Radio 3 music quiz *Full Score* for three years.

Guy Woolfenden was the first Artistic Director of the Cambridge Festival from 1986-1991, was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of Birmingham Conservatoire for his services to music in the Midlands in 1990, is an Honorary Member of the London College of Music, is a past President of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (2002-03), and is an Honorary Associate Artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company. He was chairman of the Denne Gilkes Memorial Fund from 1985-2013, a charity founded to help young musicians and actors, and he was awarded an OBE in the 2007 New Year's Honours list for services to music.

Birmingham Symphonic Winds was established in 1992 by its Music Director, Keith Allen, with the aim to meet the demands of players in the area wanting to perform with a high quality wind ensemble. The 45-strong orchestra is made up of players living and working in and around Birmingham and some who travel from across the UK to participate with the ensemble.

The orchestra celebrated its 20th anniversary in November 2012, with a sell-out concert at the CBSO Centre, Birmingham where it gave the world premiere of *Behold, Go Forth and Be Joyful!* a new three movement suite by John Rutter. The concert was filmed for YouTube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00_mm3PL72o

In 2014, BSW was invited to become Ensemble in Residence at Birmingham University, forging links between BSW and the University Wind Band. BSW Music Director Keith Allen and members of BSW are mentoring student conductors and players, offering opportunities for students to rehearse with BSW and the two orchestras will be performing a joint concert at the Elgar Concert Hall, Birmingham University on Sunday 1 March.

The orchestra is held in high regard nationally, performing at venues such as the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester and several prestigious festivals. Its international reputation is also well-deserved: in December 2003 BSW promoted British contemporary wind orchestra repertoire on the world stage by becoming the first ever British ensemble to perform at the prestigious Midwest Clinic in Chicago, playing to an audience of over 2,000. In 2006 the orchestra performed Berio's *Accordo* in Birmingham Contemporary Music Group's Urban Fusion Mouth, Feet, Sound project at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham and again in 2007 at the Cologne Musik Triennale contemporary music festival. In July 2007 BSW represented the UK at the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE) conference in Ireland.

BSW prides itself on its quality and variety of programming, with a strong dedication to the creation and performance of contemporary works for wind orchestra. As part of an ambitious five-year project BSW has commissioned works including *The Canticle of The Sun* for solo percussion and wind ensemble by Martin Ellerby (2006), *Divertimento* by Guy Woolfenden (2007), *Shakespeare Pictures* by Nigel Hess (2008) and *Second City Ceremony* by Philip Sparke (2010). The final new work in this unique commissioning programme, the eagerly awaited *Danceries II* by Kenneth Hesketh, received its world premiere in Birmingham on 9 April 2011 alongside the four other commissions.

BSW's critically acclaimed New York debut took place at the prestigious Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, on 17 April 2011, receiving a standing ovation. All five of the recent BSW commissions were performed showcasing the best of contemporary British symphonic wind music.

In Easter 2014, BSW performed joint concerts in Hong Kong with the Hong Kong Youth Symphonic Band at the Kwai Tsing Theatre and a joint concert with the Macau Youth Symphonic Band at Macau University. Each performance featured a varied programme of music by British composers, together with guest saxophone soloist Hannah Marcinowicz playing *Cinnamon Concerto* by Martin Ellerby, in the presence of the composer.

Birmingham Symphonic Winds is delighted to be supported by Hortons Estate Limited.

BSW has achieved an unparalleled track record in its 22 year history, with more accolades for musical enterprise and excellence than any other wind orchestra in the UK:

- Gold award, National Concert Band Festival (UK)

- Gala concerts at the International Wind Festival, Royal Northern College of Music (1999 & 2004)
- Invitation concerts to WASBE Conferences in Schladming, Austria (1997) and Killarney, Ireland (2007)
- 1st prize, International Wind Festival, Strasbourg, France (2000)
- Invitation concert as the first-ever UK ensemble at Midwest Clinic, Chicago (2003)
- Guest ensemble at opening concert of Musik Triennale Köln, Cologne Cathedral (2007)
- BBC Radio 3 broadcast (2008)
- 5 new works commissioned over 5 years (2007 - 2011)
- Ensemble in Residence: Birmingham University (2014 -)
- Premieres & Encores recording project (2007 + 2008)
- Association with high profile soloists: Alison Balsom (trumpet), Juliette Bausor (flute), David Childs (euphonium), Craig Ogden (guitar), Sarah Williamson (clarinet)
- Sell-out concert seasons at CBSO Centre, Birmingham
- BSW has performed over 325 different pieces of music, including 18 premiere performances, in more than 25 different venues in the UK, USA and Europe.

www.bsw.org.uk

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