

Hexham Orpheus Choir & Northern Praeclassica

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

A SEA SYMPHONY

Hexham Abbey
Saturday 7th May 2016
7.30pm

Director - Mark Edwards
Soloists - Carole King & Alex Otterburn

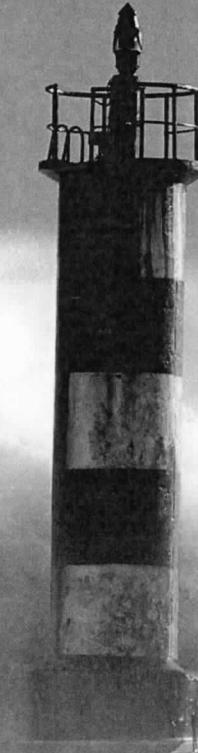
PROGRAMME

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The Programme

7.30 Concert Begins

The Wasps Overture. Ralph Vaughan Williams

Songs of the Sea. C Villiers Stanford

Interval with refreshments

A Sea Symphony. Ralph Vaughan Williams

- I A Song for All Ships
- II On the Beach at Night Alone
- III (Scherzo) The Waves
- IV The Explorers

The Choir

Tonight's concert is a joint performance by two choirs, coming together as one for this concert.

Hexham Orpheus Choir

Hexham Orpheus Choir (Charity Registration 514942) is dedicated to performing and promoting access to classical music in Tynedale. We have over 85 members and always welcome new singers. Our members range from the very experienced to the less so and both are equally welcome. For the less experienced, if you have a singing voice, with an innate feel for pitch and rhythm and a desire to practice and develop your singing and sight reading, then membership of the choir is a great way to develop your skills.

<http://hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk/>

Northern Praeclassica

Northern Praeclassica (Charity Registration No. 503478) is a Newcastle-based chamber choir. Founded in 1973, it originally specialised in music of the pre-classical period, but in recent years has expanded its repertoire to include music from all periods. Its programmes may include sacred and secular, accompanied and unaccompanied, and large or small scale works. In a typical year we stage three concerts, of which one may be on a larger scale, sometimes given in aid of a charity and sometimes joining forces with other local choral groups.

www.northernpraeclassica.org.uk

Biographies

Director of Music - Mark Edwards MMus

Originally from Edinburgh, Mark trained as a percussionist before taking up conducting and receiving an MMus with Distinction from Newcastle University, studying with Professor Eric Cross. Mark is pleased to have studied and worked with many great conductors including: Sian Edwards, Pierre-André Valade, Philippe Bach, Rodolfo Saglimbeni, Philip MacKenzie, Christopher Gayford and Edwin Roxburgh. Mark has also conducted many orchestra's including: The Amadeus Orchestra, St Michel Strings (Finland), Newcastle University Symphony Orchestra and is also a workshop leader for the charity Streetwise Opera. In the last two years Mark has worked with the Royal Northern Sinfonia in première performances of local composers' works, including performances in Hall One and Hall Two at Sage Gateshead.

Recent highlights include performing at the Royal Albert Hall and Symphony Hall (Birmingham); live broadcasts for BBC 3's 'In Tune' and 'Words and Music' programmes. Recent concerts included Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances, Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5 and Violin Concerto, Rachmaninov Symphony No.2, Mahler Symphony No. 1, Strauss Till Eulenspiegel and Four Last Songs, Brahms Ein Deutsches Requiem and Mozart Requiem. Mark has been lucky enough to receive scholarships to participate in international conducting masterclasses with Sasha Mäkilä in Finland, Dr László Norbert Nemes at the Kodály Institute (Hungary), Sian Edwards at Dartington and with Pierre-André Valade as part of the London Sinfonietta Academy.

He is currently director of music for Northern Praeclassica, Felling Male Voice Choir, Hexham Orpheus Choir, Newcastle Sinfonietta and is also Festival Director for the Northern Chords Music Festival and sings with award winning choir 'Voices of Hope'.

Carole King

Born and brought up in Perth, Scotland, Carole studied singing at both the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal College of Music. While studying she received various prizes including Scottish Opera's John Noble Bursary. As a soloist, her concert performances have included Beethoven "Symphony No 9" at the Barbican Hall in London, and Bach "St Matthew Passion" with the late Sir David Willcocks. Operatic roles have included Mimi in "La Bohème", which she understudied for Scottish Opera, and during her time with English National Opera, between 1996 and 2004, Pamina in "The Magic Flute" and Anna in "Nabucco". Since moving to the North East with her young family she has performed regularly as a soloists and with Voices of Hope, in addition to teaching.

Alex Otterburn

A 2014 winner of the International Opera Awards bursary, Alex read Economics at The University of Manchester and went on to complete his masters at the Royal Academy of Music (Distinction, Dip RAM). Since then things have moved quickly and in 2015, Alex made his international debut at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw singing Curio in "Giulio Cesare" as well as the National Concert Hall, Dublin singing Schaunard in "La Bohème" with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra. Other debuts include the title roles of "Don Giovanni" in London and "Yevgeniy Onegin" for Dartington International Festival under Russian specialist Sian Edwards. His credits include work with Grange Park Opera, Opera Ireland, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival and lecture recitals with Opera Prelude at the Cadogan Hall, London. Alex is currently studying on the Royal Academy Opera course with a full scholarship.

Rehearsal Pianists

We would like to thank our rehearsal pianists Yoshie Kawamura and Jacqueline Metcalf for their hard work in helping to prepare the chorus for rehearsals.

The Choir

Sopranos

Claire Arnold
Sarah Barker
Carolyn Below
Evelyn Blenkinsop
Anna Chaddock
Emily Chandler
Elspeth Christie
Judi Cornforth
Jill Dexter
Cathy Duncan
Nancy Gash
Cath Griffith
Carolyn Hawkes
Rosemarie Herdman
Adele Kinsella
Pip May
Jacqueline Metcalf
Tanya Pless-Mulloli
Bronya Read
Ann Reed
Nuala Rose
Maeve Selby
Jay Thacker

Carolyn Vasey
Brenda Waton
Carrie Winger
Felicity Wright

Altos

Lou Baxter
Jennifer Britton
Angela Brown
Alice Brunton
Wendy Busby
Diane Clifford
Jane Dammers
Sheila Dance
Nicola Davison
Lynne Henderson
Rita Howell
Mary Illingworth
Margaret Jacot
Alison Menzies
Marion Mullen
Louise Khazaee
Linda Lord
Val Mallinson

Jenny McKay
Jenny Myles
Liz Nisbet
Joanna O'Neill
Heather Porritt
Fionnuala Ratliff
Pat Rose
Dorothy Simmons
Janet Storrie
Gill Thompson
Jean Wilks

Tenors

John Barker
John Below
Malcolm Chainey
Tim Grew
Ted Henderson
Les Hodgson
Haydn Jenkins
Susan Kent
Chris Little
Lesley MacDonald
Peter Nevin

Rachel Ogilvy
Eddie Palmer
Bruce Reed
Peter Vasey,
Alan Wright

Basses

Barry Bates
Paul Berry
Julian Boyfield
David Brown
Les Brunton
Iain Clifford
Glenn Davis
Stuart Dearlove
Nick Lord
Malcolm Mace
Keith Mallinson
Tony May
Owen McArdle
Don McLeod
John Rose
Chris Simmons
Alan Verheyden

The Orchestra

1st Violin

Ed Cross (Leader)
Julia Boulton
Jane Cuggy
Sue Innes
Emma Frisk
Christopher Hartley

2nd Violin

Jo Montgomery
Andrew Uttley
Dawn Allen
Hannah Bashir

Viola

Chrissie Slater
Laura Newton
Maria Laura Belli

'Cello

Ele Leckie
Greg Pullen
Clare MacFadyen

Bass

Duncan Brown

Flute

Clare Crinson-Graves
Brian Stewart

Oboe

Philip Cull
Judith Rousseau

Clarinet

Jennifer Murray
Katrina Buzzard

Horn

Chris Senior
Maria Robinson
Ben Woolley
Ian Kille

Trumpet

Alex Lewis
Alastair Lord
David Hignett

Trombone

Stuart Gray
Steve Baxter
Ian Davies

Tuba

Alastair Story

Harp

Venera Bojkova

Timpani

Malcom Dick

Bassoon

Andrew Jacob
Molly Nielsen

Percussion

Simon Coleman
Jonathan Fenwick
Matt Moore

Programme Note

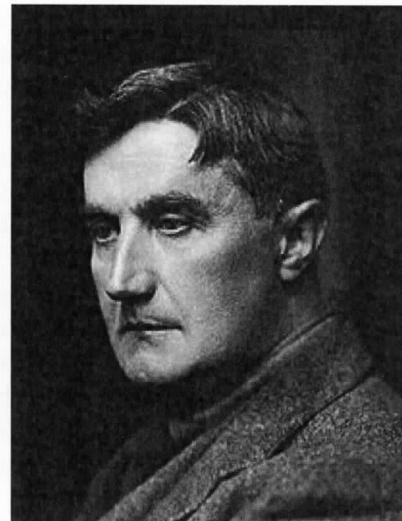
The Irish born Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was a scant generation older than the Englishman Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). They shared much common ground: both were well-born sons, became alumni of Cambridge University, had connections with the newly founded Royal College of Music (as composition professor and his student respectively) and both became noted musicians, composers, and conductors of their age. But the twenty years that divided them marked a threshold in musical style, which Stanford was not interested in crossing but which Vaughan Williams ardently helped to draw.

Stanford worked within Victorian value systems, and his approach to the structure and content of music followed a recognised Victorian pattern. That is, he studied music in Leipzig and Berlin and upheld Brahmsian principles in his composition. In contrast Vaughan Williams, temperamentally uncomfortable with social and philosophical systems which created divisions among mankind, was also unsatisfied by the legacy of Germanic musical conventions that he was invited to adopt. From his first published work in 1901 (*Linden Lea*) until the first performance in 1910 of his *Sea Symphony* - and for many ensuing years - his diverse projects were driven by his desire to identify a characteristic British music of historical integrity, and to discover an individual musical voice.

Vaughan Williams: Overture, *The Wasps* (1909)

Aristophanes' comedy *The Wasps*, first produced in 422 BC, is a caustic satire on the Athenian judiciary of the day. The "Wasps" are the elderly jurors who constitute the play's classical Greek chorus, and who swarm wasp-like to defend one of their kind.

Towards the end of the same years in which he was working on *The Sea Symphony*, Vaughan Williams composed incidental music for his old college's production of *The Wasps*. He also arranged an orchestral suite from the music, of which the overture is most often performed today. Its jovial mood announces comedy, but the energetic wasps are quickly usurped by folk song themes which have more connection with England than with Ancient Greece, while the sparkling orchestration displays the fresh orchestral colour palette which the composer had developed by 1909.



Stanford: Songs of the Sea op. 91 (1904)

Stanford died leaving a considerable opus which included nine operas, seven symphonies and eleven concerti as well as numerous choral works. But despite their acknowledged technical mastery, his compositions have been felt to lack emotional depth, and except for the church music most quickly fell out of the concert repertoire. His set of five *Sea Songs* is one of the survivors.

The five poems were written by the Victorian poet Henry Newbolt (1862-1938), glorifying not the sea but the valour of the English sea-dog in a gallery of nautical events and triumphs (the third poem, ignoring a 300 year divide, connects the Devonian Sir Francis Drake with the Devonshire Regiment of 1900, in an allusion to the recently concluded Anglo-Boer War). Newbolt was delighted with Stanford's settings of his poems, which he felt ideally enhanced their patriotic sentiments. The romantic songs are a tuneful demonstration of Stanford's harmonic and melodic ingenuity, and have remained popular despite the unapologetic imperialism they evince.

In keeping with the shanty idiom, the writing is largely for male solo voice; the piece was first published for "solo voices (and male chorus ad lib)". It is not known when the SATB choral version was published, or even whether Stanford was responsible for it.



Vaughan Williams: A Sea Symphony - Symphony no.1 (1910)

“Whenever Ralph was rehearsing a choral work” wrote Ursula Vaughan Williams, “he would read the words to the choir, before they attempted the music, to make his singers understand the mood and the quality of the poem.” No clearer testimony can express the significance that Vaughan Williams attached to the text of his choral compositions. The “mood and quality” of these Walt Whitman verses deeply inform the music that Vaughan Williams strove during seven years to create.

The American poet appealed strongly to more composers of the late Victorian era than Vaughan Williams alone. Whitman’s voice celebrated not what divides but what unites mankind, in lines free of metrical constraint, their egalitarian, humanist content liberated from European conventions and belief systems. As a Cambridge undergraduate Vaughan Williams had so directly responded to this verse that he reputedly always carried his edition of Whitman’s major collection “Leaves of Grass” with him. In 1903, selecting several poems to express both physical and metaphysical dimensions of sea imagery, he produced a sketch entitled “Notes for choral work Songs of the Sea”. His intentions were worlds apart from Stanford’s.

During the next seven years the composer embarked on purposeful research into English folk song, studied Tudor and Elizabethan music, and as Musical Editor to the English Hymnal invaluabley enriched the nation’s stock of Anglican hymns. He also spent the winter of 1907-08 in Paris receiving intensive tuition from Ravel in composition and orchestration. These influences feed into the musical language of the work which evolved from the 1903 sketch into a nobly conceived first symphony. The ever generous Stanford invited Vaughan Williams to conduct its première in the Leeds Triennial Festival, of which he was Director. The date was 12th October, 1910, Vaughan Williams’s 38th birthday. In his own programme note the composer wrote: ” The plan of the work is symphonic rather than narrative . . . [hence] . . . frequent repetitions of important words and phrases which occur in the poems . . . the words as well as the music are treated symphonically . . . ” Thus the four movements of the symphony correspond to four poems, but do not follow four poems verbatim. In the first movement, the chorus evokes a wide and changing seascape before the baritone solo introduces the voice of the universal sailor, followed by the soprano’s spiritual reflections on the unifying properties of the sea and the soul’s immortality. The two middle movements set shorter poems, a contemplative nocturne for male solo and chorus, and a painterly scherzo for chorus only. The visionary final movement engages with the soul of man on an heroic voyage which derives its worth from the seeking and not from the unknowable destination.

A friend who heard the first performance wrote congratulating Vaughan Williams on the “lovely texture of the whole” while unable to resist commenting in parenthesis that the singers “may send their throat doctors’ bills to you later!” A chorus numbering 348 in Leeds Town Hall that night had not obscured what Vaughan Williams achieved in this utterly original piece of English composition: swell heaving, currents tugging, light glinting, moods shifting, it is a musical drama of the grandeur of quest, risk, and universality which still touches listeners today.

SONGS OF THE SEA: five poems by Henry Newbolt

Drake's Drum

Drake he's in his hammock and a thousand miles away,
(Captain, art thou sleeping there below?)
Slung between the round shot in Nombre Dios Bay,
And dreaming all the time of Plymouth Hoe.
Yonder looms the Island, yonder lie the ships,
With sailor lads a-dancing heel-and-toe,
And the shore-lights flashing, and the night-tide dashing,
He sees it all so plainly as he saw it long ago.

Drake he was a Devon man, and ruled the Devon seas,
(Captain, art thou sleeping there below?)
Roving tho' his death fell, he went with heart at ease,
A' dreaming all the time of Plymouth Hoe.
"Take my drum to England, hang it by the shore,
Strike it when your powder's running low;
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port of Heaven,
And drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago."
Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come,
(Captain, art thou sleeping there below?)
Slung between the round shot, listening for the drum,
And dreaming all the time of Plymouth Hoe.
Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Call him when ye sail to meet the foe;
Where the old trade's plying and the old flag flying
They shall find him ware and waking, as they found him long ago!

Outward Bound

Dear Earth, near Earth, the clay that made us men,
The land we sowed,
The hearth that glowed---
O Mother, must we bid farewell to thee?
Fast dawns the last dawn, and what shall comfort then
The lonely hearts that roam the outer sea?

Gray wakes the daybreak, the shivering sails are set,
To misty deeps
The channel sweeps---
O Mother, think on us who think on thee!
Earth-home, birth-home, with love remember yet
The sons in exile on the eternal sea.

Devon, o Devon

Drake in the North Sea grimly prowling,
Treading his dear Revenge's deck,
Watched, with the sea-dogs round him growling,
Galleons drifting wreck by wreck.
"Fetter and Faith for England's neck,

Faggot and Father, Saint and chain, -
Yonder the Devil and all go howling,
Devon, O Devon, in wind and rain!"
Drake at the last off Nombre lying,
Knowing the night that toward him crept,
Gave to the sea-dogs round him crying
This for a sign before he slept: -
"Pride of the West! What Devon hath kept
Devon shall keep on tide or main;
Call to the storm and drive them flying,
Devon, O Devon, in wind and rain!"
Valour of England gaunt and whitening,
Far in a South land brought to bay,
Locked in a death-grip all day tightening,
Waited the end in twilight gray.
Battle and storm and the sea-dog's way
Drake from his long rest turned again,
Victory lit thy steel with lightning,
Devon, O Devon, in wind and rain!

Homeward Bound

After long labouring in the windy ways,
On smooth and shining tides
Swiftly the great ship glides,
Her storms forgot, her weary watches past;
Northward she glides, and through the enchanted haze
Faint on the verge her far hope dawns at last.

The phantom sky-line of a shadowy down,
Whose pale white cliffs below
Through sunny mist aglow,
Like noon-day ghosts of summer moonshine gleam---
Soft as old sorrow, bright as old renown,
There lies the home, of all our mortal dream.

The Old Superb

The wind was rising easterly, the morning sky was blue,
The Straits before us opened wide and free;
We looked towards the Admiral, where high the Peter flew,
And all our hearts were dancing like the sea.
"The French are gone to Martinique with four and twenty sail!
The Old Superb is old and foul and slow,
But the French are gone to Martinique, and Nelson's on the trail.
And where he goes the Old Superb must go!"

So Westward ho! for Trinidad, and Eastward ho! for Spain,
And 'Ship ahoy!' a hundred times a day;
Round the world if need be, and round the world again,
With a lame duck lagging all the way.

The Old Superb was barnacled and green as grass below,
Her sticks were only fit for stirring grog;

The pride of all her midshipmen was silent long ago,
And long ago they ceased to heave the log.
Four year out from home she was, and ne'er a week in port,
And nothing save the guns aboard her bright;
But Captain Keats he knew the game, and swore to share the sport,
For he never yet came in too late to fight.

So Westward ho! for Trinidad, and Eastward ho! for Spain,
And 'Ship ahoy!' a hundred times a day;
Round the world if need be, and round the world again,
With a lame duck lagging all the way.

'Now up, my lads,' the Captain cried, 'for sure the case were hard
If longest out were first to fall behind;
Aloft, aloft with studding sails, and lash them on the yard,
For night and day the Trades are driving blind!'
So all day long and all day long behind the fleet we crept,
And how we fretted none but Nelson guessed;
But every night the Old Superb she sailed when others slept,
Till we ran the French to earth with all the rest.

Oh, 'twas Westward ho! for Trinidad, and Eastward ho! for Spain,
And 'Ship ahoy!' a hundred times a day;
Round the world if need be, and round the world again,
With a lame duck lagging all the way.

A SEA SYMPHONY: verses by Walt Whitman

1. A Song for all Seas, all Ships

Behold, the sea itself,
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;
See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle the green and blue, See, the steamers coming
and going, steaming in or out of port, See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.
Today a rude brief recitative,
Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or ship-signal,
Of unnamed heroes in the ships -- of waves spreading and spreading far as the eye can reach,
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,
Fitful, like a surge.
Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all intrepid sailors,
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never surprise nor death dismay.
Pick'd sparingly without noise by thee, old ocean, chosen by thee,
Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and unitest nations,
Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

Flaunt out, O sea, your separate flags of nations!
Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals!
But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul of man one flag above all the rest,
A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man elate above death,
Token of all brave captains and all intrepid sailors and mates,
And all that went down doing their duty,
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains young or old,
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all brave sailors, All seas, all ships.

II. On the Beach at Night, Alone

On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the universes and of the future.
A vast similitude interlocks all,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different,
All nations, all identities that have existed or may exist,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

III. (Scherzo) The Waves

After the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars and ropes,
Below, a myriad, myriad waves hastening, lifting up their necks,
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,
Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant with curves,
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking displaced the surface,
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the ocean yearnfully flowing,
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and frolicsome under the sun,
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many fragments,
Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following.

IV. The Explorers

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,
Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless stars above,
Below, the manifold grass and waters,
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,
Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.
Down from the gardens of Asia descending,
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,
Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations,
questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-happy hearts,
that sad incessant refrain, 'Wherfore unsatisfied soul?
Whither O mocking life?'
Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?

Who justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?
Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be carried out,
Perhaps even now the time has arrived.
After the seas are all cross'd,
After the great captains have accomplish'd their work,
After the noble inventors,
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

O we can wait no longer,
We too take ship O soul,
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,
Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O soul,)
Caroling free, singing our song of God,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like waters flowing,
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,
Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them.
Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou mest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.
Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding O soul thou journeyest forth;
Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers -- haul out -- shake out every sail!
Sail forth -- steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me, For we are bound where mariner has not yet
dared to go, And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.
O my brave soul!
O farther farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!

Our Sponsors and Acknowledgements

This performance with symphony orchestra is a major project for both choirs and we are extremely grateful for the sponsorship and support offered by many in our community. We would like to thank our sponsors:

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The Hexham Magazine Company, for publicity and poster design. The Hexham Magazine Company publish, 'Barnacle Bill Magazine', for all those interested in messing about in boats (in the practical as well as musical sense). www.barnaclebill.org

Logic, for assistance with transport and logistics. Logic is a manufacturing company based in Hexham which specialises in the design and manufacture of equipment and accessories for ATVs, UTVs and Quad Bikes. www.logictoday.co.uk

Corbridge Middle School for provision of additional seating.

Margaret Huntington. For loan of lighting equipment

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