

York Guildhall Orchestra
York Barbican, 5th January 2019

Music is the best medicine. Dragging myself off my sickbed on Saturday afternoon, I really had no expectation of leaving the Barbican after two hours feeling refreshed and invigorated. I should have known better.

The menu for this family concert was dances by Johann Strauss the Younger, lightly seasoned with Lehár, film scores by York's own John Barry and Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. A better tonic would be hard to imagine. The York Guildhall Orchestra under Simon Wright was on cracking form and an all-age audience lapped it up.

Lynne Dawson, YGO's president and another illustrious Yorkie, was at her most engaging as narrator in Prokofiev's orchestral fairy tale, colouring her tones magically. The players followed suit, with the woodwind principals notably distinctive and the horn trio's Wolf appropriately menacing.

Much of the Strauss was enlivened by seven organised dancing couples on the wings, including a pair of youngsters, joined informally by others from the audience. The *Tritsch-Tratsch Polka* had extra panache and the brass were supercharged in the build up to Lehár's *Gold and Silver Waltz*, which had a fizzing finale. The bass drummer interpreted *Thunder and Lightning* pretty literally and later popped several 'corks' in the *Champagne Polka* with equal élan. The violins especially relished Barry's sweeping melodies from *Out of Africa* and *Born Free*.

It was all terrific fun, topped off with the *Radetzky March* as encore. This concert really should become an annual tradition. Beats cough syrup any day.

Martin Dryer
7th January 2019