

George LLOYD Symphony No. 3 in F major **Edward ELGAR** *Sea Pictures*, Op. 37

Sheldon BAIR The Homefront 1944 Sergei RACHMANINOV Symphonic Dances, Op. 45

Ealing Symphony Orchestra
John GIBBONS Musical Director
Harriet WILLIAMS Mezzo-soprano

Saturday, 11 February 2023 · 7.30pm St Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane, W5 1QG





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John Gibbons Musical Director



John Gibbons is a multi-faceted musician: conductor, composer, arranger, pianist, and organist, who works across musical genres including opera, cathedral music, and recording neglected British orchestral music.

John has conducted most of the major British orchestras including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and, most recently, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

He has recorded orchestral works by Nikos Skalkottas with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the string concertos of Arthur Benjamin with the RSNO on the Dutton Epoch label, four Mozart Piano Concertos with Idil Biret — two with the London Mozart Players and two with the Worthing Symphony Orchestra, Bruckner's Ninth

Symphony (with a completion of the finale by Nors Josephson) with the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra on the Danacord label, and William Wordsworth's Orchestral Works (Vol. 1) on the Toccata label.

Renowned for his adventurous programming, John has given many world and UK premieres of both new pieces (most recently the Triple Concerto by Errollyn Wallen with Kosmos Ensemble and WSO in Chichester Cathedral) and neglected works including the Third Orchestral Set by Charles Ives, the Violin Concerto by Robert Still, and both the Second Piano Concerto and Violin Concerto by William Alwyn. His performance of George Lloyd's Fourth Symphony with the Ealing Symphony Orchestra drew an ecstatic review from Simon Heffer in the Daily Telegraph.

John recorded Laura Rossi's film score The Battle of the Ancre (Pinewood Studios) and conducted the BBC Concert Orchestra in her score to The Battle of the Somme at the live screening in the Royal Festival Hall to commemorate the centenary of the ending of this battle.

Overseas work includes Walton's First Symphony with the George Enescu Philharmonic as well as concerts with the Macedonian Philharmonic, the Çukurova Symphony (Turkey), the Portuguese Symphony Orchestra, and performances of Malcolm Arnold's Fourth Symphony in Latvia and Vaughan Williams's A Sea Symphony in Worms, Germany.

John Gibbons studied music at Queens' College, Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Royal College of Music, winning numerous awards as conductor, pianist, and accompanist. He assisted John Eliot Gardiner on the 'Leonore' project and the recording of music by Percy Grainger, and was Leonard Slatkin's second conductor for a performance of Charles Ives's Fourth Symphony with the Concertge-

bouw Orchestra in Amsterdam.

He has conducted numerous opera productions at Opera Holland Park with particular emphasis on Verdi, Puccini, and the verismo composers, including Mascagni's Iris and Cilea's Adriana Lecouvreur. He conducted La Bohème for the Spier Festival in South Africa, toured Hansel & Gretel around Ireland with Opera Northern Ireland and Opera Theatre Company, and conducted a number of productions for English Touring Opera. John's orchestral reductions include Walton's Troilus & Cressida for Opera St Louis, Missouri and Karl Jenkins's Stabat Mater.

John, a renowned communicator with audiences, is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Vice-Chairman of the British Music Society, and Choral Director at Clifton Cathedral. His own music has been performed in various abbeys and cathedrals as well as at the Southbank, London.

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Harriet Williams Mezzo-soprano



Harriet Williams made her Royal Opera House, Covent Garden début as Erster Knappe *Parsifal*, returning to perform Flosshilde *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Girl *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Also at the ROH she was the featured soloist in her debut with The Royal Ballet performing six Duparc songs in *L'Invitation au voyage*. At English National Opera she made her début as Polinesso *Ariodante*.

Her repertoire includes title roles in Giulio Cesare, Carmen, and Ariodante, Waltraute Die Walküre, Bradamante Alcina, Ottavia, Arnalta, and Fortuna L'incoronazione di Poppea, Dido Dido and Aeneas, Mistress Quickly Falstaff, Fenena Nabucco, Hannah Kennedy Maria Stuarda, Smeton Anna Bolena, Flora and Annina La Traviata, Marcellina Le nozze di Figaro, Suzuki Madama Butterfly, Angelina La Cenerentola, Rosina Il barbiere di Siviglia, Albine Thaïs, Pauline and Governess Queen of Spades, Nenila The Enchantress, Parséïs Esclarmonde,

Madame Larina Eugene Onegin, Mab La jolie fille de Perth, Erda Das Rheingold, Zweite Norn Götterdämmerung, Brangäne Tristan und Isolde; and Geneviève Pelléas et Mélisande.

She has sung principal roles with Welsh National Opera, English Touring Opera, Opera Holland Park, Grange Park Opera, Longborough Festival Opera, the Early Opera Company, and the Chelsea Opera Group. She has performed under the baton of Sir Colin Davis, Sir Bernard Haitink, Sir Antonio Pappano, Sakari Oramo, Vladimir Jurowski, Petr Altrichter, Sir Neville Marriner, Carlo Rizzi, Christian Curnyn, Christopher Moulds, and Wolfgang Seeliger.

She has sung with The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The Royal Scottish National Orchestra, The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and The Academy of St- Martin-in-the-Fields. She appeared as Flosshilde in a semi-staged concert performance of *Das Rheingold* with the

London Philharmonic Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski at the Royal Festival Hall.

Major concert performances include Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Ravel's *Chansons madécasses* with the Northern Sinfonia at The Sage, Gateshead, and on tour in Hong Kong, and Bach Cantata No. 21 with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Sakari Oramo, also broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Harriet Williams's international engagements have included Mrs. Olsen in *Street Scene* with Opéra de Toulon and in The Opera Group's award-winning production at Théatre du Châtelet and Gran Teatre del Liceu, and Maria in the Italian premiere of *For You* by Michael Berkeley at the Teatro Olimpico in Rome.

Recent engagements include Mrs. Olsen in Street Scene at the Teatro Real in Madrid and Opéra de Monte-Carlo in Monaco, Fricka in Die Walküre for Grimeborn Opera Festival, soloist in Mahler's Rückert Lieder with The Lambeth Orchestra. Brangäne, Tristan und Isolde, Act 2 with The Ealing Symphony Orchestra, soloist in Elgar's Sea Pictures and Sheldon Bair's The Homefront 1944 with the Worthing Symphony Orchestra, Brangäne Tristan und Isolde with The London Opera Company and soloist in Verdi's Requiem with the Tonbridge Philharmonic Society. Future engagements include Second Norn, Götterdämmerung in Longborough Festival Opera's Ring Cycle and Madame Ulrica Arvidsson in Un ballo in maschera with the Chelsea Opera Group.





Ealing Symphony Orchestra

Saturday, 18 March 2023 · 7.30pm St Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane, W5 1QG

Laura ROSSi Jailhouse Graffiti
BEETHOVEN Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61
DVOŘÁK Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95

John GIBBONS Musical Director Peter NALL Violin

Tickets: £16 (£6 students & U25s, accompanied U18s free)



George Lloyd (1913–1998)

Symphony No. 3 in F major

I. Allegro con fuoco II. Lento III. Finale: Energico

In 1992 George Lloyd wrote:

In about 1980, I decided I must get rid of my early pieces; anything written before my opera *lernin* was suspect. I had a glorious bonfire and would have added my first three symphonies to the flames. There was a difficulty; by the time I was clearing away all this debris, I had written seven more symphonies and I could not face having to change all the names and numberings on the scores and orchestral parts. The simplest course was to revise the first three and leave them to take their fate. This I did for Nos. 1 & 2 but the Third has been left virtually as it was apart from a few very small additions.

I wrote the first three symphonies when I was nineteen and at that time, with all the arrogance of youth, I greatly disliked large symphonies in the romantic style — except for Elgar's No. 2 which I still believe is the best symphony ever written by an Englishman. So I decided that if I wrote symphonies, they would be short. To this end both No. 1 & No. 3 are in one continuous movement although they are both in three distinct sections. I was probably finding a good excuse for my difficulty in sustaining a long slow movement, something which is never easy to achieve.

No. 3 starts with an impetuous theme and soon grows into a long expressive



tune. At 19 a young composer tends to be either ultra-romantic or cynical and world-ly-wise; I was one of the former so there is plenty of vigorous despair in a minor key. The slow section is just one long sad tune in different guises. It dies away to be broken into by a brass fanfare leading to the final section which is bright and lively.

I was fortunate in that only two years after completing the symphony I met John Ireland who had taken a fancy to *Iernin*. I showed him my 1st and 3rd symphonies and he recommended No. 3 as the one to be played in London. He introduced it to the powers-that-be at the BBC. I conducted the first performance with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in November 1935 at a "Contemporary Music" concert.



Programme Notes

Programme Notes

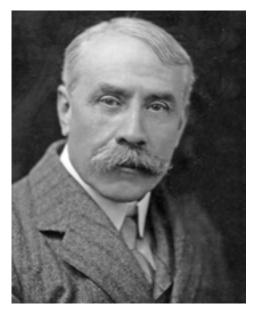
Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Sea Pictures

I. Sea Slumber Song
II. In Haven (Capri)
III. Sabbath Morning at Sea
IV. Where Corals Lie
V. The Swimmer

The first work that Elgar completed after the success of his Enigma Variations in 1899 was the song cycle Sea Pictures. One of its songs, using a text by his wife Alice, had already been composed in 1897 under the title Love Alone. Alice slightly altered the words and retitled it In Haven to make it fit with a scheme of 'sea songs' that was forming in Elgar's mind. Alice's poem became the starting point for the cycle, although, as Elgar gathered further material, he realised it must be placed second. He was to some extent consciously modelling Sea Pictures upon Berlioz's cycle Les Nuits d'été. Characteristically, each of the movements contains subtle and colourful touches of orchestration that show his sensitivity to the text. Indeed. Sea Pictures is not simply a set of songs about the sea. Elgar, perhaps feeling isolated from the mainstream musical world, sought to focus on the isolating aspects of the sea, including the idea of the sea as the abode of death, the "watery grave". Thus in the first song, a setting of a poem by Roden Noel, the sea sings a motherly lullaby, as it were to a sailor who will never return from its bosom. Alice Elgar's poem actually started out as a poignant recollection of a visit she made years before to the island of Capri, but behind it lies the idea that love is as permanent as death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem Sabbath Morning at Sea finds a sailor far from home, thinking of those he left behind while all around him sings the sea. There is no mistaking the "watery grave" image-



ry in Richard Garnett's *Where Corals Lie*, for which Elgar supplies a strange, almost supernatural kind of music. The last song is a setting of A.L. Gordon's poem *The Swimmer*, cast in a vigorous Allegro di molto. This is humanity facing the ultimate challenge of the sea. It evokes some of Elgar's finest music and is one of his most difficult, taxing songs: a fitting close to a reflective, thought-provoking cycle.

(Italicised text indicates lines repeated in the songs, but not in the original poems.)

I. Sea Slumber Song

by Roden Noel

Sea-birds are asleep,
The world forgets to weep,
Sea murmurs her soft slumber-song
On the shadowy sand
Of this elfin land;
"I, the Mother mild,
Hush thee, O my child,
Forget the voices wild!

Isles in elfin light
Dream, the rocks and caves,
Lull'd by whispering waves,
Veil their marbles bright.
Foam glimmers faintly white
Upon the shelly sand
Of this elfin land;
Sea-sound, like violins,
To slumber woos and wins,
I murmur my soft slumber-song,
Leave woes, and wails, and sins,
Ocean's shadowy might
Breathes good-night,
Good-night!"

II. In Haven (Capri)

by Caroline Alice Elgar

Closely let me hold thy hand, Storms are sweeping sea and land; I ove alone will stand.

Closely cling, for waves beat fast, Foam-flakes cloud the hurrying blast; Love alone will last.

Kiss my lips, and softly say:
"Joy, sea-swept, may fade to-day;
Love alone will stay."

III. Sabbath Morning at Sea

by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The ship went on with solemn face;
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward.
I bowed down weary in the place;
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight!
The waters around me, turbulent,
The skies, impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
[As] glorified by [even the] intent
Of holding the day-glory!

Love me, sweet friends, this Sabbath day,

The sea sings round me while ye roll Afar the hymn, unaltered, And kneel, where once I knelt to pray, And bless me deeper in your soul Because your voice has faltered.

And though this sabbath comes to me Without the stoled minister, Or chanting congregation, God's Spirit [shall give comfort], He Who brooded soft on waters drear, Creator on creation.

[He shall assist me to look] higher, Where keep the saints, with harp and song.

An endless Sabbath morning, And on that sea commixed with fire Oft drop their eyelids raised too long To the full Godhead's burning.

(Stanzas I, III, XI, XII, and XIII)

IV. Where Corals Lie

by Richard Garnett

The deeps have music soft and low When winds awake the airy spry, It lures me, lures me on to go And see the land where corals lie. The land, the land, where corals lie.

By mount and mead, by lawn and rill, When night is deep, and moon is high, That music seeks and finds me still, And tells me where the corals lie.

Yes, press my eyelids close, 'tis well, Yes, press my eyelids close, 'tis well, But far the rapid fancies fly To rolling worlds of wave and shell, And all the land where corals lie.

Thy lips are like a sunset glow,
Thy smile is like a morning sky,
Yet leave me, leave me, let me go
And see the land where corals lie.
The land, the land, where corals lie.

8

Programme Notes

Programme Notes

The Swimmer

by Adam Lindsay Gordon

With short, sharp, violent lights made vivid,

To southward far as the sight can roam; Only the swirl of the surges livid,

The seas that climb and the surfs that comb.

Only the crag and the cliff to nor'ward, [And] the rocks receding, and reefs flung forward.

[And] waifs wrecked seaward and wasted shoreward

On shallows sheeted with flaming foam.

A grim, grey coast and a seaboard ghastly, And shores trod seldom by feet of men

Where the battered hull and the broken mast lie,

They have lain embedded these long years ten.

Love! Love! when we wander'd here together,

Hand in hand! Hand in hand through the sparkling weather,

From the heights and hollows of fern and heather,

God surely loved us a little then.

The skies were fairer and shores were firmer —

The blue sea over the bright sand rolled; Babble and prattle, and ripple and murmur, Sheen of silver and glamour of gold —

Sheen of silver and glamour of gold

[...]

See ! girt with tempest and winged with thunder,

And clad with lightning and shod with sleet,

The strong winds treading the swift waves sunder

The flying rollers with frothy feet.

One gleam like a bloodshot sword-blade swims on

The skyline, staining the green gulf crimson,

A death stroke fiercely dealt by a dim sun, That strikes through his stormy winding-sheet.

Oh! brave white horses! you gather and gallop,

The storm sprite loosens the gusty reins:

Oh! brave white horses! you gather and gallop,

The storm sprite loosens the gusty reins;

Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop

In your hollow backs, on your high arched manes.

I would ride as never [a] man has ridden In your sleepy, swirling surges hidden, I would ride as never man has ridden To gulfs foreshadowed through straits forbidden.

Where no light wearies and no love wanes.

No love, where no love, no love wanes.

(Square brackets [] indicate text omitted in the song.)

Sheldon Bair

The Homefront 1944

Carrie Bair (the composer's grandmother) of Liverpool, Pennsylvania, wrote the letter set in this composition, on 28 September 1944. She wrote to her sister Nellie who lived about 60 miles from Liverpool. Carrie had received word that her son Eugene "Gene" Bair was declared missing in action during the 29th mission of his Liberator B-24 Bomber on 11 July. It was later learned that the bomber had probably crashed in the English Channel with all hands. Gene and his crew, flying out of Horsham St. Faith (now Norwich Airport) had been involved in the D-Day invasion in June and were scheduled to return home after their 30th mission. Meanwhile, Lowell Bair, Gene's younger brother (the composer's father), was serving in the South Pacific on a destroyer escort. His ship, the USS England DE 635, was attacked and damaged late in the war at Okinawa, but



Lowell was not injured.

Carrie Bair was a gentle woman who found herself caught up in a war that affected her and her family for the rest of their lives. This is just one of thousands of similar stories.

Sheldon Bair (2022)

Dear Sis Nellie.

September 28, 1944

This is a rainy eve. I have been so tired and nervous today. I should have answered your letter before this but. I try to write every night to Lowell, and that keeps me busy finding some thing to say to him.

On Monday there was word came to Liverpool of one of our Town boys being Seriously wounded Jack McKinney. I can sympathise with her. I know what she is going through. I have not heard from Lowell for a week now. I think he is out on a Voyage, I believe around Manila. He has souvenirs and stars and campaign bars, but can not say anything about it. I got a letter from the war Dept. that the whole crew was missing, not only Gene. They left for Munich Germany on 11 of July was never heard from since that. The chaplain in England of the 8th Air Force wrote me also. So I must just wait and pray for his return. "We shall have no more war", "and our boys will not go over on Foreign soil" "bull Shit".

Have you been out home lately. Mamma gave me my dish when I was there last time. If you get a chance come up, when we get down home. That is as far as we get and that is not often.

Hope this finds you all well.

Lovingly Carrie.



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Programme Notes Musician Spotlight

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45

I. (Non) allegro
II. Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)
III. Lento assai — Allegro vivace — Lento assai. Come prima — Allegro vivace

With the onset of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Rachmaninov left his beloved Russia forever. He eventually settled in the USA and performed extensively for about ten years. Late in life he returned to composing. His works from this late period — the Fourth Piano Concerto, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, the Third Symphony, and *Symphonic Dances* — have distinction of style, great emotional appeal, and superb orchestration.

Symphonic Dances was his last major composition. The work was created as music inspired by the dance rather than dance music per se. Rachmaninov originally planned to name the three dances, but he subsequently abandoned this idea. It thus has no programme and is intended to be purely symphonic. Sadly, its premiere was poorly received because the orchestra was under-rehearsed.

In contrast to Rachmaninov's earlier ultra-romantic style of composition, this work shows a leaner orchestration, more concise ideas, and more piquant harmonies. The key element is rhythm. The first dance is an energetic piece in which the plainsong chant Dies irae, the medieval church text describing the Day of Judgment, is cited, albeit unobtrusively. In the contrasting central section, the alto saxophone plays a ravishingly beautiful melody; the use of woodwind to convey sadness is typically Russian. The second dance introduces a strange, ghostly waltz, and this section, too, has more than a tinge of melancholy in it. The final dance guotes sev-



eral rhythms of popular music, especially with a Spanish flavour; hurried fragments of the Dies irae burst from various orchestral sections and become increasingly assertive. After a central section, in which some lush violin phrases are introduced. the Spanish mood returns, together with ever more assertive and prominent use of the Dies irae until the whole orchestra takes it up and varies it with increasing power. Rachmaninov was apparently obsessed with this melody, for he quotes it in several other works, including the Variations on a Theme of Paganini and the Isle of the Dead. In a final touch of wry humour, Rachmaninov pits the Dies irae against the traditional Russian religious chant, Blessed be the Lord. The brilliant orchestral colouring, combined with Rachmaninov's ingenious use of rhythm, have made this late work an enduring concert favourite.

Programme notes for Elgar and Rachmaninov sourced from the Music Bank of Making Music, adapted by Martin Jones. Our spotlight tonight falls on violist Janet and cellist Paul Robinson, who first met playing in Reading Concert Orchestra. Decades before Classic FM came into being Jan's brother-in-law, Les Lawrence, had devised a hugely successful series of concerts to make symphony orchestra music accessible to new audiences. The 'Moods in Music' concert series combined light music with less well-known classical works, performed by the Reading Concert Orchestra. A video of a 1986 concert is still available on YouTube today.

After marrying in 1972 the couple managed to sustain their musical activities despite busy careers (in teaching for Jan and in television for Paul), a growing young family, as well as a stint working overseas in Dubai in the mid-seventies where Paul's cello required DIY repairs due to the heat and air-conditioning.

In 1987 Paul was ready to resume regular orchestral playing and joined the ESO, but found that his roster pattern at Channel 4 was not conducive to the commitment required. He re-ioined the orchestra in 1998, having moved to a more regular shift pattern. Paul has since been a stalwart of the cello section as well as offering his services as Orchestra Manager for two years and as Treasurer for six. Initially he was still playing the instrument he had been using since his teenage years. Whilst it had survived the air freight trip to Dubai and back, unfortunately it did not survive an incident in the pub after rehearsal, when another drinker (not with the ESO) fell on Paul's instrument, which was in a soft case. This time the damage proved to be terminal, but thankfully Paul's insurance settled quickly, and he was able to put the money towards a better instrument! Paul is also the Orchestra's official photographer and has a vast photographic archive capturing many facets of life at the ESO over the last 20 years.



Jan managed to resist the lure of the ESO for much longer but was eventually tempted by the prospect of a tour to Haarlem with a programme including the 1812 Overture, and she has remained ever since. During lockdown both Jan and Paul threw themselves into the ESO's virtual activities and would appear in a new fancy dress outfit at the weekly Zoom gathering, as well as tackling the technology to join the 'virtual' rehearsals using Jamulus. The ESO's virtual performance of Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March No. 4 (available on YouTube) was much improved by the addition of Jan's sister Sue and brother-inlaw Les, who recorded the entire percussion section from their living room.

During lockdown Jan led a small team to research the history of the ESO and collate musical memories from members of the Orchestra. The result was a fascinating 300-page compendium outlining the musical lives of our members and highlighting what the Orchestra means to them; and a shorter but equally interesting publication which covers the history of the ESO from its inception in 1922 to the present day (Ealing Symphony Orchestra@100 — Our Story).

The ESO is immensely grateful to Jan and Paul for creating such a rich archive of the Orchestra for all to enjoy.

13

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Thank you all.

Gary Walker Friends Representative Dr K Ahluwalia & Dr E Gardner

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14

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Luisa Page
Kate Day
Mark Robbins
Simon Morris
Andrew Roberts
Helena Gumley-Mason
Sarah Lough
Emilie Edelenbos*
Nawzad Haji
Veronica Colyer

Violas

David Way Jenny Davies Clare Barker Álvaro Rebón* Catherine Barlen Francesca Landauer* James Greener* Mike Frost Hilary Potts Mollie Koenigsberger Matthew Newton Violas (cont'd)

Janet Robinson David Smith* Rainer Hersch

Cellos

Rachael Bucknall Alice Laddiman Emma Wakeling Deborah Lovell Alan Garriock Karin Hawkesworth Paul Robinson Maya Stimson Barbara James

Basses

Dominic Nudd Clara Nissen Jonny Hayward

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Pamela Wise Mary Saunders Catherine Fox Paul Jefferson

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Tuba

Alan Henry

Percussion

Andrew Barnard Matthew Fletcher Ben Bucknall Liam McCloud Andre Camacho Emma Vincent

Keyboards

David Smith*

Harp

Glain Dafydd

^{*}Committee members



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Getting your hearing tested will allow you to see how well you can hear! If music brings you joy and happiness, allow us to help you enjoy every note along with making the most of many other special moments too.

Once you have a hearing test with us here at Eating Hearing Centre, we can explain how you can help your hearing health for future and continue to hear music better, for longer.

We have all of the latest digital hearing aids .if you need them, to help enjoy your life to its fullest. They will help you hear television better, hear on the phone and in background noise too!



GET IN TOUCH TODAY TO HEAR BETTER FOR LONGER

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