



pic: MILENA MIHAYLOVA

SYMPHONIES OF SOUND

Dust off the coat-tails, it's time for the annual Welsh Proms. **Michael Brown** previews this year's packed and varied programme.

Once again, the lure of the Welsh summer coaxes the celebratory spirit of its residents in the form of the Welsh Proms. Following the success of its 25th anniversary last year, the 26th edition of the annual concert series promises to continue the varied and internationally-renowned programme with which The Welsh Proms have made their name year after year. As with previous Proms, 2011's programme features a finely-tuned balance of old and new, both in terms of age and musical history. Indeed, while the word 'prom' may conjure images of stuffy suits and unending symphonies, the Welsh Proms aim to counter this aging stereotype with a diverse selection of local and international acts as well as many affordable events, some of which are completely free.

The first of the summer's performances certainly bucks the trend as local heroes **Wonderbrass (Fri 8 July, 5pm, tickets: £3)** open proceedings with a 20-piece, energetic amalgamation of soul, funk, latin and jazz. Later that evening is a more traditional classical experience as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra perform **Here Come The Classics (Fri 8 July, 7.30pm, tickets: £5-£33)**, featuring a selection of popular shorter pieces, including the likes of Suppé's *Light Cavalry Overture* and Pachelbel's *Canon*. Heralded as the "Nation's Favourite Orchestra", the Royal Philharmonic are certain to give nuanced, yet faithful, renditions of these classics during their performance at St. David's Hall.

While most events cater more for adult tastes, the Welsh Proms also feature a number of performances aimed specifically at children. Both the **Tiddly Prom**

(**Mon 11-Sat 16 July, 10.30am, tickets: £5.50**) and the **Primary Prom (Mon 11 July, 1pm, tickets: £2.50)** give younger concert-goers the opportunity to experience the magic of live music from an early age. Bridging the gap between young and old is the Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra's **Family Prom (Sat 9 July, 7pm, tickets: £5.50-£10)**, where audiences are given a tour of the world through performances of well-known favourites like Offenbach's *Can-Can* (France) and Rossini's *La Boutique Fantasque* (Italy).

A whole host of Welsh talent is also on display throughout the Proms, with free concerts from Cardiff-based jazz ensemble **3 Square (Sat 9 July, 1pm, admission: free)** and **Perfect Fifth (Wed 13 July, 1pm, admission: free)**, a brass quintet made up of students from the prestigious Royal Welsh College of Music And Drama. Welsh jazz also gets a look-in as Cardiffian, confusingly-named

gypsy jazz four-piece **5 Go Swing (Sat 16 July, 4.30pm, tickets: £3)** inject the final day of the Proms with toe-tapping rhythms and smooth solos.

Indeed, local talent is clearly in abundance and deservedly showcased throughout the Proms, with Welsh quartets **ASA Saxophone Quartet (Tue 12 July, 1pm,**

tickets: £3) and **Mavron String Quartet (Wed 13 July, 5pm, tickets: £6)** both offering their own takes on popular favourites and celebrated classics. Meanwhile, the **Brass And Voices Prom (Wed 13 July, 7.30pm, tickets: £5.50-£28)** sees the combined forces of Swansea's Morrision Orpheus Choir and Rhondda Valley's Cory Band performing a number of well-loved pieces from Bernstein and Coates to Jenkins and Tchaikovsky.

The best, as the old adage states, is often saved 'til last and the Welsh Proms are no exception. The **American Prom (Thu 14 July, 7.30pm, £5.50-£33)** offers one of the Proms' most eclectic programmes, from Copland's *Fanfare For The Common Man* to selections from *West Side Story* and *Schindler's List*. The next day, Richard Durrant, otherwise known as the 'Guitar Whisperer', provides a solo performance worthy of the title **Guitar Prom (Fri 15 July, 7.30pm, £10)**, combing a dynamic audio-visual show with virtuoso playing. Finally, and logically, the Proms end with the **Last Night Of The Welsh Proms (Sat 16 July, 7.30pm, £5.50-£27)**. Conductor Owain Arwel Hughes and the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera will pull out all the euphonious stops to ensure a spectacular finale to what will no doubt be an inspirational and compelling celebration of both Welsh and international music and culture.



The Welsh Proms, Fri 8-Sat 16 July, St David's Hall, Cardiff, tickets: free-£33. Info: 029 2087 8444 / www.stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk