

## BBC Proms Factsheet

### **What are the BBC Proms?**

A series of more than 70 concerts, mostly orchestral, given nightly every summer between mid-July and mid-September. The BBC Proms are also widely known as the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts.

### **Where?**

The Proms are held at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Until 1941, the Proms took place at the Queen's Hall, which was destroyed during a wartime bombing raid.

### **Why 'Promenade' Concerts?**

Traditionally Proms are concerts at which the atmosphere is informal and where Promenaders stand in the central Arena of the Royal Albert Hall. The Gallery provides another promenade area where there is more room to sit or even lie down and listen to the music.

### **When did the Proms begin?**

The Henry Wood Promenade Concerts began at 8.00pm on Saturday 10 August 1895. Even then, promenade concerts were not a new idea: they started in France in the 1830s and were introduced to the UK shortly afterwards.

### **Whose idea were they?**

The Proms were the brainchild of impresario Robert Newman, whose ambition, along with a young conductor named Henry Wood, was to enable people to enjoy 'serious music'. Dr George Cathcart, a London throat specialist, provided the financial support necessary for the new venture to be launched. At that time, concerts were usually expensive, so tickets costing only one shilling meant that large audiences could hear a variety of orchestral music for the first time. Even now, you can

prom for £4 a night, and it's possible, if you buy a season ticket, to attend for less than £2 a night in the Arena or Gallery!

### **Who was Henry Wood?**

The first conductor of the Proms, aged only 26, and the energetic and inspired programme-planner of many Proms seasons. He conducted almost every concert for nearly half a century.

### **Why the 'Henry Wood Promenade Concerts' and how did the BBC become involved?**

The BBC had taken over the running of the Proms in 1927. In 1944, shortly before his death, Sir Henry asked the BBC if it would continue to present the concerts after his retirement, offering the corporation the exclusive right to use the title 'Henry Wood Promenade Concerts' for as long as it continued to promote them.

### **How can I find out what's on at the Proms?**

The BBC Proms 2004 Guide, published on Friday 30 April 2004, contains full details of the complete programme of concerts, along with articles about the music and artists, and a priority booking form. Priced £5.00, it is available from all good bookshops and can be ordered from the BBC Shop, 50 Margaret Street, W1W 8SF; telephone 0870 241 5490. Booking facilities are also available on the BBC Proms website, [www.bbc.co.uk/proms](http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms), itself a comprehensive source of information and insight into the 2003 Proms season.

Box Office: 020 7589 8212  
[www.bbc.co.uk/proms](http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms)