




Dulwich Orchestral Society

CONCERT




Saturday, 8th July 2000
at 7.45 pm

Julian Williamson
(conductor)


Padraic Savage
(violin)

Paula Tysall
(leader)

St Barnabas' Church, Calton Avenue
Dulwich, SE22



Programmes: 50p



Overture: The Hebrides Opus 27

When he was twenty, Mendelssohn made the journey to Scotland (no mean feat in the days of stagecoach and sail) and fell in love with the magnificent scenery. It inspired the superb third symphony (subtitled "The Scottish"), and the deep effect on his memory of a visit to Frigal's Cave on the rocky Hebridean coast produced this famous overture.

It is quite special even for Mendelssohn, as his customary melodic invention and surefooted mastery of form are combined with marvellous musical scene-painting. From the memorable opening theme in the very first bar (which Mendelssohn tells us he actually got down on his knees when writing) to the second main melody (as great a tune as he ever wrote), right through to the magical ending, it is as if you can hear the surge of the tide, the crashing of breaker on boulder, the echo of seabirds and the beauty and grandeur of that unique place.

Programme notes by Lynn Cook

Violin Concerto in E minor Opus 64

Allegro molto appassionato
Andante
Allegro non troppo
Allegro molto vivace

Vivacious exuberance and lyrical eloquence rub shoulders in this work, in a manner which bolters the very poor state of Mendelssohn's health during its composition. Although it had been running round his head for about six years the concerto was not completed until late 1844 when the signs of stress and overwork, which were to hasten his death some three years later, were already only too apparent. But the writing gives no hint of this, enticing us into a world as far removed from it as was Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, produced even closer to his own demise. Its structure is in keeping with many of Mendelssohn's instrumental works, in that it falls us into the assumption that the form is classical in concept, leaving us to discover at our leisure the surprising differences which lie within.

The key of E minor is unusual to begin with (apart from Paganini's I Know of no other major violin concerto written in this key) and there is no sinister introduction for the orchestra. Almost immediately the soloist plays the long first subject, only after he has launched into a passage of vigorous embellishment is the orchestra allowed to state the theme in its own right.

One has the feeling throughout that this work is very much violin-led. Even the beautiful second subject for wind is supported by a pedal-note held by the soloist. The cadenza is written out in full and placed earlier than usual, forming a bridge between the development and recapitulation sections. This movement is linked to the second by a solitary note for the first bassoon which guides us from the heavy E minor sounds to the serene lightness of C major for a restful cantilena, during which the soloist rarely ceases playing.

In the finale, the E minor of the opening has become E major and we are treated to a movement which literally dances with delight: here the classical design is the most straightforward but its simplicity is the perfect contrast for the ingenious subtleties woven into the ever-moving solo line and the interaction of the strings with the orchestra which bounces around in response. It is as near perfection as anything Mendelssohn produced.

I N T E R V A L

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Symphony no. 2 in E minor Opus 27

Largo - Allegro moderato
Allergo molto
Allegro
Allergo vivace

Rachmaninoff's first symphony was received with some disdain by both critics and audiences and it took the bruised composer some ten years to pluck up the courage to write another. The year 1907 was the huge success of the second piano concerto which, since the turn of the twentieth century, has earned him the fame to the ends of the musical world. He felt that, in the meantime, his compositional skills had advanced sufficiently to attempt a symphonic work. Some companions to stand alongside his much-loved ocean - this in spite of the fact that the symphonic form never instinctively attracted him.

The result was the symphony that we are performing tonight. It can best be described as a sumptuous feast of sound whose echoes of Borodin, Tchaikovsky and others can be found in the wealth of beautiful tunes and cyclical nature of the material which runs through its four extensive movements. The first of these is a typically Russian sombre affair whose slow introduction is almost imperceptibly into an Allegro moderato in which the mood of yearning solitariness is eased somewhat by the warm glow of the second theme. The Scherzo which follows has a waltz-like character foregrounding the very famous beautiful sounds is wrapped in a rich tapestry of constantly varying orchestral sonorities so typical of the Russian romantics. Finally, we are launched into a vigorous dance movement whose forward thrusting energy is shared briefly by another of Rachmaninoff's luxuriant melodies before the symphony is rounded off with an exuberant coda.

Programme notes by Julian Williamson

Over the last twenty years, Julian Williamson has been associated with a large number of orchestras and choirs. He has performed regularly at the South Bank, St John's, St Ann's and St Paul's Cathedral, the London Sinfonietta, the London Sinfonietta Chamber Choir, he has worked with the London Bach Orchestra and has taken him not only to many parts of Great Britain, but also Germany, Holland, Zimbabwe, and the United States.

Padric Savage was born in Australia in 1976 and began violin lessons at the age of four with Elizabeth Dornett in Canberra. In 1992 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Tanglewood Music Center in Massachusetts, USA, and in 1994 a fellowship from the Winston Churchill Memorial Fund enabled him to continue his studies at the Royal College of Music under Dr Felix Aubrey. During his studies at the RCM he became the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, and he graduated with first class honours in 1997.

He has performed extensively in the UK as a soloist, appearing with the BBC Concert Orchestra, the Young Musician's Symphony Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta Chamber Orchestra, the Concordia International Ensemble, the Royal College of Music Symphony and the English Solists Ensemble. His playing featured on BBC Radio 2 and 3 and in recital at the Wigmore Hall as a finalist in the 1999 YCAT auditions.

He is now the new leader of the Archinto String Quartet who hold a fellowship at the Royal Academy of Music and tour regularly within the UK giving recitals. He also appears regularly as a concertmaster of orchestras around London and is currently on trial for the position of first violator of the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

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