

**DULWICH
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA**

CONCERT

Saturday 6th July 2002 at 7.45pm

St Barnabas' Church, Calton Avenue, Dulwich SE21

Julian Williamson
Conductor

Lesley-Jane Rogers
Soprano

Paula Tysall
Leader

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Overture: "The Wreckers"

Ethel Smyth (1858 - 1944)

By all accounts Ethel Smyth was a brave woman. The second half of the nineteenth century was no time for a girl to aspire to be a musician, and England was probably the last place in Europe to tolerate such a hope. Add to this the fact that her father was a man of strict military stock who openly confessed that he would rather go to his grave than see his daughter enter such a profession and you can visualise some of the barriers which faced her. However, Ethel harboured many of the fighting qualities of her father and by dint of threats, persuasion and not a little emotional blackmail she eventually wore her parents down and gained permission to study in Leipzig. Here she met Brahms, Clara Schumann, Dvorak, Grieg and others - all of whom remarked on her prodigious talent. But her career was to be constantly dogged by the same prejudices she had found in her family, and in spite of gaining considerable critical acclaim for a number of her works she never managed to procure a place in the permanent repertoires of Britain's opera houses and concert halls.

Probably her greatest success was achieved with her opera "The Wreckers". It received enthusiastic receptions in Germany, Bohemia and London (where it was produced by Thomas Beecham). The story is set in an eighteenth century Cornish village whose inhabitants believed in a long-held right to lure on to their rocks any passing ships which could then be plundered mercilessly. The plot has all the elements of late romantic melodrama whose passion and violence is well reflected in the powerful Overture. This is hot-blooded music in which the sweep of the sea can be felt from the first bar, and its sheer intensity made many people of that time believe that it could not have been penned by a woman. Today, fortunately, we know a little better, and can perhaps look back and regret that the prejudices of a past age prevented this great talent from having a better chance to spread its wings.

Four last songs

Richard Strauss (1864 - 1949)

(1) Frühling (2) September (3) Beim Schlafgehen (4) Abendrot

Lesley-Jane Rogers (soprano)

Like Ethel Smyth, Richard Strauss was instinctively attracted to the theatre and one of the greatest writers for the voice of the twentieth century. Apart from his many opera successes he produced a string of songs of enviable quality throughout his career. However, as in so many of his dramas, he saved the best music for last. Nearing the end of his life he produced these Four last songs which must rank among the most beautiful music he ever composed. Three poems by Hesse and one by Eichendorff all refer in some way or another to the transient nature of humanity (something he had already touched on in the tone-poem Death and Transfiguration) but the serene sense of acceptance and peace with which he colours the words removes any sense of bitterness or morbidity and, instead, we are washed in a gentle sea of tranquillity.

From the darkness of the tomb the singer dreams of the beauties and blue skies of the springtime (**Frühling**) spreading over the world above. The lovely images pervade the shadowy vault like a miracle and produce a living shudder in this realm of death. In the **second song**, Autumn draws in and, as the rain falls, it is time for Summer to shiver at the approach of cold and darkness. Everything in the garden is slowly becoming weary and yields to the inevitability of death which overtakes all. As sleep approaches the **third song** invites the singer to shed all passionate desires and allow the soul to embrace the slumber through which it can float into the magic of the night. Finally (**Abendrot**) we meet a couple who have walked through life hand in hand. As they near the end of their time they wander towards they know not what:

*O broad, still peace
So deep in the sunset
How tired of wandering we are -
Could this perhaps be death?*

I N T E R V A L

Symphony No 4 in G

Gustave Mahler (1860 - 1911)

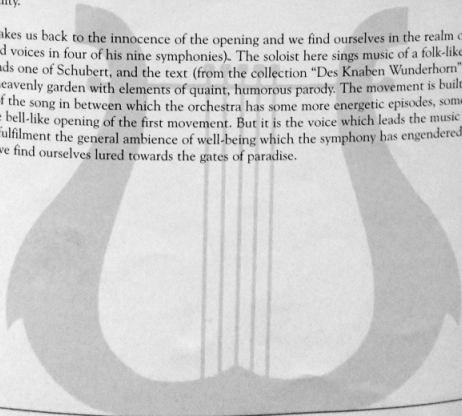
After the gargantuan size of his 2nd and 3rd symphonies Mahler turned to more classical dimensions for his 4th. Written around the turn of the twentieth century much of it harks back to the Vienna of Haydn and Mozart and its total length - under an hour - is scarcely longer than the opening movement of the symphony No 3.

There is a delightful sense of childlike innocence as the bell-like motif which opens the first movement leads to a string of enchantingly lyrical melodies some of which, despite their unmistakably Mahlerian stamp, have a distinctly old-fashioned feel. This amiable atmosphere of well-being is disturbed in the middle section of the movement as various elements of the material are thrust together to produce an increasing intensity of sound. This is released as the opening themes are reprised (albeit in a different order) and the movement ends with a return to the mood of joyful naivety.

In all of Mahler's works there is a dark side and this surfaces here in the sardonic scherzo which follows. After an arresting horn motif the movement is dominated by a violin solo played on an instrument tuned a tone higher than normal. Mahler made no secret of the fact that the angular music of the solo and the rather brusque sound produced by the extra tension in the strings is a deliberate attempt to imitate the devil playing a dance of death on his fiddle. He was attracted strongly to the spirit of the danse macabre and this atmosphere pervades much of the music, in spite of several more gentle "landler" episodes.

The third movement is by far the longest of the symphony. We are transported from the dark infernal regions to the Elysian fields as the music, dominated initially by the lower strings, bathes the listener in the sunshine of relaxed beauty. We are then treated to what is loosely a set of variations which reflect different moods produced by these thematic alterations. Some of them have a mournful strain, some a dance-like quality, and some are intensely energetic, but they are all wrapped within this enveloping mantle of peace and tranquillity.

The finale takes us back to the innocence of the opening and we find ourselves in the realm of song (Mahler used voices in four of his nine symphonies). The soloist here sings music of a folk-like simplicity which reminds one of Schubert, and the text (from the collection "Des Knaben Wunderhorn") mixes a vision of a heavenly garden with elements of quaint, humorous parody. The movement is built around the five verses of the song in between which the orchestra has some more energetic episodes, some of them recalling the bell-like opening of the first movement. But it is the voice which leads the music gently on, bringing to fulfilment the general ambience of well-being which the symphony has engendered, until in the final pages we find ourselves lured towards the gates of paradise.



*In the pleasures of heaven we're joyous, the earthly avoid that annoy us,
In heaven not a rattle heard is of earth's bustle,
In deepest of peace all goes on,
In way that's angelic we're living, it's due thought to merriment e'er giving,
a-dancing and springing, a-skipping and singing,
Saint Peter in heaven looks on.*

*Saint John and his lambs have been parted, and Herod to catch it has started.
An innocent and weak little pretty and a meek little lambkin to slaughter is led.
Saint Luke is the oxen a-slaying, he does it without all delaying,
In heavenly cellar the wine costs no heller!
The angels they bake all the bread.*

*All manner of herbs aromatic, they grow in our garden ecstatic.
Asparagus salad, delights to the palate! On great platters for us there abound.
Good apples, good pears and good peaches,
To eat them the gardeners beseech us.*

*Wouldst roebuck, wouldst pheasant, and numbers they're present and running around.
If for fast food one wishes, then with joy there come a-swimming all the fishes.
See yonder Saint Peter with nets running fleetier than wind to the heavenly brook.
Saint Martha there must be the cook.*

*No music on earth e'er so stirring with ours can stand the comparing.
Ten thousand young virgins to dancing to urges!
With laughter Saint Ursula shakes.
Cecilia with all her relations are excellent court musicians
Of sweet angels' voices a chorus rejoices
To pleasure it all things awakes.*

Programme notes by Julian Williamson

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If you would like to become a patron, please send your cheque made payable to "Dulwich Symphony Orchestra" and details including your address to the Treasurer Sarah Toyn, 18 Woolstone Road, Forest Hill London SE23 2SG Tel (w): 020 8699 7769.

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 Sonali Banerjee
 Tom Brockbank
 Jimmy Brown
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 Ariela Cravitz
 Maisie Hipperson
 Julie Lee

Violin II

Eric Croston
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 George Fuller
 Jane Howard
 Jackie Love
 Sarah Milnes
 Roz Wall

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 Mick Mortimore

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Horn

Graham Vernon
 Lucy Steel
 Paul Kajzar
 Jane Urquhart

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Tim Collett
 Eric Milner
 Rebecca Matthews

Trombone

Michael Brooks
 Sally Bond
 Dave Pogson (Bass)

Tuba

Martin Humphrey

Percussion

Alex Fleming
 Christina Such
 Adam Payn

Timpani

Stella Kesby

Harp

Patrizia Meier

Julian Williamson Over some 20 years Julian Williamson has been associated with a wide range of orchestras both professional amateur. He has directed concerts with the London Mozart Players, City of London Sinfonia, Milton Keynes City Orchestra and the Ernest Read Symphony Orchestra. Apart from conducting in all the major London Halls he has performed in many other venues throughout Britain. His work abroad has taken him to America, Zimbabwe, Germany, France and Holland.

Paula Tysall studied the violin at the Centre for Young Musicians and went on to study at the Royal College of Music and the National Centre for Orchestral Studies. Since then she has divided her time between freelance orchestral playing and violin teaching. As a member of the New London Orchestra she has made recordings for the BBC, Classic FM and Hyperion and appeared at the Proms. With various orchestras she has toured Italy, Spain and America. She is 1st Violin in the Ashington String Quartet.

Lesley-Jane Rogers studied singing and piano at the Royal Academy of Music, taking both subjects successfully to postgraduate level. She now specialises in oratorio and solo cantatas, and is heralded as one of the most versatile soloists of today, with a vast repertoire of several hundred works. She has worked with many leading conductors and orchestras, and her discography includes Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' opera *Resurrection*, Carl Rütt's *Magnificat* and *Alpha et Omega*, Sadie Harrison's *Aster*, as well as several recordings with the Wren Baroque Soloists. Lesley-Jane has also given many world premières, most notably Ivan Fedele's *La chute de la Maison Usher* with the **Ensemble InterContemporain** in Paris's prestigious Cité de la Musique.

New players are always welcome, we rehearse on Tuesdays 7.30-9.30pm at Chatsworth Baptist Church Hall Chatsworth Way West Norwood SE27.

NEXT CONCERT: 30th November 2002 7.45pm at St Barnabas Dulwich

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