



DULWICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

NEWSLETTER June '07

Review of our last Concert

I don't know about you, but I learned most of what I know about the classical music repertoire from a) the short manageable essays on the backs of old 12 inch vinyl LPs (yes, you remember) and b) short manageable paragraphs in the programme notes for concerts. For the DSO's Spring concert, the programme notes perhaps erred on the extra-short-and-manageable side, but this was because the pieces were preceded by what I thought were very interesting talks (given without full notes) by Julian Williamson. To let you into a secret, it was the first proper concert I had attended since being fitted with my new NHS digital hearing aids, so the talks were enhanced by the fact that I could actually hear what he was saying. Not always the case in resonant churches. So yes, I welcome the idea of pre-concert talks, especially informative ones like Julian's. But to have our cake as well as eating it, perhaps we could have had slightly longer programme notes as well.

The other things to be getting at our cakes and eating them were The Wasps in the first item on the programme. Julian carefully explained to us how the music of Vaughan Williams's Overture is nothing to do with the cake-ivorous insects, but is based on Aristophanes's Greek comedy and therefore really about arguing philosophers. None of us took any notice, however, as the music is clearly about the dratted insects. Or at least the opening is - VW also gives us a big rollicking English tune. The DSO, needless to say, were not stung by the challenge and took the piece in their stride; both the busy investigating of the sandwiches from the strings, and the big tune, with some nice horn playing. Perhaps one day the DSO will give us the whole suite from The Wasps - less well known than the Overture.

Gerald Finzi seems to be mostly well-known as a writer of English songs and choral music. He is sometimes disparagingly thought of as one of the 'cow pat' school of English pastoral composers of the first half of the 20th Century. But as well as growing rare apple trees, he was politically and philosophically aware, and a serious researcher of 18th century English music. His Cello Concerto, his last major composition, is anything but pastoral or bucolic (let alone 'cow pat'!); it must be one of his most deeply passionate and searching works. All of it dramatic in the extreme, the middle slow movement ('Andante Quietto'!) is darkly eloquent, and the third movement, 'Allegro giocoso' starts with an astonishing multiple pizzicato passage from the cello soloist.

All this serious (and difficult) stuff was brilliantly played by cellist Oliver Coates. He seemed so young to me, he could almost be a policeman! A name to look out for in future no doubt. And of course admirably backed up by the DSO with some equally dramatic orchestral ritornellos.

Elgar's Symphonic Study on Shakespeare's Falstaff has a detailed and explicit programme. I paid careful attention to Julian's talk, and learned that the Sir John Falstaff depicted is mainly from the Henry IV plays. (Actually I cheated, because it says this in the programme notes as well.) Falstaff's colourful character inspired colourful music, giving ample opportunities to show-case the many and varied talents of the DSO. Falstaff's revelry and then decline and fall are covered in some very picturesque music for individual soloists; his character description came through well in solo cello passages from Nicky Jackson, his drinking - not to say degeneration into a drunken stupor - remarkably depicted by Hillary Dodd on bassoon (I think she was probably sober really), and the pathos of his decline and final repudiation by Henry V affectingly evoked on solo violin by leader Paula Tysall. The talented players of the DSO clearly thrive on ambitious challenges, both in individual solos and in integrated orchestral sound.

Ian Chown

Dates for your diary

Our next concert

21st July, All Saints, West Dulwich (entrance Lovelace Road).

The afternoon rehearsal is 2.30 – 5.30pm. The concert will start at 7.45pm. Tim has the list of necessary jobs that will make the day run smoothly for us all. Due to the deplorable lack of volunteering, apart from regulars, the committee have decided to pick two sections of the orchestra “out of a hat” who will then sort out the division of the jobs between them.

Gentlemen of the orchestra – please note that you will be wearing long sleeved black shirts, with black trousers, at this concert.

Future concert dates

Next season's concert dates are **November 24th 2007, March 8th 2008 and June 21st 2008.** Make sure you have these dates in your diary now.

AGM

The date of our AGM is **October 16th.** It will start at 7pm, so again please diary this date.

Librarian Vacancy

Louise Simon, who has been our librarian for six or more years now, is stepping down at the end of this season. Louise writes:

“I thought it would be helpful to circulate another summary of the role. I’ve had a couple of enquiries about how we source music, which I hope the following will answer:

- After the programme has been decided by the Committee I obtain the orchestral sets from participating public libraries. We are members of three libraries (Westminster, Kent and Liverpool) so there’s usually no need to search any further. I check the Encore database (<http://www.iaml.info/iaml-uk-irl/projects/encore.html>) first to find out which library holds the work which means that all I need to check directly with the library is availability.
- Arranging payment (either an invoice for Ian or by reimbursement).
- Bringing the music to the first rehearsal (with sign-out sheets)
- Collecting the music at the end of the concert and ensuring that all parts have been returned (I usually do the detailed checking at home and follow up from there rather than hanging around after the concert)
- Returning the music to the library, usually by post.

On a week to week basis, the job isn’t particularly time consuming, but, as I mentioned at the rehearsal, the job could easily be shared between two people. One person could be responsible for obtaining the music and bringing it to the rehearsal and the other could make sure that the parts have come back and are returned to the lending library.

I’m happy to answer any questions and to help over the transition period.”

Louise

Please consider if this is a job that you could do for the orchestra.

Sponsorship

Odbbins are now providing us with discounted wine for our concerts. We all need to be thinking of other possible sources of sponsorship. Please speak to a member of the marketing group of the committee if you have any possible leads.

Marketing

The marketing sub-committee meet regularly to find more effective ways of promoting the orchestra. It is essential that the committee have feed-back from you the members. We particularly would like to know how many concerts you would like to play in future seasons. If you haven’t yet filled-in a questionnaire form then please take one from the red music box.

Charity News

Our May concert interval collection for St Christopher's Hospice raised £127.

Dulwich Festival

This year we took part in the Dulwich Festival for the first time in recent memory, which is why we did four concerts instead of the usual three. We had two objectives – to increase our audience and to raise awareness of the orchestra in the area. The first of these was successful in that attendance was 25% greater than typical, although financially the result was neutral as we had to pay box office commission to the Festival. It is too early to tell whether the second objective was achieved, although we are hoping that local choral societies might consider us next time they “do a Messiah”.

Good News

Annabel and baby Sam are well. She says “We are all fine thanks; albeit a little tired! I will be coming back in September. I hope all is going well; I really miss not playing!”

Items for the next newsletter to Frances Barrett by October 17th, please.