

DULWICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

AUTUMN CONCERT

Saturday, 26th November 2005 at 7.45 pm
Great Hall, Dulwich College, SE21

ROSSINI

William Tell Overture

TCHAIKOVSKY

Piano Concerto No. 1

SCHUMANN

Symphony No. 3 in E Flat

Julian Williamson
Conductor

Joseph Fleetwood
Piano

Paula Tysall
Leader



Interval collection for St. Christopher's Hospice

Overture: William Tell

Gioachino Rossini (1792 – 1868)

Although Rossini's life covered some seventy-six years, less than twenty of these were devoted to work in the theatre. Between 1811 and 1829 he produced close on forty operas and then abruptly retired at the advanced age of thirty-eight. William Tell was the last example of Rossini's dramatic art and it remains a testament to a genius who could have given even more to the world of opera had his work continued in this direction. Although rarely performed today – partly because of its great length and difficulty – it received over five hundred performances at the Paris Opera which commissioned it. In more recent times it has sunk out of favour and although we are denied some wonderful music in the opera itself the overture has remained one of the continuing favourites of the concert platform – and not without reason. It is quite different from any of the composer's preceding overtures with which we are familiar, giving us nothing less than a miniature tone poem distilling into a compact structure the essence and mood of the drama which follows it. The story of William Tell is well known and the four distinct sections of this work give us a flavour – enlivened by Rossini's brilliant and unusual orchestration – of various elements of the drama. The contemplative opening for five cello and two bass parts gives us a feel for the homely side of Tell and his family, as well as the love which develops between two of the younger characters. This is disturbed by distant rumblings of thunder which soon break into a full-blown storm as Tell attempts to row a friend across Lake Lucerne to safety. As the tempest eases we are transported into the pastoral atmosphere of the Swiss mountains and the cor anglais imitates the sound of the alpine horn in a version of an old folk melody, the Ranz des Vaches, with which herdsmen used to summon their cattle from the valleys up on to the higher pastures. Rossini's treatment of this is quite magical particularly as he combines it with a flute obbligato which breathes the fresh air of the countryside. This is suddenly interrupted by trumpets and brass which launch the whole orchestra into a vigorous galop. This concluding section throws us into Tell's struggle against the tyrannical Austrian forces and predicts his ultimate victory rather in the manner of the finale of Beethoven's Egmont overture.

Piano Concerto No 1 in B flat minor (Op 23)

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

- (1) **Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito**
- (2) **Andante semplice**
- (3) **Allegro con fuoco**

Like a number of very famous pieces of music (Bizet's Carmen, for instance) this work had a distinctly shaky start. When the composer played it through to a group of his colleagues his mentor, Anton Rubinstein, greeted it with total contempt and derision stating that perhaps a few bars might be salvaged but that the remainder should be dispatched to the waste paper basket immediately. Tchaikovsky, although stunned and deeply hurt by these comments, felt that the work did have merit so he rather diffidently showed it to another great pianist, Hans von Bülow, half afraid that it would receive a further verbal pasting. Von Bülow, however, was delighted with it, poured praise on the surprised Tchaikovsky and asked him whether he could take it and perform it on his forthcoming tour of America. Since there seemed little chance of a Russian performance in the foreseeable future the composer gladly agreed and so it transpired that a work which was to become one of the most famous in the world was premiered in Boston, about as far away from its creator as could be imagined. Von Bülow's enthusiasm for it soon began to pay dividends and as he played in many concerts in America and Europe over the ensuing years it soon became a popular favourite both in Russia and elsewhere and did much to spread Tchaikovsky's fame throughout the world.

It is not difficult to see why the concerto is such a crowd-puller. The basic idea – derived from Liszt – of a kind of gladiatorial contest between a single heroic soloist and a large orchestra is something audiences have always loved. Like David, the pianist challenges the Goliath of the orchestra and by the sheer ebullience and brilliance of the writing emerges with the victor's laurels. Add to that the sumptuous tunes which abound throughout its three movements (particularly the celebrated opening theme which curiously never recurs) threaded by Tchaikovsky with great skill into a fairly traditional structural design and you have a winning formula which has kept it in the top-ten list ever since.

The work is so well known that any lengthy description seems superfluous but listeners might like to know that some of the material is derived from other sources. The opening of the Allegro con spirito section of the first movement is taken from an old folk song sung by blind beggars in Ukraine, and the vigorous rhythms which form the basis of the final Rondo are taken from one of those frenetic dances so associated with the heart and soul of Russia. By contrast the wispy waltz-like tune which pervades the fast middle section of the second movement is based on a French chanson “Il faut s’amuser, danser et rire”. Tchaikovsky loved French music second only to his home country’s and the whole concerto breathes a wonderful eclectic mixture of sounds so typical of this composer, providing an exuberant basis for the heroic feats of David as he challenges his Goliath.



INTERVAL

During the interval please give generously to the collection for St. Christopher’s Hospice



Symphony No3 in E flat (Op 97)

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

- (1) Lebhaft (lively)**
- (2) Scherzo**
- (3) Nicht schnell (not quickly)**
- (4) Feierlich (solemn)**
- (5) Lebhaft (lively)**

Written in 1850 this symphony is in fact the last of the four penned by Schumann (the confusion being caused by differing publication dates). It was written shortly after the composer had moved to Düsseldorf where he worked for a number of years before his mind began to show signs of instability and his career came to a sad and abrupt end in an asylum. One of the great features of Düsseldorf is the Rhine which flows through its centre and Schumann attempts to evoke in this work some of the majesty and breadth of this noble river. He originally gave it the subtitle “Rhenish” but did not put it on the title page of the published score wanting the work to speak as pure music. But there is no doubt that much of the symphony evokes the spirit of Germany’s great waterway. The grand opening theme of the first movement sweeps the music along like a great tide and the whole has an heroic grandeur which displays the heavy influence of Beethoven’s own third symphony at many points. The second movement is entitled “scherzo” but it really has more of a lilting folk-like quality conjuring up images of the old landler melodies so common to tavern music along the Rhine’s banks. This folk-song idea is carried into the third movement which is a charming intermezzo throwing into relief the weighty sounds of the beginning and those to come. This weight shows itself immediately in the change of mood for the fourth movement. Here Schumann paints a short musical picture of a particular event which he had witnessed – the enthronement of a new archbishop in the imposing atmosphere of Cologne cathedral, and the majestic grandeur of the sounds evoke the dark enormity of the building along with the deep quiet of the waters which flow close by. This ends in an atmosphere of suspense and rather eerie uncertainty which is washed away as the finale suddenly sweeps us back to the energy of the river which now surges along in full flood imbuing the music with an ebullient energy and carrying us with full sail to a brilliant conclusion.



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Joseph Fleetwood

Joseph Fleetwood was born in Dundee in 1980 and studied at the RSAMD in Glasgow and the Royal College of Music in London. Recent concerto appearances have included performances of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto, Rachmaninoff's Paganini Rhapsody and Second Piano Concerto and Gershwin's Rhapsody In Blue, with which he gave his London debut in 2004.

Joseph has given many solo recital performances around the country appearing at the Caledonian Club in London, Edinburgh Society of Musicians and Chelmsford Cathedral amongst other places, gaining respect from the critics. In early 2000 he won the RSAMD lieder prize and last year he was awarded first class honours from the RCM for performances of Beethoven and Shostakovich trios. Previously Musical Director at St. Paul's Church, Herne Hill, Joseph currently works at the RSAMD as a repetiteur for the Musical Theatre department whilst completing a Masters Degree there.

The Dulwich Symphony Orchestra wishes to acknowledge the generous contribution from a member of the congregation of St. Paul's Church towards Joseph's appearance with us this evening.

Julian Williamson

In a career spanning close on forty years Julian Williamson has conducted choirs and orchestras in many parts of England and abroad. He has directed concerts in all the major concert venues in London and has given many performances all over the country. He also spends much time lecturing, a part of his work which takes him all over Britain and abroad. He is particularly delighted to have been associated with the Dulwich Symphony Orchestra over a number of years, with whom he has explored many interesting corners of the orchestral repertoire.

Violin 1

Paula Tysall (leader)

Chris Burns

Tom Brockbank

Emily Coelho

Helen Bartholomew

Victoria Dawes

Helen Winkworth

Abbi Temple

Anna Borrett

Gill Tarlton

Violin 2

Jane Howard

Elizabeth Cleary

Philippe Masson

Iain Speirs

Tessa Crilly

Ann Earle

Andrew Poulter

Pippa Jameson Evans

Mary Galloway

Viola

Frances Barrett

Judith Smith

Frances Lee

Philip McKenna

Anne Miller

'Cello

Nicky Jackson

Russell Ashley-Smith

Sarah Colyer

Oliver Pearce

Jane Knowles

Tim Ingles

Brigid Constantine

Fiona Clarey

Double Bass

Samantha Weitzel

Mike Lasserson

Chris Bond

Flute

Sam Purser (+ piccolo)

Annabel Noton

Oboe

Louise Simon

Ian Finn (+ cor anglais)

Clarinet

Roland McCabe

Brendan O' Neill

Bassoon

Hilary Dodd

Jeremy Crump

Horn

Graham Vernon

Paul Kajzar

Jane Urquhart

Bradley Strauchen

Trumpet

Tim Collett

Eric Milner

Trombone

Charles Mackworth-Young

Steve Jenkins

John Bell (bass)

Timpani

Tony Maloney

Percussion

Tansy Hamley

Laura Kemmis

Cleo Taylor

The next DSO concert will be on Saturday 25th March 2006 at St. Paul's Church, Herne Hill.

The programme will include Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez" and Sibelius' 5th Symphony.