



Johannes Brahms

Academic Festival Overture Op. 80

Franz Joseph Haydn

Symphony No 104 in D major, 'The London Symphony'

Hector Berlioz

Harold in Italy, Symphony with viola obbligato, Op. 16

Soloist: Matthew Jones

Conductor Julian Williamson

Assistant Conductor Lindsay Ryan

Leader Paula Tysall

All Saints' Church, Lovelace Road, London, SE21

Saturday 28 November 2009



Interval collection for St Christopher's Hospice

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

DSO violinist **Ted Thornhill** writes:

This famous overture has been a staple of concert halls for decades, and with very good reason indeed: it has an uncomplicated structure, bags of lyrical warmth and hearty doses of excitement and sunny irreverence.

The overture was composed in 1880 as a musical token of thanks to the University of Breslau, for bestowing an honorary doctorate upon the great composer. Hence the name 'Academic'.

Now, Brahms was a dab hand at composing, but practical jokes were also a forte of his and he decided to use a number of student drinking songs as the inspiration for the piece. The result is an overture infused with a spirit so jovial and cheeky that some say it's actually something of a raspberry to the academic world.

Possibly, but what's undeniable is that it's also brilliantly rhythmical, wonderfully melodious and demonstrates, especially in the finale, Brahms's mastery of counterpoint.

The composer conducted the premiere himself at a special convocation held by the university on January 4, 1881, which apparently didn't go down too well with some of the fustier academics, who weren't too keen on boisterous fun wrapped up in a classical disguise. But audiences these days most definitely have permission to wear a broad grin during performances of this taut, sparkling overture.

Symphony No 104 in D major, 'London'

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

I Adagio-Allegro; II Andante; III Menuetto: Allegro; IV Finale - Spirituoso

DSO bassoonist **Jeremy Crump** writes:

In 1790, Haydn's employer Prince Nikolai Esterhazy, for whom he had been Kapellmeister for 28 years, died. The Prince's son no longer insisted that he lived in the family's rural Hungarian retreat and Haydn was free to move to Vienna. The reputation of his music had gone before him and he was famous throughout Europe on account of his string quartets, symphonies, trios and oratorios. The exceptional popularity among fashionable and wealthy Londoners led the German violinist and impresario J P Salomon to bring Haydn to London for two extended periods in 1791-2 and 1794-5. On each occasion Haydn composed a series of six symphonies – which were to be the last he wrote. The D major symphony, No 104 and the last of all, was first performed at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket on 4 May 1795. The performance was an immense success. Haydn wrote in his diary *"I made 4000 Gulden on this evening, Such a thing is possible only in England."* The Morning Chronicle's critic wrote *"It is with pleasure we inform the public, that genius is not so totally neglected as some people are too apt to conform. The Benefit of Haydn, was at the Great Concert Room of the King's Theatre, on Monday night; and attended, not only by the best judges and dearest lovers of music, but by a distinguished and crowded Assembly. More than half the pieces performed were of Haydn's composition, and afforded indubitable marks of the extent and variety of his powers... A Gentleman, eminent for his musical knowledge, taste, and sound criticism, declared this to be his opinion, that for fifty years to come Musical Composers would be little better than imitators of Haydn."*

There is no particular reason why this one of the twelve symphonies written for Salomon's concerts was called the London symphony. Indeed, far from incorporating any particularly English features, the third movement has the feel of a Viennese landler and the main theme of the finale is thought to be based on a Croatian folk tune. But the symphony is in any case a masterpiece of a form which owed its classical form largely to Haydn's long commitment to the genre.

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INTERVAL

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

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Harold in Italy – Symphony with viola obbligato, Op. 16

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

I Harold in the mountains, scenes of melancholy, happiness and joy

II March of the pilgrims singing the evening prayer

III Serenade of an Abruzzian mountain-dweller to his sweetheart

IV Brigands' orgy – reminiscences of earlier scenes

DSO violist **Frances Barrett** writes:

I named my second viola Harold. It was an obvious thing to do for a Berlioz-struck viola playing teenager. Berlioz is well known for giving us viola players an interesting time. He had a special fondness for the viola and with his enlightening orchestration brought the instrument a great deal more respect than it had previously experienced. Harold in Italy was written in 1834 after a commission from Paganini, who was hoping, no doubt, for a concerto he could play on his recently acquired Stadivari viola. But concertos were not Berlioz's thing; technical display for the sake of it? No, this was to be a vehicle for Berlioz to reflect on his Italian experiences, and on a large scale.

As Berlioz himself said: "My intention was to write a series of orchestral scenes, in which the solo viola would be involved as a more or less active participant while retaining its own character. By placing it among the poetic memories formed from my wanderings in the Abruzzi, I wanted to make the viola a kind of melancholy dreamer in the manner of Byron's Childe-Harold. Hence the title of the symphony: Harold in Italy. Harold's melody is superimposed on the other orchestral voices, and contrasts with them in tempo and character without interrupting their development." So Paganini must have been disappointed as the solo viola represents a person who is wandering apart, commenting on the action rather than dominating it. Berlioz makes this point clear by leaving the Harold *idée fixe* unchanged during each of the four movements regardless of which instruments play it, although much of the thematic material is based on this theme. You can hear the influence of Beethoven whom Berlioz admired so much.

After the brooding opening of the first movement a minor to major burst of sunshine introduces the harp and prepares us for the entry of the solo viola. With a good natured theme, and one of surprising regularity for Berlioz, the simple and easily recognisable *idée fixe*, representing the wandering Harold, is heard for the first time. This is repeated with rich accompaniment and leads us into the main part of the movement – a 6/8 Allegro with compulsive rhythms.

The second movement is a procession, taking us in a wide arc from *pppp* to *f*, and back again. In this very descriptive movement we hear the tread of the pilgrims - a trudging bass line, and bells - horns, flute, oboe and harp. This is more Berlioz orchestration magic, whilst the solo viola weaves his own path, observing all.

For the third movement we are taken to the mountains. Berlioz experienced the music of the *pifferari* – strolling wind players – when in Italy and here gives us a boisterous tune, with a dominating rhythm from the orchestra's violas. The contrasting middle section has an enchanting cor anglais solo. Again the solo viola wistfully watches all.

The abrupt opening to the finale calls us to order. The themes from the previous movements pass before us until the orgy gets underway. The solo viola rouses himself to respond but the brigands carry us to the conclusion of the symphony which is, in the main, fairly relaxed and contrasts with the *Symphonie fantastique* that we played this time last year.

Matthew Jones

Swansea-born Matthew is violist of the Bridge Duo and the Debussy Ensemble. Recent recital and chamber music venues include the Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, St. David's Hall and the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing; with duo partner Michael Hampton he made his Carnegie Hall recital debut in 2008. Matthew is professor of violin, viola and chamber music at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Charterhouse International Music Festival. He has recorded five CDs: two Bridge Duo recordings of English music, and most recently a Prokofiev disc for Naxos. In February 2009 he gave the world premiere of Derek Ball's Viola Concerto with the RTE National Symphony Orchestra.

Violin	Viola	Flute	Trumpet
Paula Tysall (leader)	Frances Barrett	Sam Purser	Tim Collett
Helen Bartholomew	Chris Brody	Annabel Noton (+ <i>piccolo</i>)	Susan Emmons
Chris Burns	Laura Davis		Paul Martin (+ <i>cornet</i>)
Katherine Byrne	Julian Elias	Oboe	
Anna Carlisle	David Lawes	Louise Simon	Cornet
Elizabeth Cleary	Alan Taylor	Ian Finn (+ <i>cor anglais</i>)	Barnaby Lowe
Tessa Crilly			
Jo Duggan	Cello	Clarinet	Trombone
Sophia Eberhard	Nicky Jackson	Roland McCabe	Charles Mackworth-Young
Emma Gant	Caroline Annesley	Brendan O' Neill	Steve Jenkins
Jane Howard	Russell Ashley-Smith		
Harriet Lamb	Sarah Bort	Bassoon	Bass Trombone
Alan Mitchell	Fiona Clarey	Hilary Dodd	John Bell
Robert Pack	Bridgid Constantine	Jeremy Crump	
Sarah Priscott	Oliver Pearce	Eloise Carpenter	Tuba
Iain Speirs	Peter Watkins	Pippa Hashemi	Raymond Hearne
Nancy Taylor (leader 2nds)			
Ted Thornhill	Double Bass	Horn	Timpani
Jill Vaughan	Sam Wise	Graham Vernon	Tony Maloney
	Liz Faulkner	Lindsay Ryan	
Harp	Mike Lasserson	Paul Kajzar	Percussion
Elizabeth McNulty		Jane Urquhart	David Holmes
			George Bird
			Merlin Jones

Julian Williamson

In a career spanning nearly fifty 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.

Lindsay Ryan

Appointed Assistant Conductor of DSO in October 2008, Lindsay leads community engagement work for the orchestra. Lindsay has a BMus (French Horn) from the University of Melbourne and is also the Associate Conductor of the Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra.

The next DSO concert is on Saturday 13th March at All Saints' Church
The programme will consist of a complete performance of 'Má Vlast' by Smetana

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