



NEWSLETTER October 2007

Review of our last Concert

Having attended Dulwich Symphony Orchestra concerts for many years, and also even played in it when a percussionist was needed, I'm pleased to say that the concert given in July 2007 was the best I've yet heard.

In the past the orchestra had at times seemed not quite up to the standard of some of the very impressive community orchestras in South London. No longer. It not only put on an impressively varied programme, but gave a convincing account of one of the major works of the symphonic repertoire.

The first half of the concert was taken up with three short pieces. The opening Beethoven Overture, Consecration of the House, was a little disappointing. The piece seemed to lack the punch and sense of direction of some of the composer's other overtures. However, it was good to hear DSO tackling the great master's music, since I haven't often noticed it in the programmes - I look forward to hearing some of the more substantial works in the future.

Dvorak's Romance was well played, with Paula Tysall sparkling in the solo part. To someone like myself with a deep antipathy to the composer's music, it remained a curiosity rather than an achievement, but I could see that the audience really enjoyed it.

The revelation of the first half was the Peer Gynt Suite No 1, by Grieg. There is a great risk in programming such familiar music, particularly music which relies so heavily on the repetition of familiar melodies. Yet this came across as a genuinely new interpretation, with the Hall of the Mountain King genuinely gripping and scary - taken faster than usual, and a brave decision fully justified by the performance.

Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony is one of those pieces which can be treated as a war-horse, or played in a way which reveals the composer's struggle, as a melodist expert

in writing short sections of music such as his ballet scores, to achieve some form of symphonic structure.

Julian Williamson deserves great credit, not only for his introductory talk which helped greatly in following the symphonic form, but also for giving us an interpretation which came across to me as a portrayal of a struggle between depression and the exhilaration of creative activity and achievement, with the latter winning out at the end.

There were big melodies for all sections, well executed without exception, but a special mention should go to to Brendan O'Neil on first clarinet, Tchaikovsky's chosen instrument for many of the crucial melodies.

Well done DSO. I look forward to the next concert.

Alan Taylor

AGM

Our AGM was held on 16th October. We welcomed Jane Howard on to the Committee.

Chair's Report

2006 – 7 was quite a year! We played four concerts, instead of our usual three, turned our rehearsal schedule inside out to accommodate these and took part in the Dulwich Festival. We played some wonderful and unusual music and had some extraordinary performances. We also attracted some new members, redesigned our website and logo and secured some sponsorship for the orchestra. We also thanked Louise Simon for being our solo librarian for the past seven or so years.

Four concerts last year made much more work for the committee but generally it was a good exercise in being more flexible and achieved our aim of making it possible for us to take part in the Dulwich Festival. Some members weren't able to play every concert and it did put a financial strain on us, from which we haven't completely recovered yet, but we attracted a slightly larger audience. However, taking part in the Festival was not as exciting or as rewarding as it might have been, because of the way the Festival is run, and so it is unlikely that the committee will consider us taking part in it again in the near future.

We have developed the practise of good organisation and efficiency in the orchestra - not just by having regular committee meetings, but also by forming sub-groups. The marketing group have put together the individual training and experience we've gained, and ideas from Making Music days, and many good things have been produced. We now have an extensive mailing list of regular members of our audience, and sponsorship from Bushells and Oddbins and advertised programme for the new season have been direct results of our efforts. Jeremy Crump designed our new website and Mary Galloway designed a new logo for the orchestra. And there's lots more ideas where those came from. Small details like getting the dreaded bowings ready to be copied in from the first rehearsal are also a very practical result of profitable meeting times!

We have grown in numbers, with new members finding us through the internet. We now don't have just a waiting list for wind places, and the committee have decided on a "returning policy" (see below) for people who drop out for a while and then want to return to a section that is already full.

For the Committee the downside this past year was the lack of volunteering from members to do the jobs that make an amateur organisation run. I think it's a real shame when everything else has been growing that this aspect has been decreasing. The Committee found a solution; when it came to the concert day jobs we now pick sections "out of a hat", but it would be good if we could safely abandon that solution in the future.

Lastly can I encourage everyone to put away their foibles when it comes to ticket sales? We are now playing our concerts to a very high standard and we should be proud to let people we know come and hear us. Ian will tell how close to the financial edge we walk so being shy and retiring about selling tickets could mean the difference between having a lovely orchestra like this to play in, or not having any orchestra at all. So can I urge you to put away your niceties and go and sell tickets? After all our work the future for the DSO could lie here.

Frances Barrett

Financial Report

The finances for 2006-7 were rather tight as we attempted to hold four concerts instead of three whilst only increasing the annual subscription by £10. (This was to allow us to take part in the Dulwich Festival). Consequently we have decided that this season we can only play pieces which we can borrow from libraries as we cannot afford publishers' exorbitant hire charges. The Committee also reluctantly decided not to perform any *concertante* pieces either, but Paula's husband Chris kindly offered to play a flute concerto for free and we will also be having another solo from Paula in the summer. Hopefully we will be able to return to concertos and copyright music next season.

Ian Finn

Charity

The amount raised for St Christopher's at our last concert was £104.00. St Christopher's have passed on their thanks for our continued support.

Tickets

Extra tickets are available from Russell Ashley-Smith. It is clear from the points raised at the AGM that increased ticket sales are an essential part of securing our future.

Sponsorship

Bushells estate agents are now sponsoring our programmes. Oddbins are still providing us with discounted wine for our concerts. These sponsorships didn't arise without asking for them. We all need to be thinking of other possible sources of sponsorship, however small. Please speak to a member of the marketing group (Jeremy, Tim, Russell and Frances) if you have any possible leads.

Leaving and rejoining the orchestra

Sometimes members are unable to take part in the orchestra for a period of time but would like to return in the future. If you find yourself in this situation you must inform your Section Leader, or the Chair, as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. Please don't ask a friend to come along in your place, as we normally invite the next person on the waiting list for your instrument. We will make it clear to that person that the position is only temporary pending your return.

There are no hard and fast rules about how long your place would be kept open, but the Committee will always review the situation and discuss it with you before any decision is made. If your place has been given to somebody else your name can always be added to the section waiting list.

If you are unclear about any aspect of this then do please speak with a member of the Committee.

Members' News

Victoria Dawes has left us and moved to Kent - quite a loss to the firsts. Also from the firsts, Martin Stokes has broken his collar bone and is out of action this term, so we wish him a speedy recovery.

We are so sorry to learn that Anne Earle from the seconds is very ill and her husband, although not well himself, is doing a lot of her caring. She says she is "struggling on" and is having one session of chemotherapy a week until about Christmas time. She's had various setbacks which have left her weak but is now feeling a bit better and a bit more positive. She misses the orchestra but fondly remembers all the good times she had with us. In the meantime Anne has a violin to sell. It's c.1700 plus, dainty, not a big sound. If anyone is interested then please ask Frances for her contact details.

Our best wishes to you and your husband, Anne.

Dates for your diary

Our next concert

24th November, 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. The draw for the job list, this time, will be between the Seconds, Violas & Basses, 'Cellos and the Brass (including horns). Two sections will be drawn and will divide the jobs between them.

Dress is black for ladies. Gentlemen of the orchestra please note that you will be returning to your winter DJs for this concert.

Future concert dates

This season's remaining concert dates are **March 8th 2008** and **June 21st 2008**. Please make sure you have these dates in your diary now.

Subscriptions this season

Fees are back to £50 per term. Please pay yours as promptly as possible. If you are in a position to pay all or some of the instalments in advance then it would be appreciated, as it does help the budgeting.

Items for the next Newsletter to Frances Barrett by February 5th please.