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Dulwich Orchestral Society

Saturday, 4th July 1998
at 7.45 pm

Julian Williamson
(conductor)

Roy Theaker
(violin)

Paula Tysall
(leader)

St Barnabas' Church, Calton Avenue,
Dulwich

Programmes: 50p

Overture in the Italian Style.....Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Rossini produced an amazing series of operatic masterpieces while still in his twenties, and was a sensation on his visits to Vienna. As an impressionable twenty-year-old himself, Schubert fell under his spell, and immediately set to work to write two overtures "in the Italian style". While this one does parody some of the features of the sparkling Rossini overtures we are used to - tramping rhythms, crescendos and florid melodies - it is, by and large, a tuneful piece of Viennese charm typical of Schubert in his "Rosamunde" manner.

Programme notes by Lynn Cook

Violin Concerto in D opus 35.....Piotr Ilych Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

- (1) Allegro Moderato
- (2) Canzonetta
- (3) Finale

As with much great music, Tchaikovsky's violin concerto seems to refract rather than reflect the background against which it was written. Emerging from a period of considerable despair following the collapse of his disastrous marriage, Tchaikovsky was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1879 by the violinist Yost Kotek. They enjoyed playing such pieces as Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole* together, and as seems almost Hollywood-inevitable, Tchaikovsky set about composing a concerto. It took, according to Tchaikovsky, about two days for Kotek to learn the completed first movement practically to concert standard. The violinist, however, rejected Tchaikovsky's original second movement, which the composer salvaged as part of his Opus 42. The present *canzonetta* seems to have been written after the *Finale* was completed.

The *Finale* itself flouted poor Kotek and he took refuge in the traditional instrumentalist's gibe at new music: "...unplayable" is how he described it. Thus, in turn, almost flouted Tchaikovsky, who wrote in his diary: "This verdict, coming from such an authority as the St Petersburg virtuoso had the effect of casting this unfortunate child of my imagination for many years into the limbo of forgotten things".

He tried dedicating it to the famous violinist Leopold Auer, hoping that he might champion the concerto on the concert platform. Auer would not touch it, and it was left to Adolf Brodsky to give the first performance. The triumphant reception consisted of a demonstration for Brodsky against the concerto. Edward Hanlick, doyen of the Viennese critics, considered the piece "conclusive proof that music can give off a bad smell", a view that, today, bears no relation to this concerto's immense popularity.

Programme notes by Stuart Dawlap

INTERVAL

Serenade no. 1 in D opus 11.....Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

- (1) Allegro molto
- (2) Scherzo and Trio: allegro non troppo
- (3) Adagio non troppo
- (4) Marmitta 1 & 2
- (5) Scherzo
- (6) Rondo

The word "serenade" suggests a light-hearted, generally amorous song, and so it is in leader and operas such as Don Giovanni and The Barber of Seville. However, the classical masters such as Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert developed the orchestral serenade into a large-scale, almost symphonic form, albeit genial and relaxed in style. Brahms composed his two early serenades with these examples in mind. This one is, in fact, his first published work for orchestra, written when he was 24. Even so, it has all the mastery of his later, more familiar symphonies, and is intricately classical in form.

The first of the six movements begins with a "drone" bass, redolent of bagpipes, setting the pastoral mood that pervades the whole work. Though it is a large and sophisticated instrument it is Brahms at his most affable, and finally dies away with a sweet, quiet coda. Then there is the first of two scherzos, whose opening theme gently anticipates that of the titanic scherzo of the great second Piano Concerto years later. This movement has the character of a rather serious, sad waltz, as does the trio middle section. There follows a broad flowing slow movement, reminding one vividly of the famous depiction of the brook in Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*.

After this long idyll there is a succession of shorter, quicker movements: a charming minuet, with a rocking bassoon bass that continues the rustic good nature; a boisterous second scherzo with a star part for horn, almost every note of which could have come from the pen of Beethoven in one of his more cheerful moods; a splendid Rondo finale with a bounce and very catchy main theme and some delightful sequels. We end, happily and ritually in a triumph of trumpets and drums.

Programme notes by Lynn Cook

Over the last 20 years, Julian Williamson has been associated with a large number of orchestras and choirs. He has performed regularly at the South Bank, St John's Smith Square and the Barbican Hall where, apart from his many concerts with the Camden Choir, he has appeared with the London Bach Orchestra and the English Festival Chorus. His work has taken him not only to many parts of Great Britain, but also to Germany, Holland, Zimbabwe, and the USA.

Apart from directing the standard repertoire, he has always been keen to promote contemporary music. In recent years he has been involved with the work of various 20th century composers including Ernest Krenak, Alan Hovhan, John Gardner, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Iain Hamilton.

Roy Thacker was a pupil at the Membrian School and then studied the violin at the Royal Academy of Music, graduating with a first class honours degree. He continued his studies at the Vienna Conservatoire and Yale University. He performs both as a soloist, and a freelance orchestral player with orchestras such as the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. His busy schedule has seen him perform in over 30 countries in the last 5 years: recent concerts include the Sibelius and Brahms concertos with the Bulgarian National Radio Orchestra. This year, he was a prize winner in the ISM International Violin Competition.

VIOLIN I

Paula Tysall (leader)
Maisie Hipperson
Alan Thompson
Chris Burns
Richard Jones
Fran Haas
Ivor Cox
Keith Allen
Mick Russell
Emma Robson

VIOLA

Bing James
Philip Mc Kenna
Maureen Montrose
Bernadette Benati
Roger Mundy
Frances Barrett

DOUBLE BASS

Arthur Pennie
Matthew Berry
John Wilson

FLUTE

Sam Morris
Kate Morris

CLARINET

Sue Best
Duncan McInnes

TRUMPET

Bob Love
Elspeth Hackett

VIOLIN II

Nigel Stephens
George Fuller
Elisabeth Cleary
Jane Howard
Tom Brockbank
Naomi Sills
Jackie Love
Denis Reynolds

CELLO

Sara Heathcote-Holmes
Marion Wootton
Katherine Badger
Kate Anderson
Sarah Toyn
Catherine Johnson
Eleanor Ghey

HORN

Graham Vernon
Joe Wright
Gary Brassel
Vicky Snell

OBOE

Louise Simon
Ruth Lyon

BASSOON

Gareth Jones
Jill Blakey

TIMPANI

Anne Harcombe

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