
MUSIC AT ST. BARNABAS'

DULWICH
ORCHESTRA

Conductor

STUART DUNLOP

Leader

LYNN COOK

Solo Violin

CHRISTOPHER NICHOLS

Saturday December 8th 1990 at 7.45p.m.

TCHAIKOVSKY VIOLIN CONCERTO in D Opus 35

Allegro Moderato - Canzonetta - Finale

As with much Great music, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto seems to reflect rather than reflect the background against which it was written. Emerging from a period of creative terror following the collapse of his disastrous marriage, Tchaikovsky was visited early in 1878 by the violinist, Kotelik. 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 Kotelik to learn the completed first movement to practically 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 floored poor Kotelik and he took refuge in the traditional instrumentalist's gibe at new music - "unplayable" is how he described it. This in turn almost floored 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 wouldn't touch it with a barge pole, and it was sent to Adolf Brodsky to give the first performance late in 1881 at a Vienna Philharmonic Concert conducted by Hans Richter. The triumphant reception consisted of a demonstration by Brodsky of a piece of Edward Hanslick, doyen of the Viennese critics, considered the piece "conclusive proof that music can give off a bad smell".

It's all just a little bit hard to believe now, isn't it?

Members of the Orchestra

Viola	Lyn Cook (leader)
	Fred Banks
	Heather Bennie
	Elizabeth Cleary
	Michael Furlong
	Elaime Galloway
	Elizabeth Heap
	Maisie Hippercon
	Fiona Knight
	Don McGown
	Judith Morrey
	Caroline Perkins
	Kate Robinson
	Lydia Robinson
	Jane Shultz
	Ann Stephenson
	Dennis Sullivan
	Lesley Unsworth
	Lynn Willis
Violin	Rassoon
	Gareth Jones
	Gilles Hindley
	Horn
	Martin Lawrence
	Paul Burnett
	Hilary Brindley
	Migel Pott
	Joe Wright
Trumpet	Trumpet
	Derek Cozens
	Matthew Redfearn
Trombone	Trombone
	Donald Manson
	Shane Mills
	Aupert Price
Tuba	Tuba
	Dennis Treloar
Timpani	Timpani
	Chris Kimber

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY No 2 in D MAJOR Opus 43

- I - Allegretto
- II - Tempo Andante, ma rubato - Poco Allegro
- III - Vivacissimo - Lento e suave
- IV - Finale Allegro Moderato

"It is as if the Almighty had thrown down pieces of a mosaic from Heaven's floor and asked me to put them together."

Sibelius' description of the symphonic process as it occurred to him is both a general comment on the mystery of creation (cf Elgar "There is music in the air; I just take as much of it as I need.") and a particularly acute recognition of his own methods, especially from the Second Symphony onwards.

Much has been made of the relationship of the First Symphony to those of Tchaikovsky. It is a relationship, one feels, listening to the piece, conceived for the benefit of programme note writers. And yet it is largely true to say that Sibelius' symphonic development really snapped into focus with the Second. Though the first Symphony is constructed of truly Sibelian building blocks (the long, powerful paragraphs of the first movement; the structural accelerando which powers the second, etc), it is put together in a way which seems at times to defer to the past (the Brucknerian Scherzo - with its entirely Sibelian Trio of course! - for example).

The Second Symphony eschews deference, though not necessarily reference, to the past. It is symptomatic that critical literature concerned with the piece suggests, according to author, at least three different places in the first movement to receive the labels "second subject group" and "recapitulation". The movement is as lucid, formally speaking, as the listener could wish for; yet the components, however satisfyingly they fit together, seem to shrug off their labels effortlessly.

The Dulwich Orchestra

The Dulwich Orchestra was formed in 1950. Its members range from students to senior citizens and for many players provides an opportunity to complement the demands of work or raising a family with some satisfying music-making. The orchestra is supported as an evening class by the Southwark Institute of Adult Education. Each term the orchestra rehearses the works which it will perform at the final concert. This gives a good inside knowledge of the pieces being performed, and allows individuals to practice as required to master the repertoire. From the player's point of view, the opportunity to work together under the direction of the conductor on a challenging repertoire is especially satisfying, particularly when this is shared with an audience on the night of a concert. If the standard does not match the clinical excellence familiar from radio and recordings, there is a balancing factor which says that the works now taken for granted at the turn of a switch were once new and difficult and as much of a challenge for, say, Liszt's orchestra at Weimar (smaller than this assembly) as for this assorted group of amateur musicians from South East London.

Acknowledgements

The orchestra would like to thank the vicar of St Barnabas' Church for the opportunity to perform in these splendid surroundings, and the Southwark Institute of Adult Education for assistance with the production of tickets and programmes for this concert.

The second movement, the longest of the piece, is the one which gives the cello to Sibelius' new sense of focus. Thematically organic it nevertheless is full of focus, some very sudden indeed. It is like a colossal jig-saw, more particularly, a tessellation - the ancient art of the mosaic maker. In the first movement some of the pieces overlap and the structure is terse and condensed. In the second, juxtaposition is fearless but not smooth and the resultant gaps between the pieces are the gateway to the dark world of the northern demons which both haunted and fuelled Sibelius' creative mind - most literally in the tone poems.

The two pizzicato chords which finish the second movement are strikingly reminiscent of those at the very end of the First Symphony - it is almost as if Sibelius has condensed the whole of the First's burden into two movements of the second.

The third movement again displays fierce contrasts (the oboe melody of 'Lento e suave' seems to come from another world) and at times an odd, mocking trait. The Finale is joined to the third movement by the umbilical cord of its rising three note main motive, which is adumbrated in the bridge passage. The intransigence of the two note figure in the bass which accompanies the Finale's opening is indicative both of Sibelius' intent to subvert expectation (the figure persists long after its initial context) and his ability to reinforce the direction of a musical paragraph - the release which occurs when the bass of the harmony finally changes is wonderful.

The persistence of the three note figure of the theme is also the springboard for the conclusive climax - the trumpets claw their way up to a fourth note, and the triumph is palpable. If one then recalls the opening figures of the first movement - the strings begin with three rising notes and the wind three falling - one is led to consider the musical application of that widely used term 'organic'.

(Programme notes by Stuart Dunlop)

CHRISTOPHER NICHOLLS was born in Croydon in 1971 and first started to play the violin at the age of seven. Shortly after this, his family moved to Shrewsbury, where lessons continued with Hamish Drummond. At the age of 12, he won a music scholarship to Shrewsbury School where studies continued, until in 1986 when Chris began lessons with Howard Davis at the Royal Academy of Music. Around this time he joined the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and was a founder member of the National Youth Chamber Orchestra. In 1989 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music full-time.

Now in his second year there, Chris appears frequently in concerts around England, both as soloist and with the trio that he formed, the "Felix T-19". He has studied with Professor Zakhar Bron in London and Rugiero Ricci in Austria. He recently made the world Premier recording of Bernard van Dieren's Sonata for Solo Violin, for Whitetower Records.

Chris plays on a unique Hieronymus Amati violin from 1719, on loan to him from the Royal Academy of Music.

STUART DUNLOP began conducting at York University and when he left with an M.A. in 1983 had performed with various student ensembles. Variety proved to be a keynote in the following years. He co-founded and conducted the Parke Ensemble, specialising in British contemporary music, while acting as Musical Director for a series of shows. As a bassoonist, his activities ranged from chamber music with the Pneuma Quintet to orchestral work on period instruments with the Hannover Band and the London Classical Players.

In 1988 he enrolled on the Conductor's Course at the Royal Academy of Music (to learn how to do it properly!) and is now in his final year, studying with Colin Metters. Sir Colin Davis, George Hurst and Horst Keumann. He has conducted the Parke Ensemble in two recordings for BBC Radio 3. As well as conducting the Dulwich Orchestra, and others in London such as Hayes and Blackheath, he is also the holder of the Bob Harding bursary for 1990-1 with the Havant Symphony Orchestra.

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Violin

Lynn Cook (leader)
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Michael Furlong
Elaine Galloway
Elizabeth Heap
Maisie Hipperson
Fiona Knight
Don McGown
Judith Morrey
Caroline Perkins
Kate Robinson
Lydia Robinson
Jane Shultz
Ann Stephenson
Dennis Sullivan
Lesley Unsworth
Lynn Willis

Viola

Mary Keeler
Wendy Cox
Sara Lodge
Philip McKenna
Roger Mundy
Vincent Turner

Cello

Hugh Henzig
Katharine Badger
Neil Cox
Roger Clayden
David Maloney
Sara Skinner
Julie Shilling
Marion Wootton

Double Bass

John Hutchings
John Ivison
Arthur Pennie
Keith Scarr

Flute

Helen Williams
Julia Wilson

Oboe

Stephen Gates

Graham Ruffell

Clarinet

Sue Best
Duncan McInnes
Steven Preston

Bassoon

Gareth Jones
Giles Brindley

Horn

Martin Lawrence
Paul Burnett
Hilary Brindley
Nigel Putt
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