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# MUSIC AT ST. BARNABAS

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## DULWICH ORCHESTRA

Conductor

JULIAN WILLIAMSON

Leader

PAULA TYSALL

Solo Piano

FLORIAN UHLIG

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Saturday June 14th 1997 at 7.45 p.m.

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Programme 50p

'Der Freischütz' is a typical Romantic opera in which heroism and love are the principle features in a story laced with the Gothic forces of black magic and evil spirits. To win the hand of his love, Agathe, Max has to win a shooting contest. To try and ensure success he enters into a pact with the devil in return for seven magic bullets. Six of these will hit any target. Max aims at but the seventh is at Satan's bidding. It is, of course, this final bullet which delivers a mortal wound to Max but he is saved, after due repentance for his evil actions, by the intervention of a hermit and united with his loved one. It is an opera packed with atmosphere, much of which is hinted at in the colourful overture. Horn-calls of the hunt, eerie sounds of the Underwood scene in the Wolf's Glen, Agathe's love music, all these are intertwined with heroic themes which flow so effectively from Weber's pen. If you never manage to see the opera then this is a perfect ten minute summary.

PIANO CONCERTO IN A MINOR (OP.7).....CLARA SCHUMANN  
(1819 - 1896)

Soloist: Florian Uhlig (Piano)

If ever there was a man who lived out his unfulfilled ambitions through his offspring it was Friedrich Weack. His musical abilities were such that he became one of the most respected keyboard teachers in Leipzig, but they stopped short of allowing him any success on the concert platform. He therefore decided - even before the birth took place - that he would mould his eldest child to become a celebrated virtuoso who, through his teaching, would display to the world the performing talent which he himself lacked. From her very first breath the life of his daughter, Clara, was planned with this goal in mind. She lived, ate and drank music, and every waking moment was filled with her father's strict, and often oppressively severe, system of training.

Many children would have buckled under such relentless pressure but, miraculously, Clara blossomed exactly as her father had predicted. Shortly after her ninth birthday she took part in a public performance at the Leipzig Gewandhaus and within two years Friedrich basked in the reflected glory of her first full-scale recital. Such was the public's enthusiasm for her playing that her father decided to widen her audience, and there followed a quelling series of tours which took them both to the remotest corners of Europe, bringing her critical acclaim from such eminent performers as Chopin and Liszt.

Parallel to this extraordinary facility as a player, Clara was showing an equal attitude for composition and it was not long before her programmes were including piano pieces of her own. At about the same time she struck up a friendship with a student of her father's, Robert Schumann. The possessive Friedrich immediately saw the danger signs and there every chance he could in his way, and as their relationship deepened his behaviour became ever more venomous as he saw his fantasy world crumble around him. Their struggle to marry involved a lengthy court case and carries heavy echoes of a contemporary episode in England involving Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett.

But many they did and one would have thought that, free from her father's dictatorial hand, Clara's career as pianist and composer would have progressed apace. Unhappily this was not to be the case.

The new demands of wife and then mother, coupled with her husband's insistence on absolute silence while he was working, meant there was little opportunity for practice. Although she was able to give occasional concerts, her career as a virtuoso became a mere shadow of her younger days, and the number of new works from her pen sadly declined. The

situation was alleviated slightly in the early 1850s when a new house in Düsseldorf offered an area which allowed Clara to work without disturbing her husband. But the respite was short lived. Robert's increasingly unpredictable behaviour had long been giving cause for concern and in 1854 he suffered a complete breakdown and had to be committed to an asylum where he died some two years later.

Given all these circumstances it is remarkable that Clara produced as much music as she did. We have some fine chamber music - in particular a beautiful Piano Trio in G minor - , a variety of songs, both solo and choral, and, of course, an extensive collection of pieces for her own instrument. Central to this latter group is the Piano Concerto in A minor. This remarkable work was written when the composer was a mere fourteen years old but displays a mastery of form and subtlety matter far beyond her years. The third movement was completed first and performed on its own in 1834. Clara then prelaced it with two further movements, and premiered the full concerto a year later with Mendelssohn conducting. As it turned out, it was to prove the largest work she ever attempted and its array of interesting and innovative touches make one regret her future reliance with the orchestral repertoire. Although much of the design follows normal structural procedures it is deliberately loose-limbed and creates the impression of a free-flowing fantasia. This may have been influenced by Mendelssohn's developments in this field and this type of design was fast forming part of the Romantic concerto idiom as the subsequent works of Robert Schumann and Liszt were to demonstrate.

The three movements are performed without a break. The sonata-like scheme of the first is cunningly camouflaged easing gently into a lyrical Romanze. Here the bold world of the concerto is abandoned as the piano joins with a solo cello to treat us to an episode of pure chamber music - a combination which was to be further explored in Robert's own later piano concerto, and in Brahms' B flat concerto. The impant announce the re-appearances of the orchestra and we are launched into an energetic Polonaise-style finale which reflects Clara's keen interest in the music of Chopin. The instrumentation here is more complex and there is evidence of Robert's help with the scoring, but this no way detracts from the astonishing maturity of a work which has been subjected to years of unjust neglect. Following his recent discovery, present day audiences can now appreciate how sad it was that the talent displayed here was stifled by futile events and thus prevented from achieving its full potential.

I N T E R V A L L

SYMPHONY NO1, IN C MINOR.....JOHANNES BRAHMS  
(1833 - 1897)

- (1) Un poco sostenuto - Allegro - meno allegro
- (2) Andante sostenuto
- (3) Un poco allegretto e grazioso
- (4) Adagio - Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

Following Robert's death Clara Schumann was faced, at the age of 37, with the financial responsibility of bringing up a large family on her own. To earn sufficient money she returned to the concert platform and spent the next forty years in a relentless round of concerto performances and recitals at home and abroad which made the tours of her youth seem like holiday interludes. She never returned to composition but devoted a great deal of her energy to promoting the music, both of her late husband, and that of a young student who had become a close friend of the family during Robert's last years - Johannes Brahms. She was to take a life-long interest in the work of this shy, highly self-critical artist and the deep friendship which developed undoubtedly helped both of them creatively and personally.

Like most of his important works, Brahms' first symphony did not have an easy birth. Originally conceived in 1862, a further fourteen years were to elapse before it was presented to the public. Much of the problem resided in the giant figure of Beethoven whose symphonies had proved so all-embracing that they seemed to have uttered the last word. Brahms asked himself how he could add anything to these miracles of creation and it was only when he had passed the age of forty, and had published nearly seventy works that he felt justified in attempting an answer. His delay is our gain for rarely has a composer's first sortie into the symphonic field revealed such brilliance and maturity.

The work is in the standard four movement format and is philosophically allied to the fifth and ninth symphonies of Beethoven. The opening is one of spectral gloom. Over a pedal C hammered out by timpani and basses two giant motifs fight for prominence: a swifling figure in the violins and cellos to reach up to the light but is held down by the woodwind and violas who pull heavily in the opposite direction. This literally explodes, leaving hints of other themes waiting in the air, before the opening surges to re-emerge. The introduction then dissolves in an atmosphere of eerie expectancy before bursting into a tempestuous Allegro. The point of the slow beginning now becomes clear. All the ghostly motifs alluded to there now string into full life and form the brooks out of which the whole movement is built. Intense passion and drama are woven into a Beethoven-like structure in which not a note is wasted. All the material owes its derivation to the first forty bars, and is worked through with a vehemence which increases as the movement progresses. Finally, its energy spent, it sinks into a reprise of the initial material, now tinged with a mellow hue which looks forward to the ultimate goal of the whole symphony.

The middle movements have a more relaxed and intimate character, and look back in some ways to the composer's earlier serenades. The beautiful Andante has a delicacy of instrumentation which makes one think of chamber music, something which is highlighted by the inclusion of a lyrical violin solo. There then follows, not a rumbustious scherzo in the Beethoven mould, but a kind of Pastorale in which the music has a folk-like simplicity. There is a dance-like feel to the movement but it always remains gentle and is best summed up by Brahms' own instruction, "grazioso".

Various critics have voiced the opinion that the central part of the symphony is too lightweight - "a couple of interludes" is the description of one - but they miss the point. After the oppressive nature of the opening Brahms then allows the tension to relax so that, in the finale, he can pick up these emotional strands with the listeners' ears refreshed and lead them to a triumphant conclusion. This is the design of the fourth movement in which, once more, we are launched into a cloudy introduction giving us the outline of the material to come. We are led to a point of pivotal uncertainty which is relieved by a majestic horn tune heralding the sun and sweeping the storm clouds away. After a brief chorale theme, played in the manner of a "chorus mysticus" the main body of the movement begins with a broad frame for strings which has often been compared with Beethoven and the ninth symphony finale. After this we are swept through a whole gamut of emotions, the huge structure unfolding like a great battle between the forces of darkness and light. The sun is finally victorious in the coda when the tempo quickens and the "chorus mysticus" tune, deliberately not used by Brahms since its first appearance some fifteen minutes earlier, suddenly blazes out in all its glory. This resolves the drama in an instant and leads the symphony to its heroic conclusions.

Over the last 20 years, **Juhan Williamson** has been associated with a large number of orchestras and choirs. He has performed regularly at the South Bank, St Johns 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 Choir. His work has taken him not only to many parts of Great Britain, but also Germany, Holland, Zimbabwe and the USA.

Apart from directing on 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 Krenek, Alun Hoddinot, John Gardner, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Iain Hamilton.

Born in Dusseldorf in 1974, **Florian Uhlig** began to study with Prof. Roland Proll at the Hochschule Für Musik in Dortmund from the age of eleven. At the age of twelve he gave his first solo recital on the opening of the First International Schubert Piano Competition in Dortmund.

In 1995 he was awarded a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London to study with Bernard Roberts, whilst continuing his private studies with Peter Feuchtwanger, and in February 1997 he was on an ERASMUS exchange scheme with the Hochschule der Künste Berlin to attend a clavichord workshop. He has participated in international masterclasses, with Peter Feuchtwanger (London), Delfel Kraus (Hamburg), and in chamber music with Igor Oistrach.

Florian Uhlig has performed extensively throughout Europe, in the festivals of Bonn and Feuchtwangen, the "Schubertlieden Schnackenburg" in Germany, the "Musikalisches Begegnungsluzern" in Switzerland and the Tudeley Festival in England. He has recorded two CDs, one of the music of Clara and Robert Schumann, the other of Virtuoso encores.

On 19 June 1997 he is due to make his orchestral debut at the Barbican in London with the Clara Schumann Piano Concerto.

**VIOLIN I**

Paula Tysall (Leader)  
Maisie Hipperson  
Barry Mawer  
Alan Thompson  
Alistair Thomson  
Eric Croston  
Mick Russell  
Francis Dale  
Sally Park

**VIOLA**

Bing James  
Philip McKenna  
Barbara Mattner  
Maureen Montrose  
Vincent Turner  
Mary Keeler  
Francis Barrett

**DOUBLE BASS**

Arthur Pennie  
Chris Bond  
Matthew Berry  
Alfred Solomon

**FLUTES**

Sam Morris  
Barbara Langford

**CLARINET**

Sue Best  
Duncan McInnes

**CONTRA BASSOON**

Peter Carrie

**TRUMPET**

Eric Milner  
Tim Collett

**VIOLIN II**

Nigel Stephens  
George Fuller  
Adrian Chen  
Elisabeth Cleary  
Julian Saxl  
Jane Howard  
Dinah Hyams  
Dennis Reynolds

**CELLO**

Alex Galloway  
Marion Wootton  
Sarah Toyn  
Kate Anderson  
Lilah Edney  
Alison Rose  
Marion Esmonde  
Jean Horne

**HORN**

Graham Vernon  
Joe Wright  
Lucy Robertson  
Ann Warnes

**TROMBONE**

Ian Whittaker  
Helen Reilly  
Paul Goodwin

**TIMPANI**

Mike Grant

**OBOE**

Graham Ruffell  
Louise Simon

**BASSOON**

Helen McLachlan  
Jill Blakey

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