



# **DULWICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**A Summer Concert**

**Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2004  
at 7.45 pm**

**St. Luke's Church,  
West Norwood, SE27**

**Julian Williamson**

**Conductor**

**Chenyin Li**

**Piano**

**Paula Tysall**

**Leader**

**Programmes : 50p**

[www.dulwichsymphonyorchestra.org.uk](http://www.dulwichsymphonyorchestra.org.uk)

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## In the Steppes of Central Asia

Alexander Borodin [1833 - 1887]

During his lifetime Borodin was renowned primarily for his pioneering work in the field of chemistry. Music was, at the beginning, an absorbing hobby for him but, nurtured by his wife - an outstanding pianist in her own right - it became more and more important as time went on to the extent that, on his death, he left behind a small but important legacy which finds today a fitting place beside the masterpieces of Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky and others. This haunting miniature tone poem was one of his most popular works. It was composed in 1880 for the celebrations to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Tsar Alexander II's accession and, like the work of so many of Borodin's contemporaries, breathes the spirit of Russia from beginning to end. The following note appended to the score admirably summarises the simple but evocative programme pictured in the music: "In the silence of the monotonous steppes of Central Asia is heard the unfamiliar sound of a peaceful Russian song. From the distance we hear the approach of horses and camels and the bizarre and melancholy notes of an oriental melody. A caravan approaches, escorted by Russian soldiers and continues safely on its long way through the immense desert. It disappears slowly. The notes of the Russian and Asiatic melodies join in a common harmony, which dies away as the caravan disappears in the distance".

### Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in D minor [Op. 15]

Johannes Brahms [1833 - 1897]

[1] *Maestoso - Poco piu moderato*

[2] *Adagio*

[3] *Rondo - Allegro non troppo*

The mighty power and scale of this work tend to make us forget that it is the earliest contribution Brahms made to the large-scale orchestral repertoire, and that its inception was to lead its creator down many tortuous blind alleys before fulfilment could be achieved. The music was first sketched in the early 1850s as a sonata for two pianos - it is not surprising that, like Beethoven before him, the young composer should write primarily for the instrument on which he was already an acclaimed virtuoso. But it was not long before he came to the conclusion that the material had a definite orchestral stamp about it and so it was recast as the initial framework for a symphony. This idea also ended up in a cul-de-sac due mainly to a lack of orchestral technique and it was only after a number of years that the notion of combining the best of both the above attempts produced the concept of a piano concerto. Even now the work went through many re-incarnations before its first performance in 1859, and still dissatisfied, Brahms revised it again and again for over two years before releasing it for publication in 1861, allowing the world to see at last the music as we now know it.

All this is difficult to understand when we listen to the titanic opening with its waves of orchestral sound laying the ground plan for the huge first movement with the apparent assurance of a master. The granite-like first theme with its swirling Baroque trills and deep pedal-notes is almost like the opening of some great classical tragedy and key of D minor makes us realize that here music has taken a step beyond Beethoven's ninth symphony. The ingenious mixture of minor and major sounds produces an increasing sense of dark drama which rises and falls like a great sea, until it is calmed by the arrival of the piano which attempts to pour balm on the troubled waters of the orchestral sound. Then in the middle section it is the keyboard which takes the dramatic lead and as the movement progresses we see a coalescing of these two forces in a partnership which throws the idea of the concerto into the realm of the romantic symphony. The dark anguish of the music is carried right to the end and the mixture of elegiac rhapsody and tightly structured classical formulae imbue it with a range of emotions one would look for in a Shakespeare play.

Many people have commented on the fact that the first movement was initiated at the time of Robert Schumann's death in an asylum. The famous composer had been both a friend and a mentor to the struggling young Brahms and the sombre hues of this work's beginning may well have been influenced by the horrifying spectacle of the slow decline and demise of a great mind. If this is the case the serene peace of the Adagio which follows offers us a vision of the other side of the equation - the peace of the soul after death. After the turbulence we have witnessed we are here treated to hymn-like sounds of magical stillness, and when we realize that the composer originally penned over the title page the words "Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini" [Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord] the inspiration becomes even clearer, as Brahms' nickname for his teacher was Domine. But there is more. In a letter of 1856 Brahms writes to Clara, Schumann's widow, about the second movement of his concerto: "I am painting a lovely portrait of you; it is to be the Adagio". This was penned some eighteen months after the cataclysmic events described above and there is no doubt that Brahms went through a period of being deeply attached to Clara. Like all music the ultimate truth will never be known but it is possible that the tranquil beauty of this slow movement proved a cathartic resolution to what must have been a whole amalgam of emotions - the orchestral chorale could have been for Robert, the semi-improvisatory keyboard part for Clara, who was acknowledged as one of the world's greatest pianists, and the whole a glowing tribute to two people who had given love and security to a rather lonely young man.

With the finale we are back in the dark world of D minor but in different way. One of the other seminal experiences of Brahms' youth was a tour he made with a Hungarian violinist, Ede Remenyi. The music they played opened his ears to a whole new world of exotic dances, and this influence is plainly felt here as the concerto launches into a Rondo theme which seems to combine all the elements of a Magyar dance with a Bach partita. We quickly realize that this is by far the most showy movement for the soloist. It is almost as if this was a conscious attempt to throw off the previous threnoidal atmosphere with sparkling energy and it certainly achieves its purpose as after a number of exciting episodes and cadenza passages the music finds itself transformed into a bright D major as it hurtles towards its brilliant conclusion.



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during the interval for St. Christopher's Hospice  
in memory of Dirik Jackson.**

### **Symphony No. 2 in D major [Op. 43]**

**Jean Sibelius [1865 - 1957]**

[1] Allegretto

[2] Tempo Andante, ma rubato - poco Allegro

[3] Vivacissimo - Lento e suave

[4] Allegro moderato

In an era when celebrated composers such as Bruckner, Mahler, Tchaikovsky and others [including Brahms] had helped to push the idea of the late romantic symphony almost to its limits Sibelius proved one of the most innovatory of them all and showed there were further undiscovered paths to be explored. Along with Grieg he became one of the main standard-bearers for Scandinavian music and his orchestral repertoire remains, to this day, unsurpassed by any other composer from that region both for technical achievement and popularity.

Like Mahler, Sibelius represents as well as anyone the crossroads between the 19th and 20th centuries. They both used a musical language essentially born of Romanticism but added layers which gave it a distinctly modern tinge. With Sibelius this shows itself both in the way he organises his material and in his very personal method of orchestration. You have only to listen to the first bars of the second symphony to understand his method. Here you have three seemingly unconnected themes - an ostinato pattern for the strings, a dance-like tune for the wind, and a reflective one for the brass, to which are added over the ensuing pages a few more apparently disparate passages. But as the movement progresses - utilising the basic ground rules of symphonic structure dating back to Beethoven - strange connections between the various themes begin to form in the ear of the listener until material which appears at first quite incongruous gradually gels to the point when each part can add something dramatically to the other, and in the latter part can unite in quite different combinations which still make sense. Each cell on its own sounds rather perfunctory but used together they grow other cells thus producing a new generation of unexpected surprises. Everything seems to grow and mutate into something else but as the opening string motif brings the movement to a close you realize that everything which appeared new had in fact evolved from the initial material - a very novel way of building a symphonic movement.

One of the other great features of Sibelius' writing, as I mentioned above, is his orchestration. The lonely landscape of the second movement's opening is portrayed by solo timpani followed by double basses on their own [throughout his works the independence of the double bass line is a major hallmark of his style]. His idiosyncratic way of handling the orchestra then helps to build, out of these solitary beginnings, a movement of ardent passion, marked by yearning string passages, swirling movements in the wind - usually in thirds of sixths - and strident brass fanfares. By keeping these elements largely separate he produces a very personal sound which, on the occasions when he does weld them together generates an intensity redolent of Tchaikovsky, and makes the final bars of dislocation all the more poignant. Again we are presented with many differing elements which, in Sibelius' hands, slowly create an energetic force which repeatedly grows and explodes until it breaks itself up.

Hardly have we time to recover from this when the composer throws a vicious scherzo at us. Here the strings stab us with running phrases while the woodwind try to piece together some thematic material. Two beautiful trio interludes provide restful shelter from these bombardments until we are thrown back into the melee. At the very point when you feel this can be carried no further we find new ideas building in the texture and a sense of expectation mounts until we suddenly find ourselves released into the sunny landscape of the finale. This is the simplest and most straightforward of all the four movements and its very simplicity is often denigrated by critics. Those who do so miss the entire point of the symphony, because, like Beethoven's fifth before him, the composer here liberates all the emotions which have been pent up for so long in an expansive paean of joyous praise which after being led through the dark regions of impenetrable Scandinavian forestry emerges back out into the blazing sunshine of the final bars in which the theme is transformed into a triumphal chorale.

**Programme notes by Julian Williamson**

## DULWICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

### Violin I

Paula Tysall [Leader]  
Helen Bartholomew  
Anna Borrett  
Tom Brockbank  
Chris Burns  
Kirsty Mallett  
Gill Tarlton  
Abbi Temple  
Helen Winkworth

### Viola

Frances Barrett  
Julian Elias  
Frances Lee  
Martin Humphrey  
Philip McKenna  
Anne Miller  
Liz Milward

### Violin II

Jane Howard  
Elizabeth Cleary  
Adrian Chen  
Ann Earle  
Judi Kadifachi  
Philippe Masson  
Sarah Milnes  
Jim Nierobisz  
Miklós Pohl

### 'Cello

Nicky Jackson  
Russell Ashley-Smith  
Caroline Annesley  
John Lawrence  
Margaret Hodgson  
Antero Manocchi  
Jenny Nichols  
Sarah Toyn  
Mary Windus

### Double Bass

Chris Bond  
Sue Kimber  
Mike Lasserson  
Samantha Weitzel

### Flute

Zillah Smith  
Sam Purser

### Oboe

Louise Simon  
Ian Finn [Cor Anglais]

### Clarinet

Sue Best  
Duncan McInnes

### Bassoon

Hilary Dodd  
Jeremy Crump

### Horn

Graham Vernon  
Lucy Steel  
Paul Kajzar  
Jane Urquhart

### Trumpet

Tim Collett  
Hamish Cook  
Eric Milner

### Trombone

Michael Brooks  
Charles Mackworth-Young  
John Bell

### Tuba

Martin Humphrey

### Timpani

Tony Maloney

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

**Chenyin Li** was born in China, and studied at the Beijing Conservatory of Music and at Auckland University, New Zealand. In 1996 she won the New Zealand National Piano Competition and in 1997 the Young Musician of the Year Competition. Chenyin studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and is undertaking Doctorate studies at the City University in London. She has won prizes at several international piano competitions including the Dublin Competition and the Scottish Competition.

Chenyin Li has appeared in major venues and international festivals in the UK, including Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Royal Concert Hall [Glasgow], Leeds International Festival and at the Royal Festival Hall. Abroad she has played in France, Italy, Germany, Holland, Japan, Scotland, New Zealand and USA. Chenyin Li has appeared as a concerto soloist with the Phoenix [USA], the Royal Scottish and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestras.

**Paula Tysall** studied the violin at the Royal College of Music and the National Centre for Orchestral Studies. She won the Associated Board Silver Medal for Grade 7. As a member of the New London Orchestra she has taken part in many acclaimed recordings for Hyperion Records, Radio 3 and Classic FM Quartet.

**PATRONS:** A. Facey, Roger Best, Sheila McInnes, Diana and Brian Toyn, Nick Earle, Gareth Jones, Margaret Parrett, Harold and Margaret Price, Brian and Mavis Pickard, Isobel Johnson, Noel Annesley, Charlotte and Sara Ezaz, Mayling Chen.

The **Dulwich Symphony Orchestra** gratefully acknowledges sponsorship from Readman-Toyn Solicitors at [www.readmantoyne.co.uk](http://www.readmantoyne.co.uk)

The details of the next concert will be published on the web-site in July 2004.  
[www.dulwichsymphonyorchestra.org.uk](http://www.dulwichsymphonyorchestra.org.uk)