

The Lenthal Concerts

Season 2011-12

Trinity Laban Conservatoire String Orchestra

conducted by Nic Pendlebury

Amabile Piano Trio

Wednesday, April 3rd, 2012

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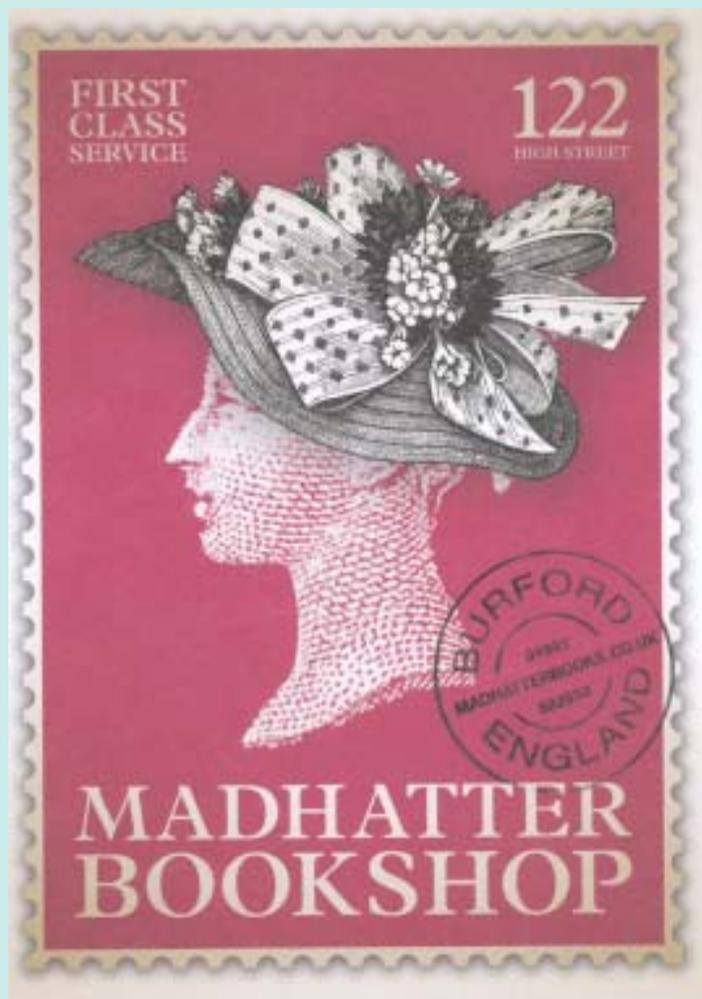
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The Annual General Meeting of the Lenthall Concert Society will be held at 7pm on Monday 9th July in the Burfords School Library. All members and prospective members are cordially invited to attend.



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Programme

Visions Fugitives op.22

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)
arranged by Rudolf Barshai
(1924-2010)

Lentamente
Andante
Allegretto
Animato
Molto giocoso
Con eleganza
Comodo, Allegretto
Tranquillo
Ridicolosamente
Con vivacita
Assai moderato
Allegretto
Feroce
Inquieto
Dolente

Prokofiev wrote *Visions Fugitives* (in Russian, *Mimoletnosti*), a suite of 20 short piano pieces, in 1915-1917, and gave the first performance at Petrograd in 1918, en route for New York (via Vladivostok and Tokyo) and self-imposed exile from the aftermath of the revolution, which he felt would hamper him artistically, although he had always supported the cause itself—in his autobiography he maintained that one of the movements of *Visions Fugitives* reflected the revolutionary events. But he took the title of the suite from a poem by the symbolist poet Konstantin Balmont (1867-1942):

*In every fugitive vision
I see whole worlds;
They change endlessly,
Flashing in playful rainbow colors*

Rudolf Barshai was a pivotal figure in Russian music-making in the second half of the twentieth century. An excellent violist, founder of the Borodin String Quartet and founder and conductor of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, he was a friend and confidant of both Prokofiev and Shostakovich, several of whose quartets he arranged for string orchestra. In 1955 he transcribed fifteen of the *Mimoletnosti* into this engaging suite, which faithfully recaptures the style of Prokofiev's own writing at the time when the original pieces were written—the sparkling and playful cadences of the Classical Symphony are never far away.

Vocalise op.34 no.14

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Vocalise is the last of Rachmaninoff's Fourteen Songs, published in 1912. As such it was written for voice (soprano or tenor) with piano accompaniment, and is wordless. Instead it is sung using any one vowel (of the singer's choosing). It was dedicated to the Russian soprano Antonina Nezhdanova (1873-1950), and when Rachmaninoff arranged the accompaniment for orchestra she gave the first performance, with the composer conducting.

The piece has appeared in many manifestations besides the purely orchestral one we hear tonight. Its seamless melodic line shows off the lyrical qualities of practically any instrument. One of the more intriguing versions in the catalogue is for piano and theremin: an instrument, one feels, that it might well have been written for.

Piano Trio in A minor op.50 (1st movement)

Piotr Tchaikovsky
(1840-1896)

Pezzo elegiaco (Moderato assai - Allegro giusto)

In 1881 Tchaikovsky was in Rome, recovering from the mauling which the critics had given his violin concerto, lately given its premiere in Vienna after two years of total neglect (its original dedicatee, Leopold Auer, refused to play it). Another violinist, Nicolia Rubenstein, with whom he had had a warmer relationship, had died in the same year, and Tchaikovsky composed this trio in his memory, in spite of his distaste for the combination—he had more than once declared that it was 'torture' to have to listen to it. But his patron (see below) was partial to the trio form, and indeed at that time maintained a private trio (of which the pianist was none other than Claude Debussy), so Tchaikovsky swallowed his prejudice and produced a masterpiece.

The work is substantial, the second movement—not played tonight—consisting of twelve variations, each of which commemorates an episode of Rubenstein's life. The shorter first movement is Tchaikovsky at his passionate best: stirring built climaxes followed by quiet passages where the music seems to be recovering its breath before building again. It finishes in a mood of exquisite calm.



Nicolai Rubenstein

Interval

Serenade for Strings in C op.48

Piotr Tchaikovsky

Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo - Allegro moderato

Walzer: Moderato. tempo di Valse

Elegie: Larghetto elegiaco

Finale (Tema Russo): Andante - Allegro con spirito

"Serenade" is one of those attractive words (even nicer in Italian) that has been used fairly freely over the years. Originally meaning a piece, usually sung, to be performed "on quiet or pleasant nights", it was commandeered in the eighteenth century for instrumental ensembles, initially for wind but in the time of the Mozarts, father and son, for strings. The orchestral serenade developed in the romantic period, although Tchaikovsky, who worshipped Mozart, retained a classical structure for his only composition in this form.

He wrote the Serenade for Strings (strictly speaking "for string orchestra") in 1880, a year before the Piano Trio, alongside the *1812 Overture*, to which it bears no resemblance, and with which Tchaikovsky compared it extremely favourably. He wrote to his patron, the wealthy widow Nadezhda von Meck:

The overture will be very showy and noisy, but will have no merit because I wrote it without warmth and without love. But the Serenade, on the contrary, I wrote from inner compassion. This is a piece from the heart.

Tchaikovsky went on to describe the first movement as "my homage to Mozart":

It is intended to be an imitation of his style, and I should be delighted if I thought I had in any way approached my model. Do not laugh, dear lady, at my zeal for standing up for my latest creation. Perhaps my parental feelings are so warm because it is the youngest child of my fancy.



Nadezhda von Meck

The first movement starts with the solid descending scale that is to be the backbone of the whole piece. This gives way via an *accelerando* passage to the *allegro*, exploiting the various colours of the strings throughout. These two alternate until the emphatic opening theme returns to close the movement.

In the second movement we are instantly in the world of Tchaikovsky's ballets. In fact Balanchine famously choreographed the movement in 1936, and later the whole work. It dances eventually into the distance, and is followed by another great Tchaikovsky melody in the *Elegie*: sombre, perhaps, but a long way from the brooding sadness of the Sixth Symphony, thirteen years later. With its rising scales it is wistful rather than desperate: more after-the-ball than end-of-the-world. In any case, there is a surprise round the corner. The last movement starts in a similarly reflective mood to the *Elegie*, but we are suddenly swept into a breathless *Allegro con Spirito*, where the irresistible motif of the descending scales becomes a bustling undercurrent to two Russian folk tunes, and one sweeping melody that is Tchaikovsky's own. Then, the master stroke: the scurrying stops, a pause for breath and Tchaikovsky reintroduces the *andante* theme with which the work began, and then transmutes it into the exhilarating *allegro* which brings down the curtain.

Nic Pendlebury

Nic Pendlebury is Head of Strings at Trinity Laban Conservatoire, and conducts the String Ensemble, the Sinfonietta, the Chamber Orchestra and the Sinfonia. With the String Ensemble he has given performances both nationally and internationally, including the Ljubliana Festival, Italy's Emilia Romana Festival, Conciertos de las Velas in Peraza Spain and at the Dartington International Summer School. The group has also participated in collaborative projects with Chethams School of Music, Wells Cathedral School and the Yehudi Menuhin School. They have performed with many notable soloists including oboist Nick Daniel, clarinetists Dimitri Ashkenazy and Darko Brlek, pianists William Howard and Helen Reed, violist Rivka Golani, organist David Titterington and jazz saxophonist Julian Agueles with whom they recorded the critically acclaimed album "As Above So Below".

Nic is also the founder and violist of the internationally acclaimed Smith Quartet renowned for their performance of new music and prize winners of the Prudential Award for the Arts. Now into their third decade they have collaborated with many of the world's leading musicians including John Adams, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, David Tannenbaum, Andy Sheppard, Django Bates the rock group Pulp and dance companies Siobhan Davies and Shobana Jeyasingh. They regularly perform in many of the world's most prestigious festivals and leading concert halls. The Smith Quartet record for Signum Classics their first three albums receiving worldwide acclaim.



Trinity Laban String Ensemble

Violin 1:

Tadasuke Iijima
Charmian Keay
Ewelina Ogarek
Iain Gibbs
Beatriz Alcalde Gil
Frederick Taylor

Violin 2:

Monika Urbonaite
Zanete Uskane
Gemma Dickinson
Ella Virr
Alfonso Almaidá

Viola:

Eva Farkas
Simon Ballard
Ralitsa Naydenova
Raisa Zapryanova

Cello:

Shelley Gent
Matthew Strover
Carolyn Rosinsky
Elisheba Stevens

Bass:

Georgina McGrath
John-Henry Baker

Amabile Trio

The Amabile Trio have been performing together ever since the trio was formed in January 2012. They have played in venues around London and have played to Lord Lipsey of the House of Lords and future engagements include performing at the Royal



Automobile Club. The trio is comprised of Naufal Mukumi: pianist, winner of the 2012 Eastbourne Young Soloist competition, finalist of Liszt International Piano Competition and currently an award winning full scholar at Trinity College of Music. Violinist Eunsley Park is a prize-winner of Tunbridge Wells International Young Artists' Competition, Sevenoaks competition and is a scholar at the Royal College of Music. Wei-Lin Tsen: cellist, is a graduate Winner of the Cavatina Chamber Music Competition and Audience Prize 2011 and Barbirolli Cello Prize 2011.

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