

The Lenthall Concerts

Season 2015-16

The English String Orchestra

directed by Michael Bochmann

Wednesday, March 16th 2016

Burford School

Burford School Symphony Orchestra

Spring Concert

Wednesday 23 March 2016

7.30pm Main Hall

Conductor

Dr John Traill

Director of Music, St Anne's College, Oxford



Tickets available from:

Mrs S Andrew: sand1949@burford.oxon.sch.uk

01993 823303

£5.00 Adults £4.00 Concessions (Under 18/Over 65)

Burford Institute of Music



Programme

'Spring' from The Seasons

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

Allegro non molto

Largo

Allegro

To call Vivaldi's life unconventional is to put it mildly. In the year of his ordination he was appointed *maestro di violino* at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, where he taught orphaned and abandoned girls who showed musical aptitude, and also acquired and maintained the instruments they played. The musical standard of his pupils must have been very high, for the services at which they sang and played attracted many of the Venetian nobility, as well as foreign visitors. Or perhaps they just looked very nice. In any case Vivaldi composed literally hundreds of concertos for them: for one, two or more instruments. When they were published, beginning with the twelve in *L'estro armonico* in 1711, they exerted an enormous influence in countries beyond Italy, especially in Germany. By the time Vivaldi's compositions for his pupils had gained admiration beyond the Pietà, he had risen to a higher position there, in which he had an opportunity to write sacred music. He had also followed his father into the world of opera, establishing himself as both composer and impresario at the theatre of S. Angelo. But he was still under contract to the Pietà to supply them with two concertos each month (at a fee of one sequin each). The four concertos portraying the seasons appeared in 1725, as part of a collection called *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione*.

Divertimento in D K136

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro

Andante

Presto

This work first saw the light of day as a string quartet, written in 1772, when Mozart was at the end of his career as a boy wonder, dazzling audiences all over Europe, and about to enter the employ of the new Archbishop of Salzburg. From now on, until he departed from his home town for Vienna on less than cordial terms with his employer, he would have the duties of court composer and musician.

The first movement is quintessential early Mozart, twinkling away merrily in best Eine Kleine Nachtmusik style, with semiquavers flying in all directions. The andante has a stately dance form, and the finale, after a few staccato steps, turns into a gambol not unlike that of the first movement, and ends at full tilt.

Violin concerto in E major BWV1042

Johann Sebastian Bach

Soloist: George Ewart

(1685-1750)

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro assai

In 1723 Bach left the court of Prince Leopold at Cöthen and took up his appointment as Kantor at the Thomasschule in Leipzig. For the next six years his duties were almost entirely concerned with sacred music, but in 1729 he was appointed to the Collegium Musicum, and was able to write secular compositions for it. This concerto is almost certainly one example, although such are the uncertainties of dating Bach's works that it is possible that it was a re-jigging of a work originally written in the Cöthen days.

Whether or not it was, there are certainly affinities with the Brandenburg Concertos, which date from the Cöthen period. A muscular first movement, with the soloist hard at it from start to finish, with or without the orchestra, is followed by the gorgeous theme of the adagio, stated by the orchestra with the solo violin playing a sort of descant above it, then breaking free with its own melodic inventions. We are back to the forthright mood of the first movement in the finale, which has another memorable tune and more ensemble playing for soloist and orchestra.

Brook Green Suite

Gustav Holst

(1874-1934)

Prelude

Air

Dance

In 1905 Holst was appointed Musical Director at the newly opened St. Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith, where he remained until the end of his life. It provided him with a steady income and, later, a sound-proof room to teach in during the week and compose in at weekends. In 1912 he composed the St Paul's Suite for the school orchestra: a work of infectious good humour which has proved to have a life far beyond the classroom.

22 years later Holst wrote this similar but less well known suite for the girls of St Paul's. It has all the earlier suite's exuberance and, though it is not in the least unworthy of a professional orchestra's attention, sounds like tremendous fun to play. Each of the three movements has echoes of the sort of English folk song that Holst cherished throughout his composing career and had no hesitation in importing into London W6. The first movement has a steady forward momentum and a delicate pizzicato postscript; the second a lilting tune in three-quarter time, and the finale is a real toe-tapper.

Andante Cantabile (from first quartet)

Pyotr Tchaikovsky

(1840-1893)

Tchaikovsky wrote his first string quartet (discounting a single movement, written six years before) in 1871, two years after his first masterpiece, *Romeo and Juliet*, but at a time when he was particularly short of money. His friend Nicholas Rubenstein suggested that Tchaikovsky should give a concert of his own works at the Moscow Conservatory and, lacking the means to engage an orchestra, the composer instead wrote a quartet. It was dedicated to his friend, the botanist Sergei Alexandrovich Rachinsky, and was an immediate success.

When he was fifteen, Tchaikovsky and his younger twin brothers had spent a happy summer on his sister's estate at Kamenka, in the Ukraine. Here he had heard a carpenter singing a folk song called *Sidel Vanya*, which translates as *Vanya sat on the divan*, and this he used in the second movement of the quartet, marked *andante cantabile*: a piece so immediately appealing that it brought Tolstoy to tears when he first heard it. It subsequently became a bit of an albatross for Tchaikovsky, who, faced with the host of transcriptions of it, thought it was the only piece of his that people wanted to hear.

Six Romanian Folk Dances

Bela Bartok

(1881-1945)

Bot tánc (Stick Dance)

Brâul (Sash Dance)

Topogó (In One Spot)

Bucsumí tánc (Dance from Bucsum)

Román polka (Romanian Polka)

Aprózó (Fast Dance)

Bartok was born on the border of Hungary and Romania; his birthplace was, in fact, at that time in the latter, although Hungary was later to claim both it and Bartok as their own. It was inevitable that during his long and meticulous research into folk music the composer should cover Transylvania, then part of Hungary. Ironically, Bartok's original title, *Romanian Folk Dances from Hungary*, was changed by the composer when Transylvania was annexed to Romania in 1918.

These dances were arranged for piano in 1915, and an orchestral version followed two years later. The titles above are in Hungarian; their Romanian equivalents are, as they say, available on request.

Waltz in A op.54 no.1

Antonin Dvorak
(1841-1904)

Dvorak wrote a set of eight waltzes for piano in 1879-80. Soon afterwards he arranged numbers 1 and 4 for string orchestra. They were premiêred in 1880 and published in 1911. They have much in common with the two sets of Slavonic Dances (1878 and 1886), also originally written for piano (in that case piano duet) and subsequently orchestrated. Gently folk-tinged, like many of its accompanying movements, it has become one of the popular favourites in the Dvorak oeuvre.

Hungarian Dance No.9 in G minor

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Like Dvorak's Slavonic Dances, Brahm's Hungarian Dances were originally written for piano duet. The set consists of 21 short pieces, of which this is perhaps the best known. It is based on *Bartfái Emlék*, a *czardas* by Béla Kéler, a composer of Slovak origin, slightly earlier than Brahms, who allegedly thought he was borrowing a folk song rather than plagiarising another composer's work. It is marked *Allegro Vivace* and is a sure-fire way of bringing a concert to a rousing end.

Programme notes by Christopher Yapp

The English String Orchestra

<i>First Violin</i>	<i>Second Violin</i>	<i>Viola</i>	<i>Cello</i>
Michael Bochmann	Angus Gibbon	Helen Roberts	Corinne Frost
George Ewart	Eleanor Cooke	Nicky Akeroyd	<i>Bass</i>
Jacqui Allen			Stephen Warner

The Worcestershire-based ESO was founded by conductor William Boughton as the English String Orchestra in 1978. It soon earned an international reputation for performances of English music, made over fifty recordings and began touring regularly in Europe. Over time, the orchestra's repertoire expanded to include the full breadth of orchestral music, the ESO grew to become the English Symphony Orchestra. Ever since then, "ESO" has served as an acronym with a dual meaning.

Conductor Vernon "Tod" Handley succeeded William Boughton in 2007, and led the orchestra until his death in 2008. Over the years, the ESO has worked with a distinguished list of instrumentalists, composers and conductors, including Stephen Isserlis, Daniel Hope, Michael Tippett, Nicholas Maw and Yehudi Menuhin, who was

appointed the ESO's Principal Guest Conductor in 1991, and led the orchestra on a number of international tours.

Central to the mission of the modern ESO is a commitment to share the power of live music with as wide a population as possible. The orchestra is dedicated to bringing performances of international standard to new audiences not only in the concert hall, but in schools, care homes, hospices and other under-served venues. These concerts often provide the only opportunity locally to hear live music by a professional orchestra. That includes people who by reason of age (young or old) or infirmity would otherwise be unable to access it. ESO raises funds, therefore, to send its Wind and String Quartets to play in local care homes and Hospices.

We run orchestra courses for children from grade 1 onwards, and train talented young players to perform alongside our regulars in some of our concerts. For pre-school age children, ESO has collaborated with the London Mozart Players to produce Storytime, which introduces the different types of instruments in an orchestra in an engaging, and audience-participatory, way.

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