

DULWICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SPRING CONCERT

Saturday, 25th March 2006 at 7.45 pm
St. Paul's Church, Herne Hill, SE24

DVORAK

Symphonic Variations

RODRIGO

Concierto de Aranjuez

SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 5

Julian Williamson
Conductor

Christopher Evesham
Guitar

Paula Tysall
Leader



Interval collection for St. Christopher's Hospice

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Symphonic Variations on an original theme (Op 78)

Antonin Dvorak (1841 - 1904)

From his earliest days folk songs formed a central part of Dvorak's life. His mother had sung them to him as she rocked him to sleep, he played them as a boy on his fiddle, and his fascination with them never waned throughout his adult life. In fact there is hardly a single piece of his music which is not imbued with the musical soil of his country. He took delight in arranging many of these old tunes directly and in 1876 produced a set of male-voice part songs based on a number of well-known melodies. One of these particularly intrigued him and he used it as a basis for a set of orchestral variations which he completed the next year. His enthusiasm for this venture was, however, not matched by his peers and he angrily shoved it into a bottom drawer where it remained for nearly a decade until he tentatively showed it to the famous conductor Hans Richter. Dvorak was amazed when Richter praised it to the skies and immediately arranged for it to be inserted into his forthcoming London concerts. Thus it was in this city that the long-delayed premiere took place and Richter wrote to the composer: "Amid the hundreds of concerts I have conducted during my life, no new work has been as successful as yours."

The melody on which the Variations are based is an old folk song entitled "I am a fiddler". On the surface it seems to have little else to offer apart from its naïve attractiveness but within its disarmingly simple structure Dvorak saw a multitude of possibilities for development. The work opens with a plain statement of this theme – six bars of unadorned melody, a contrasting rhythmic middle section, and a reprise of the opening bars here harmonised more fully. The composer then treats us to twenty-seven variations which gradually draw out all the inner secrets contained within these initial measures. The first few keep the melody fairly well intact and wrap round it a texture of ever increasing embellishment. But gradually we find the theme being taken to pieces and different parts of it being explored in a rich variety of episodes which lead us into ever more unfamiliar territory but always referring back to the tune enough to prevent us getting completely lost. Finally, when he considers he has extracted all the treasures he can muster Dvorak throws us into a brilliant finale. This is based on a vigorous fugal treatment of the tune which gets thrown around an array of instruments with ever increasing energy until in the final bars the whole orchestra seems to dance with joy.

Concierto de Aranjuez

Joaquin Rodrigo (1901 - 1999)

- (1) Allegro con spirito**
- (2) Adagio**
- (3) Allegro gentile**

Like Dvorak, Rodrigo had a life-long interest in the folk music of his country. Spain has a wonderfully rich vein of this stretching back over many centuries and, fired by his early contact with Manuel de Falla, Rodrigo was determined to build it firmly into his compositional style. In spite of being blind from the age of three (due to diphtheria) he displayed an amazing talent for composition by the time he was a teenager.

His parents – in spite of considerable financial problems – sent him to Paris where he studied with Paul Dukas whose influence, although producing an occasional Gallic twang, never over-rode the innate Spanish sounds with which he had grown up. He produced many works during his long and productive life. There were ballets, an opera, many settings of songs and a variety of orchestral works. But his abiding interest was in the realm of the concerto and he left examples for many different instruments – in particular for the guitar the sound and style of which always fascinated him. Although not a player himself he composed a number of works for it, either solo or in combination, and by far the most famous of these is the one we are performing tonight. Completed in 1939 at the end of the civil war it was an immediate hit and was seized on by the Spanish public almost as a national emblem. Over the ensuing years it spread all over world and its popularity shows no sign of diminishing.

Like Falla before him Rodrigo has a natural ability to draw in to his music the centuries-deep culture of Flamenco music. Although all the themes of this concerto are Rodrigo's own they seem to grow out of the very roots of Spanish history. All three movements conjure up in the listener images of warm sunshine, balmy evenings and joyful dancing. He called the concerto Aranjuez, after the old summer seat of the Spanish kings near Madrid, and views of this magnificent palace help to draw us in to the very depths of a country so powerfully endowed with cultural treasures. The structural design of the concerto matters little in the listening – just sit back and allow yourself to be hypnotized.



INTERVAL

During the interval please give generously to the collection for St. Christopher's Hospice



Symphony No 5 in E flat (Op 82)

Jean Sibelius (1865 - 1957)

- (1) Tempo molto moderato - Allegro moderato**
- (2) Andante mosso, quasi allegretto**
- (3) Allegro molto**

All three items in tonight's concert are products of nationalistic ideals although coming from very different parts of the world. We have seen how Dvorak and Rodrigo drew on the cultural heritage of their two countries so that it formed part of their individual style and Sibelius was very similar in this respect - although his country's geography and history contrast sharply with Bohemia and Spain. From his earliest years as a composer Sibelius longed to paint musical pictures of his homeland, a landscape covered with vast forests trapped in darkness for much of the year and swirling with wind, snow and a cold which could bite straight through the thickest clothing. From these regions grew a multitude of stories and legends which helped to give these lonely areas a sense of timelessness and majesty. This longing gave rise to a long series of symphonic poems which aimed to give the listener an emotional and even physical feel of the more remote parts of the country. These evocative sounds built themselves into Sibelius' very style so that even the seven symphonies which he penned, although not overtly pictorial, still have almost a scenic feel to them. Thus the ancient legends and intemperate weather, so much a part of the tone-poem "En Saga", form a central part of the Symphony No 2 and echoes of it are still found in No 5. The latter, originally completed in 1915 underwent considerable revision before its official premiere in London in 1921.

Its three movements contain many of the Sibelius fingerprints which have become so familiar to us – in particular his ability to make comparatively insignificant initial statements grow into themes of great stature and importance, like making huge oak trees from tiny acorns. Thus listen carefully to the opening and the rather lonely fanfares from the horns and woodwind at the beginning and you will discover, as the first movement progresses from slow introduction through an enticing waltz-like faster middle section to a finale full of cascading arpeggios you will realize that not only are you following a brilliant exercise in acceleration but that almost all the material used along the way have their roots in the opening bars. The central andante is a delightful intermezzo which again has touch of the dance about it before we are thrown into the finale which begins by drawing us into the depths of some windy forest out of which bell-like sounds emerge and eventually the whole material grows into a noble theme which slowly dispels the darkness and mystery and allows the symphony to finish in unalloyed grandeur – as though we were taken up above into the sunlight and could view the whole majestic grandeur of the Finnish landscape.

Programme notes by Julian Williamson

Christopher Evesham

Christopher was born in Halton in 1982. He was given his first guitar at the age of four. At ten, he began to study with American guitarist John Dunn of the Mons Conservatoire in Belgium. Later he studied with Andrew Barrett as an external student of Wells Cathedral School. In 1998 he won a DfEE scholarship to study there full time. Christopher reached the semi-finals of the BBC Young Musicians 2000 competition. In this year he became a student of Carlos Bonell at the Royal College of Music. He graduated in 2004 and continues to live in London.

Christopher performs regularly as a soloist. He has also played in various ensembles including the group 'tonic fold' and with flautist Laura Smith. He performs a wide variety of music and his programmes usually include a balance of older music transcribed for guitar, such as Bach and Scarlatti, and works by 20th century and contemporary composers such as Britten, Walton, Brouwer, Piazzolla, Barrios, Turina, Rodrigo etc. Christopher plays a guitar made for him in 2002 by Australian guitar makers Greg Smallman and Sons.

Julian Williamson

In a career spanning close on forty years Julian Williamson has conducted choirs and orchestras in many parts of England and abroad. He has directed concerts in all the major concert venues in London and has given many performances all over the country. He also spends much time lecturing, a part of his work which takes him all over Britain and abroad. He is particularly delighted to have been associated with the Dulwich Symphony Orchestra over a number of years, with whom he has explored many interesting corners of the orchestral repertoire.

Violin 1	Viola	Flute	Horn
Paula Tysall (leader)	Frances Barrett	Sam Purser	Graham Vernon
Chris Burns (co-leader)	Julian Elias	Annabel Noton (+ piccolo)	Paul Kajzar
Sonali Banerjee	Frances Lee		Lucy Steel
Helen Bartholomew	Philip McKenna	Oboe	Jane Urquhart
Anna Borrett	Judith Smith	Louise Simon	
Tom Brockbank		Ian Finn (+ cor anglais)	Trumpet
Emily Coelho	Cello		Tim Collett
Victoria Dawes	Nicky Jackson	Clarinet	Elsbeth Hackett
Mary Galloway	Caroline Annesley	Roland McCabe	Eric Milner
Gill Tarlton	Russell Ashley-Smith	Brendan O' Neill	
	Fiona Clarey		Trombone
Violin 2	Sarah Colyer	Bassoon	Geoff Clayton
Jane Howard	Margaret Hodgson	Hilary Dodd	Steve Jenkins
Elizabeth Cleary	Oliver Pearce	Jeremy Crump	John Bell (bass)
Tessa Crilly	Peter Watkins		
Ann Earle		Sound Engineering	Timpani
Sinead Hayes	Double Bass	Andrew Freeland	David Holmes
Philippe Masson	Samantha Weitzel	Jason Mollring	
Andrew Poulter	Chris Bond		Percussion
Iain Speirs	Billy Houghton		Adam Calderhead
Alison Thorne			

The next DSO concert will be on Saturday 17th June 2006 at All Saints' Church, West Dulwich.

The programme will include music by Elgar and Delius.

“Message from St. Paul’s.....

St. Paul’s is a beautiful Victorian church built in the mid 19th century by G. E. Street. It has a long association with fine music and we are delighted to welcome back the Dulwich Symphony Orchestra. In 2003 a fund-raising appeal was launched to raise money for an exciting plan to develop the west end of the nave, bringing the church much-needed modernisation. Plans and leaflets about the redevelopment can be seen at the back of the church. About £300,000 has been raised so far through gifts, pledges, concerts and other events, including a memorial, bringing the church about half-way to its target. In January 2005 the Dulwich Symphony Orchestra gave a memorable concert here and helped to raise £1,500. Once again St. Paul’s Church would like to express its gratitude to the orchestra tonight for supporting the Appeal through donating the proceeds from refreshments to the Building Fund.

Leigh Whittingham

Chairman of the St. Paul’s Building Fund.”