

DULWICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

AUTUMN CONCERT

Saturday 18th November 2006 at 7.45 pm
All Saints' Church, Rosendale Road, SE21



DVOŘÁK
Symphony No. 6

BORODIN
Polovtsian Dances
from 'Prince Igor'

TCHAIKOVSKY
The Tempest

conducted by

Julian Williamson

leader

Paula Tysall



Interval collection for St. Christopher's Hospice

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Polovtsian Dances from ‘Prince Igor’

Alexander Borodin (1833 - 1887)

Borodin is one of those rare people who achieved fame in two entirely different fields. As a young boy he developed a passion for making fireworks which led over his teenage years to an intense study of science in general and chemistry in particular. No-one was then surprised when this became his profession and over the remaining years of his life his wide research into many branches of chemistry brought him much respect and acclaim. But his other passion was music. His skill as a player on a variety of instruments was apparent from an early age and it was not long before he began composing under the guidance of Balakirev who quickly saw the great potential of his young protégé. Because he had to confine musical creativity to breaks and holidays from his scientific work his output is understandably small but his two completed symphonies and his tone poem “In the Steppes of Central Asia” have gained a secure place in concert programmes throughout the world.

One project, however, intrigued him more than any other – a large-scale opera on the heroic exploits of the 12th century warrior Prince Igor Svyatoslavich. Having fashioned his own libretto from a medieval epic he worked on it in disjointed bursts for some eighteen years but sadly left it unfinished at his death. Although a completion was attempted by Glazunov and Rimsky-Korsakov the opera has had only limited success outside Russia. But one section of it has become justly famous. Prince Igor has been captured by his powerful foe Khan Konchak but so impressed is the latter by Igor’s defiant courage in the face of mortal danger that he accepts him as an equal and offers him the hospitality of his magnificent palace in Polovtsy. He orders a grand entertainment for his guest the climax of which is a colourful series of dances. These are the celebrated Polovtsian Dances which provide a wonderfully vibrant backdrop to the closing scene of Act II in the opera. The seven movements begin with a gentle love lyric but the mood quickly changes to one of frenetic activity and you have to imagine hundreds of the Khan’s slaves dancing with ever increasing energy until we find ourselves engulfed in a whirligig of wild exotic fantasy.

The Tempest - Symphonic Fantasy (Op. 18)

Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)

Like many Romantic composers Tchaikovsky developed a deep love of the works of Shakespeare. This had initially been fired when his mentor Balakirev suggested a fantasy overture on the subject of “Romeo and Juliet”. The eventual success of this encouraged him to write two more over the ensuing years – “The Tempest” and “Hamlet”. The universal popularity of “Romeo and Juliet” (thoroughly deserved) has somewhat diverted the musical public’s attention away from the other two which unfortunately has led to their being played rather less often than they should.

“The Tempest” was written within two weeks in the Autumn of 1873. His friend Vladimir Stasov sent him an outline scenario and this so inspired him that he quickly worked it into an effective musical structure. There is no attempt in it to directly tell the story but, like “Romeo and Juliet” it paints in musical terms portraits of some of the people and events which occur within the play. The whole piece is wrapped round the image of the sea and as the strings build a misty texture we hear a haunting siren call from the horns, which will recur at various stages throughout the piece. As this dies away we hear distant fanfares as the mighty wizard Prospero appears. The music grows into a powerful majestic theme and we see the enchanted isle, which is his domain, appearing around him. Prospero raises his magic staff and summons forth a violent storm which whips through the orchestra with the siren call of the sea cutting through the roaring wind and rain. The tempest has caused a ship to run aground on the island and one of its survivors, Ferdinand, meets Prospero’s daughter, Miranda. As they gaze at each other the music melts into a beautiful love tune which gradually flowers as their feelings grow. Then some light scherzo sounds in the orchestra introduce us to Ariel, one of Prospero’s magic spirits. He does musical battle with his evil counterpart Caliban, whose appearance is immediately apparent in the cellos and basses. As this evaporates we find ourselves back with Ferdinand and Miranda whose initial tender feelings have now grown into an all-embracing love and we find their theme now flooding through the orchestra as they give full vent to their glowing passion. At the very height of this Prospero appears once more and as we hear his mighty theme for the last time he breaks his staff thus releasing his magic powers over the island, and as the mists descend once more we are returned to the sea and the mysterious haunting sounds of the beginning remind us of her over-riding and infinite power.



INTERVAL

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



Symphony No. 6 in D Major (Op. 60)

Antonin Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

- (1) Allegro non tanto**
- (2) Adagio**
- (3) Scherzo (Furiant): Presto**
- (4) Finale: Allegro con spirito**

From his very humble beginnings as a butcher's son Dvořák rose to enjoy the dizzy heights of international fame, not just in Europe but also across the Atlantic. But however famous his name became across the world he never forgot his roots in the countryside of Bohemia and the local folk and dance music with which he grew up. The first piece which gained him public acclaim was a set of Moravian dances and we find the influence of such music pervading his work throughout his life. This is very apparent in all his nine symphonies, from the sounds of the church bells of Zlonice in No. 1 right through to No. 9 where the tunes of the "New World" mingle magically with those of his homeland.

His sixth symphony had a curious start to its performing life. It was written for the great German conductor Hans Richter who had done much to encourage Dvořák in his career. Richter planned its premiere with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra but met with an unbreakable resistance from the members of this very independent group for "another foreign work". Their rebellion meant that the work was first performed in Prague under a Czech conductor and Richter had to wait a full twelve months before he could perform it, still not in Vienna but in London.

This symphony is no exception to the general rule of Dvořák's music in that it lives and breathes the spirit of Bohemia. The first movement introduces us to a gently lilting theme which quickly transforms itself into a vigorous rhythmic pattern. These ideas, along with a swaying second subject for cellos and horns form the core out of which this movement is built, climbing to an exciting climax near the end at which point Dvořák lets us down and allows us to assume that it will sink to its end as if in a comfortable armchair until suddenly, at the last minute, throwing us out of the window. The gentle lyricism of the adagio shows Dvořák at his lyrical best. From his early days beautiful tunes had poured out of his head and here we have a lovely selection from his treasure house with just enough drama injected to prevent it becoming over sweet. For the scherzo we are thrown headlong into the real sounds of old Bohemia. The furiant is a vivacious dance dating back centuries and Dvořák must have become well acquainted with it in the days of his youth when he played violin in local dance halls. Here he gives us an intoxicating one of his own making full use of all the stunning cross rhythms which form such a central part of traditional Czech music. The finale shows, at the beginning, a little of the influence of Brahms' second symphony and like the symphony's opening combines most effectively lyrical melodies and bouncing rustic dance tunes all of which build up near the end to an invigorating coda until the music, unable to contain itself any longer, literally explodes with joy.

Programme notes by Julian Williamson

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.

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| Violin 1 | Viola | Flute | Trumpet |
| Paula Tysall (<i>leader</i>) | Frances Barrett | Sam Purser (+ <i>piccolo</i>) | Tim Collett |
| Chris Burns (<i>co-leader</i>) | Julian Elias | Annabel Noton (+ <i>piccolo</i>) | Eric Milner |
| Sonali Banerjee | Morag Fergusson | Gemma Pritchett | |
| Helen Bartholomew | Philip McKenna | | Trombone |
| Anna Borrett | Anne Miller | Oboe | Geoff Clayton |
| Tom Brockbank | Judith Smith | Louise Simon | Steve Jenkins |
| Victoria Dawes | | Ian Finn (+ <i>cor anglais</i>) | John Bell (<i>bass</i>) |
| Mary Galloway | Cello | | |
| Martin Stokes | Nicky Jackson | Clarinet | Tuba |
| | Caroline Annesley | Roland McCabe | Mike Llewellyn |
| | Sarah Colyer | Brendan O' Neill | |
| Violin 2 | Brigid Constantine | | Timpani |
| Jane Howard | Margaret Hodgson | Bassoon | Tony Maloney |
| Elizabeth Cleary | Oliver Pearce | Hilary Dodd | |
| Tessa Crilly | Peter Watkins | Diane Da'Costa | Percussion |
| Rebecca de Rafael | Mary Windus | | David Holmes |
| Sinead Hayes | | Horn | George Bird |
| Pippa Jameson-Evans | Double Bass | Graham Vernon | Richard Knight |
| Lara Marcinkiewicz | Samantha Weitzel | Lucy Harris | Geordan Reid-Campbell |
| Philippe Masson | Chris Bond | Paul Kajzar | |
| Iain Speirs | Clare Galtrey | Jane Urquhart | Harp |
| | Mike Lasserson | | Elizabeth McNulty |

The next DSO concert will be on Saturday 24th February 2007 at All Saints' Church

The programme will consist of music by Nielsen, Dvořák and Brahms