

Symphony no. 7 in D minor. Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)

This symphony was commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society and first performed at St. James' Hall under the composer's baton in April 1885 when it was a great success. Dvorak confessed that in this work he was "aiming at the stars." He wanted to show that he was more than just a composer of charming nationalistic music, and that his native Bohemia could produce a composer to rank with Brahms, who was his friend and inspiration.

1. Allegro Maestoso

The first movement certainly start with Brahms-like severity. Over a low pedal D on timpani, tremulo double basses and the horn, first the cellos, then the clarinets play a cryptic theme whose terseness hunts at the struggles to come. Tension slowly builds up but leads unexpectedly to a horn solo with oboe countermelody, which relaxes the mood for a moment. But the tension builds up again culminating in a very forceful statement of the first theme for full orchestra. Gradually the mood changes to bring in the second subject for flutes and clarinets, a consoling song that shows strongly the influence of Brahms though Dvorak's orchestration is all his own.

The music develops this material energetically, but finally subsides to the quiet but foreboding music of the opening, ending on a whisper.

2. Poco adagio

Dvorak deliberately avoids the warm sympathetic tone of the violins for some time, the beautiful theme being scored for woodwind with pizzicato string accompaniment. When, later, the violins and cellos are heard it is with a deep sighing phrase also used in one of Dvorak's late quartets. The composer's love of the peace of the countryside comes out later in this movement, and after a sudden orchestral outburst peace is restored and it ends quietly.

3. Scherzo-vivace

A third movement is often light-hearted, jocular even, but this one, though in the rhythm of Czech folk dance, is most notable for restless energy. Two themes vie simultaneously for our attention with use of broken rhythms and cross accents and the trio hardly gives us any respite from this feeling of ambiguity and stress.

4. Allegro

A note of nationalism appears for the first time in the broad song-like first theme. The brass, hitherto used sparingly, comes into its own here. There are some moments of consolation, but this powerful movement seems set for a tragic conclusion until Dvorak snatches triumph from defeat in the final glowing chords of D major.

Southgate Symphony Orchestra Friends Association

Despite the generous support of Enfield Council, Southgate Symphony Orchestra still has a great many expenses, particularly hiring concert venues and extra players. If you would like to support the Orchestra and continue the tradition of bringing Classical music to Enfield, please consider becoming a Friend. For information, please contact: Eleanor Pritchard, SSOFA Secretary on 020 8363 9029.

To be kept up-to-date with concerts and news from the Orchestra, you may like to join our free mailing list. Please contact Eleanor Pritchard (see above) for details.

© 2005 Southgate Symphony Orchestra. All information correct at time of publication.

SOUTHGATE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Alex Eadon

Leader: Angela Hunt

Inaugural Concert

A programme of romantic masterpieces

Sunday 11th December, 7.30pm
St. Peter's Church, Vera Avenue
Grange Park, N21

Overture; Oberon

Carl Maria von Weber

Violin Concerto in D

Ludwig Van Beethoven

(Gavin Davies, solo violin)

Symphony No.7

Antonin Dvorak



Programme: 50p

Southgate Symphony Orchestra is grateful for the support of Enfield Council



Southgate Symphony Orchestra

The origins of Southgate Symphony Orchestra date back to 1962 when a group of local players asked Terry Hawes to become its first conductor. It became an evening class of Southgate College the following year when Terry was appointed to the music post at the new Southgate College in 1963. And so it remained for the next 42 years until its members were no longer prepared or able to pay the huge increases in fees. They voted to form the basis of a new fully independent orchestra to serve the local community. Without the generous support of Enfield Council and help from the Enfield Over 50s Forum it is doubtful whether this orchestra would have been able to continue its almost 50 years tradition of playing classical music for Enfield audiences.

Alex Eadon - conductor

Alexander started his musical career aged eight as a chorister at King's College, Cambridge. In 1996 he gained a Music Scholarship to Harrow School and went on to spend his Gap year as Organ Scholar at St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Currently he is reading for a BMus at the Royal Academy of Music where he studies organ with David Titterington. Alex participates in Patrick Russill's choral conducting class and has also received tuition from Denise Ham in orchestral conducting. He directs his own student choir, the *London Poulenc Singers*, and sings in the close harmony group *Prick Up Your Ears*. He is Director of Music at Christ Church, Southgate where he leads the choir for services and concerts - recent performances have included J.S. Bach's *St. John Passion*, Duruflé's *Requiem* and Tallis' gigantic 40-part masterpiece *Spem in Alium*.

Gavin Davies - violin

Gavin was born in North London and began violin lessons at the age of eleven with Jenny Swan. After further study with Marta Eitler he was awarded an Associated Board Gold Bursary and was accepted at the Royal College of Music as a pupil of Jaroslav Vanicek and later Natasha Boyarsky. Whilst at RCM he also studied piano and voice and was awarded the Royal Orchestral Society Scholarship, graduating with a BMus Hons degree in 1998. He has also studied with Luzia Ibragimov, Alison Kelly and Beverley Davison and has worked with a wide variety of orchestras and ensembles including *English National Opera*, *the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra*, *the Royal Ballet Sinfonia*, *the Ulster Orchestra*, *English Sinfonia* and *the Bootleg Beatles*. As well as the Beethoven concerto, previous concerto performances have included works by Bruch, Mendelssohn, Bach, Haydn, Tchaikovsky, Vivaldi's 'Seasons' and the Bach 'Double' Concerto with Beverley Davison.

Romantic Music

Against a backdrop of the 1815 Congress of Vienna, the Industrial Revolution and growth in public transportation, the Romantic era of European classical music lasted from the early 1800s to the first decade of the twentieth century. Composers took the formal structures of the preceding Classical era, but attempted to increase the emotional expression of the music to reach a deeper truth. Ways in which this was achieved were through extended harmony and tonalities (with chromaticism and dissonance appearing more often), the development of program music ("music about or inspired by something"), and the inclusion of new instruments (this led to larger orchestras, probably best shown by Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*). Other features of this music included the composition of nationalist pieces (often arising from political situations), pieces tending to become longer, tenors replacing castrati as the leads in opera (and choruses becoming more important) which also become less discrete in structure, and the rise of instrumental virtuosi.

Overture; Oberon of The Elf King's Vow. Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)

This was Weber's last opera, composed in 1826 to a commission from Kemble, manager of Covent Garden, and completed only a few months before the composer's untimely death at the age of 40.

The libretto was a by Planché, who wrote many pantomimes, and Oberon is, therefore, the only opera by one of the great continental composers set to English words. Set in the age of chivalry it introduces elements of the *The Magic Flute* and characters from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and perhaps it is fortunate that Weber's command of English was not sufficient for him to realise what a farrago of nonsense the libretto was. He lavished wonderful music on it and it was a massive success.

Oberon and Titania have fallen out of love (again!) and vow not to be reconciled until a pair of lovers, Sir Huon and Rezia, have proved their constancy through various adventures aided by, not a magic flute, but a magic horn.

The horn is heard softly at the beginning of the overture, answered by sighing phrases from the strings. A brief flutter of fairy wings, a distant fanfare, then a beautiful cello tune which pauses incomplete, all lead to a stirring and brilliant allegro, early romantic music at its best. The young Wagner adored Weber's music and would have had strong competition from Weber had he lived.

Violin Concerto in D. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1. Allegro non troppo

Four quiet taps on the kettle drum are answered by a hymn-like phrase on the upper woodwind. Four more drum notes and a woodwind answer lead to a more surprising interruption from the strings on a D sharp, the most dissonant note to introduce into D major. Gently the music re-establishes the home key only for the same interruption to recur followed by the same answer, leading to upward scale passages in the woodwind which grow into the famous tune which is the main theme of the movement.

The orchestra builds up to a climax, and then, in a dramatic gesture, fades away, leaving the solo violin to introduce itself with a passage of majestic octaves climbing to a top G, then descending to the G string, and up again, before the soloist has his own thoughtful version of the opening theme.

This description of the opening gives some idea of the whole movement, which is a dialogue, sometimes thoughtful, sometimes energetic, in which the violin and orchestra are equal partners.

2. Larghetto

The quiet first theme is on muted strings, giving an ethereal, dream-like quality. The ending of the theme is elaborated leading to the entrance of the violin with a new theme, also quiet and pensive. Near the end there is a brusque and startling change of key which leads to a cadenza for the solo violin, and into the last movement.

3. Rondo - allegro

The violin begins the main theme, graceful yet agile, which the orchestra then takes up in a more rumbustious version. The hunting song suggestion in the rhythm is emphasised when the two horns begin an accompanying pattern underneath a new theme high in the solo violin. The main theme returns a number of times interspersed with episodes mostly in the form of delightful dialogues between the soloist and members of the orchestra, which become increasingly spirited.

"The last sound is the opening of the rondo, which the oboe has just failed to persuade the violin to treat seriously, and which the violin, now in its own time, turns to for the close of the concerto" (Ralph Hill. *The Concerto*.)