



Sutton Symphony Orchestra

Conductor: Philip Aslangul
Leader: Annmarie McDade

Tchaikovsky Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture

Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No 2

Soloist John Paul Ekins

Shostakovich Symphony No 10

St Andrew's United Reformed Church
Northey Avenue, Cheam

Saturday 24th March 2018 : 7.30pm

CONDUCTOR PHILIP ASLANGUL

Philip Aslangul graduated from the Guildhall School of music in 1990, where he studied cello, piano and conducting with Stefan Popov, Carola Grindea and Alan Hazeldine respectively.

He has pursued a varied career; as a cellist, he has given recitals around the country with the Burlington Duo and The Q Piano Trio, including a live radio broadcast in 1991. He has worked as a freelance cellist appearing as principal with orchestras including the National Pops Orchestra, The Camerata of London and The City Chamber Ensemble, and has played with other orchestras including the English Philharmonia.

As a pianist, Philip is in demand as a répétiteur and accompanist; he has worked with the award-winning ladies choir 'Impromptu' for the past 20 years including performances on BBC2 and Radio 3. He is a Jazz and Grades examiner for ABRSM for whom he is also a Music Medals Moderator, and has worked as a Mentor for The Open University.

Philip is actively involved in youth music and conducted Kingston Schools Orchestra and Kingston Young Strings between 1998 and 2004. He is currently conductor of SYSO, Sutton's Youth Orchestra, which performs regular concerts at St Andrew's, with a tour to the Music Festival in Lisbon and a concert at the Royal Festival Hall held in 2017.

LEADER ANNMARIE MCDADE

Annamarie studied violin with Trevor Williams and Jonathan Carney and piano with Raymond Fischer at the Royal College of Music.

Annamarie had many years leading touring shows and in West End shows such as Annie get Your Gun, Aspects of Love, The Sound of Music, Oklahoma, The Producers and Company.

She spent nearly eight years in the West End production of Les Miserables (frequently leading) until 2004 and worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, English Northern Philharmonia, British Symphony Orchestra, Opera Della Luna, London Arts Orchestra (principal 2nd), Camerata of London (principal 2nd & guest leader), Pro Arte Orchestra (leader), London Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (principal 2nd & founder member) and many others.

Solo performances include Mozart A major and G major and Bruch G minor concertos, Beethoven's F major Romance, Bach's and Malcolm Arnold's Double Violin Concertos and Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

Annamarie teaches in schools and privately - all ages, all abilities! She was orchestral coach for Berkshire Young Musicians' Trust, Beauchamp House International Music and drama courses and ENCORE.

JOHN PAUL EKINS

In great demand as a recitalist, concerto soloist and chamber musician, John Paul Ekins has given performances throughout the UK, and overseas in Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Kuwait, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain and Switzerland, and he has been broadcast on the BBC, on Romanian national television and radio, and on Polish television. In 2009 he graduated from the Royal College of Music with First Class Honours, and in the same year he was awarded the James Anthony Horne Scholarship by the Guildhall School of Music and Drama to study with Charles Owen, where he graduated with Master of Performance (Distinction) in 2011. He was the recipient of a Music Education Award from the Musicians Benevolent Fund, and receives generous support from Making Music, The Concordia Foundation, The Razumovsky Trust and The Keyboard Charitable Trust.

He has performed at a number of prestigious venues in the UK and abroad, including Bucharest's Athenaeum, Zurich's Tonhalle, Prague's Martinu Hall, Bergen's Troidhaugen, Krakow's Florianka Hall, London's Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Fairfield Hall and Steinway Hall, Birmingham's Symphony Hall, Oxford's Holywell Music Room, Bath's Pump Room, Bristol's Colston Hall and Belfast's Ulster Hall. As a concerto soloist he has performed works by Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Grieg, Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich and Gershwin with orchestras throughout the UK. His concerto highlight thus far was performing Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue at the Royal Albert Hall with Southbank Sinfonia and he returns to the RAH in 2018 to perform the Warsaw Concerto.

John Paul was particularly honoured to be presented to Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Prince Philip at a Reception for Young Performers at Buckingham Palace, and international competition successes have brought him as many as 19 awards and prizes.

During the interval and after the concert, copies of John Paul's recent DVD recording will be on sale for £10.

You can find out more information on John Paul at www.jpekingspianist.com or follow him on Twitter @jpekingspianist.



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PROGRAMME

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

ROMEO AND JULIET, FANTASY-OVERTURE

No other play by Shakespeare has inspired as many composers as *Romeo and Juliet*. Throughout the romantic era, the drama held an enormous, and sometimes nearly fatal, attraction. After Berlioz saw *Romeo and Juliet* in a Paris theatre and fell desperately in love with Harriet Smithson, who played Juliet, he announced his intention to marry the actress and to write a dramatic symphony based on the play—and did both within a decade. The marriage was a mistake, however, and they later separated, but the symphony, performed in SSO's last concert, is undoubtedly his greatest work.

More than twenty operas have been written on *Romeo and Juliet*, including Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, with a mezzo-soprano as Romeo, and Gounod's enduring treatment, with the ending rewritten so that the lovers die at the same moment, singing in unison. Bernstein's urban *West Side Story* suggests that the fascination with this subject has not waned in our time. And Prokofiev's ballet, first staged in 1940, is now recognized as a twentieth-century classic, although the composer originally wrote a happy ending because he couldn't imagine how dying lovers could dance. But none of these works has surpassed the popularity of Tchaikovsky's fantasy-overture.

The Russian composer Mily Balakirev apparently first suggested the play to Tchaikovsky, at least as early as the summer of 1869. He continued to push the subject and, when Tchaikovsky wavered, he prodded him. In a letter dated October 6, 1869, he offered literary observations, suggested general guidelines for treating the subject, and even dictated four measures of music to open the work. Before Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* was finished—and it was another ten years before it reached its final form—Balakirev had approved and rejected a number of themes, recommended a new introduction in the style of a Lisztian chorale, and presented his preferred tonal scheme, based on a fondness for keys with five flats or two sharps.

Surprisingly, Tchaikovsky found his own voice with this work; *Romeo and Juliet*, a "Fantasy-Overture after Shakespeare," is his first masterpiece. The original version, composed in just six weeks, was performed in March 1870, with Nicolai Rubinstein conducting. A new version, completed that summer, incorporated Balakirev's idea of a slow chorale at the beginning. It was played in Saint Petersburg in early 1872.

Although Tchaikovsky and Balakirev had a falling out that year, Tchaikovsky continued to turn to Shakespeare for inspiration: in 1873 he fashioned a symphonic fantasy from *The Tempest* and late in 1876 he complained of losing sleep over *Othello*, which he was determined to make into an opera. He dropped the project early in the new year—two years before Verdi and Boito first conceived their *Otello*. (*Hamlet* was the last Shakespearean subject to interest Tchaikovsky: he composed a fantasy-overture in 1888 and three years later contributed incidental music to a staging of the play in Saint Petersburg.)

In 1878, while he was recuperating from his failed marriage at his brother Modest's house, he returned to *Romeo and Juliet* and was struck by its potential as a great operatic subject. "Of course I'll compose *Romeo and Juliet*," he wrote to Modest from Brailov, excited by the

prospect of writing a new opera. "It will be my most monumental work. It now seems to me absurd that I couldn't see earlier that I was predestined, as it were, to set this drama to music." But instead of writing an opera, Tchaikovsky put the finishing touches on the fantasy-overture two years later and it is this last version that is performed this evening.

The idea of composing the opera cropped up in 1881 and again in 1893, and on one of those occasions he sketched a duet for the lovers based on material from the fantasy-overture. But he never orchestrated it and ultimately gave up on the project, perhaps realizing how difficult it would be to surpass his orchestral work on the same subject.

Seldom in Tchaikovsky's music are form and content as well matched as in *Romeo and Juliet*. The contrast between family strife and the lovers' passion ideally lends itself to sonata form, with two dramatically contrasted themes; the conflict assures a fierce and combative development section. Tchaikovsky begins as Balakirev recommended, with solemn and fateful chords that suggest the calm, knowing voice of Friar Lawrence. The street music is noisy and action packed. The famous love theme begins innocently in the *Cor Anglais* and violas; it is one of Tchaikovsky's boldest strokes to save the big statement of this great melody, fully orchestrated and greatly extended for much later, at the climax of the recapitulation.

SERGEI RACHMANINOV

PIANO CONCERTO NO.2

In 1897, Rachmaninov's First Symphony was introduced in Saint Petersburg at a concert conducted by Alexander Glazunov. Glazunov was a good composer and an uncommonly decent man, but he does seem to have been a terrible conductor, and on this occasion he wrought disaster. It was certainly not the only time in the history of music that the critics, like the public, were unable to distinguish between an awful performance and an awful piece.

Rachmaninov must have known how strong and original a work the Symphony was. Nonetheless, always subject to depression, he quickly found himself unable to face the sight of blank manuscript paper. He grew despondent. The longer his composer's voice was silent the worse he felt; the worse he felt the more impossible the idea of composing.

At the head of the first page of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto stands the simple dedication, "À Monsieur N. Dahl." Monsieur Dahl was actually an internist who had been studying hypnosis. Dahl was also an excellent violist and cellist whom Rachmaninov began visiting daily in January 1900. The first aim was to improve the composer's sleep and appetite. The larger goal was to enable him to compose a piano concerto. Dr. Dahl's treatment, a mixture of hypnotic suggestion ("You will begin your concerto . . . you will work with great facility . . . the concerto will be excellent . . .") and cultured conversation, did its work. By April, Rachmaninov felt well enough to travel to the Crimea and on to Italy. When he returned home, he brought with him sketches for the new piano concerto. Two movements, the second and third, were finished that autumn and introduced in December. In the new year, he added the first movement. Five days before the premiere in November 1901, he suffered a moment of panic and was convinced he had produced a totally incompetent piece of work, but the tempestuous success he enjoyed at the premiere seems to have convinced him otherwise.

A quality especially apparent in the Second Piano Concerto is a sense of effortlessness in its unfolding, and that is something new in Rachmaninov's music. He begins with a series of piano chords in crescendo, all based on F, each reinforced by the tolling of the lowest F on the keyboard, and, through the gathering harmonic tension and dynamic force, constituting a powerful springboard for the move into the home chord of C minor. Once there, the strings with clarinet initiate a plain but intensely expressive melody, which the piano accompanies with sonorous broken chords. The piano's role as accompanist is also worth noting. Nowhere is the pianist so often an ensemble partner and so rarely a soloist aggressively in the foreground as in this first movement of this concerto. The initial impulse plays itself out in one grand, tightly organized paragraph, to which Rachmaninov adds two small afterthoughts, a bit of scurrying for the piano and a quite formal set of cadential chords. It is only then that the orchestra falls silent and the pianist steps forward as a soloist in the grand Romantic manner.

Rachmaninov constructed a bridge passage into the second movement. Again, the pianist is at first the accompanist, briefly to the flute, at greater length to the clarinet. Throughout the movement the relationship between piano and orchestra is intricate and worked out with great delicacy. There is something captivatingly touching about the way the piano shyly inserts just six notes of melody between the first two phrases of the clarinet, the roles of piano and orchestra being reversed later in the movement. A quicker interlude functions as a token scherzo. This interlude spills into a splash of cadenza, and for just five notes a pair of flutes eases the music back into softly swaying arpeggios.

The composer again makes a bridge into the finale, beginning with distant, rather conspiratorial march music, then working his way around to the piano's assertive entrance. The march music is now determined and vigorous, and Rachmaninov finds for contrast the most famous of his big tunes to set up a barnstorming conclusion.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

SYMPHONY NO.10

After the rough, oppressive hand of Stalin had cracked down on Shostakovich twice, the first in 1936, which condemned him for writing "muddle instead of music", and most severely in 1948, when his 9th Symphony had been censured, the composer stayed relatively quiet. He feared for his life, for very good reasons. Stalin had been furious and offended by his 9th and when the Zhdanov Purge was unleashed, the composer dutifully and wisely produced little bonbons, which would not be inoffensive to the doctrines of Soviet Realism. Thanks to this controlling artistic influence, Russia was flooded with mediocre scores, and according to the composer, "camouflaged by pompous patriotic programs and with the persistent meddling of incompetent bureaucrats in the creative process."

In 1953, after hearing that Josef Stalin died on March 5, Shostakovich was elated. He had not composed in the symphonic genre since the 1948 denunciation. Renewed by the thaw and freedom, he immediately began to continue his work on his next symphony, No.10, and it was not totally new: sketches had been secreted away for years in his desk. It premiered in Leningrad in December of that year.

Now flaunting individualism, Shostakovich had a field day with his personal musical monogram, which appears at several points in this work. This monogram refers to the

letters DSCH, which are represented musically as the notes D, E-flat, C and B. DSCH, is derived directly from the composer's name in German. He had also fitted this motto into other works as a defiant voice. His Violin Concerto, the String Quartets Opus 4, Opus 83 and Symphony No. 5 all contain the initials. The practice of transcribing words into musical letters began in the Baroque period when composers, including J.S. Bach, included their names or other people into their musical works.

The first movement is extensive. It opens quietly and builds gradually into breath-taking climaxes which ebb and return, all moving in a single basic moderato tempo. "In this, there are more slow tempi and lyrical moments than dramatic, heroic, and tragic," Shostakovich commented. A first theme based on a six-note motto emerges in celli and basses. After two measures there is a silence. Gradually, the brooding idea inflates to huge proportions. After this statement, for the first time in the symphony, Shostakovich turns to the winds. A clarinet sings the second theme. The third theme is given to the flute, displaying a diabolical, nervous little waltz in its low register, over pizzicato accompaniment from the strings. Although Shostakovich once had an idea to use sonata form, the scope of his thought could not be totally contained in that structure. The eventual structure is more similar to a huge arch, marked by the most massive climax imaginable—a true orchestral panic. The inverted motto is accented by the tam-tam with suspended cymbals leading a massive crescendo and clarinets screaming in their high register. A recap and coda complete the movement with a single piccolo having the last word.

The second movement, a short scherzo, is highly concentrated, impacting furious statements, which Shostakovich considered to be a "musical portrait of Stalin, roughly speaking." The fury is wild, loud and unceasing. Shostakovich knew exactly what he was doing. "Music illuminates a person through and through...even half-mad Stalin, a beast and a butcher, instinctively sensed that about music. That is why he feared and hated it" A riveting, perpetual momentum drives the heartbeat, and against this the orchestration includes roaring brass, winds at the top of their voices, and vicious, unrelenting percussion. Fierce crescendi on single tones speak consistently to the violence of Stalin's personality. A piano/pianissimo section before the final blast prefaces his ending.

The third movement finds the composer turning inward, writing in a gentle style with strings softly tiptoeing at the start. Two major ideas are featured: one from the composer's name DSCH first proclaimed by the flutes, and the other theme based on the tones signifying Elmira, the composer's lover. The two ideas converse with each other. Like lovers, the themes draw together closer and closer throughout the movement. A soft horn call summons flute and piccolo to declaim, rather hesitantly, the DSCH motto at the close.

The fourth movement returns to the more public side of the composer. The music begins Andante with unison strings and a quizzical, wandering oboe solo, with commentary from flute and bassoon. A rip-roaring Allegro ensues with woodwinds introducing a rough Russian dance in the strings.

This section is stuffed with quotes from earlier material, starting with the opening six-note idea from the first movement. As its centrepiece there is a blast of the DSCH acronym from trumpet and trombone, smashing cymbals and a huge whack on bass drum and tam-tam. The recap recalls the introduction; a bassoon pumps out the opening theme of the Allegro; before the DSCH motive triumphantly seals an optimistic conclusion.

SUTTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

We are grateful for the continuing financial support from the Humphrey Richardson Taylor Charitable Trust, our President, Patrons, and our loyal audience and donors. We would like to thank St Andrew's Church for the use of the Church buildings and refreshments service, Homefield Preparatory School for use of their premises for rehearsals, and Sutton Music Service for use of their transportation and percussion equipment.

Future dates for your diary: June 30th 2018 at All Saints Carshalton (see below for programme), and November 24th 2018 at St Andrew's URC Cheam.

1ST VIOLINS

Annmarie McDade
Paul Dickman
Stephen Lock
Dave Smith
Hazel Crossley
Natalia Wierzbicka
Matthew Norris
Soeun Bae
Rachel Coleshill

2ND VIOLINS

Joanna Lee
Carol Disspain
Michael Boxall
Emma Foulger
Fiona Glasscock
Henrik Jensen
Helen Dady
Penny Le Tissier

VIOLAS

Miriam Grant
Penny Dispirito
Marion Pedder
Pauline Dixon
Vince Turner
Carolyn Brett
Evelyn Newman

CELLOS

Niall Trainor
Marguerite Pocock
Lorraine Lenaghan
Alex Clark
Debbie McGregor
Vibeke Hansen
Clare Sturdy

BASSES

Gaye Endler
Hannah Subramaniam
Nicola Bailey

PICCOLO

Sam Wade

FLUTES

Richard Ellis
Juliet Porter
Sam Wade

OBOES

Kathryn Gunn
Hilary Dennis
Joel Wilson

COR ANGLAIS

Joel Wilson

CLARINETS

David Cox
Laura Drane
Hannah Gravett

BASSOONS

David Silvera
Janet Martin
Jamie O'Connor

CONTRA BASSOON

Ellie Mackie

HORNS

Ollie de Cataret
Caroline Auty
Janice Barker
Chris Pocock
Flora Bain

TRUMPETS

Lewis Gibbs
Mick Ahearn
Mikey Ahearn
Mark Steadman

TROMBONES

Roger Willey
Vince Freeman
Hannah Roberts

TUBA

Joshua Bennett

TIMPANI

Will Burgess

PERCUSSION

Helen Burgess
Dae Hyun Lee

HARP

Jasmine Yap

Next Concert

June 30th 2018 at All Saints Church, Carshalton

Includes Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue, Bernstein
Candide Overture and Symphonic Dances from West
Side Story