



Sutton Symphony Orchestra

President Louis Rutland, Vice President Elizabeth Angel

Conductor: Philip Aslangul

Leader: Annmarie McDade

Glazunov The Seasons
Shostakovich Piano Concerto No 2
Soloist John Paul Ekins
Stravinsky Firebird Suite

St Andrews United Reformed Church
Cheam

Saturday 23rd November 2019
7.30pm

In the presence of the London Borough of Sutton Deputy Mayor, Councillor Annie Moral

Please note that recording of this concert is strictly prohibited

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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

Annmarie grew up in Leeds where she was the leader of the City of Leeds Youth Orchestra. She was a member of the National Youth Orchestra and a founder member of the LPO Youth Orchestra. She then went on to study the violin and piano at the Royal College of Music, learning with Trevor Williams and Howard Davis.

Since graduating she has worked with many orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Opera North, British Philharmonic Orchestra, London Arts Orchestra, Kentish Opera, Camerata of London and London Musical Theatre Orchestra, several in a principal role.

Annmarie spent 8 years in the orchestra of the London production of Les Misérables and has worked on other West End shows including The Producers, Company, Annie Get Your Gun and Yank. She also led touring productions of The Sound of Music and Oklahoma.

Annmarie has worked with a variety of artists such as Jose Carreras, Plácido Domingo, Jessye Norman and Andrea Bocelli.

As a soloist works performed include Mozart's A major and G major Concertos, Bruch's G minor Concerto, Beethoven's Romances, Vivaldi's Four Seasons and Bach's and Malcolm Arnold's double violin Concertos.

Annmarie lives in Carshalton and teaches both privately and for Sutton Music Service. She has been the leader of Sutton Symphony Orchestra since 2011.

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 highlights thus far are performing Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue at the Royal Albert Hall with Southbank Sinfonia and returning there to perform the Warsaw Concerto in 2018.

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

THE SEASONS

ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV

Winter-Spring-Summer-Autumn

Alexander Glazunov's ballet *The Seasons*, Op. 67, was composed for the Russian Imperial Ballet troupe, and first staged in February 1900 at the Marinsky Theatre under the choreographic direction of Marius Petipa. The work is not, however, a ballet in the conventional sense, lacking as it does any clearly defined scenario. Instead, Glazunov's *The Seasons* is cast in the form of a series of four tableaux, each of which is further subdivided; this model is similar to that of Tchaikovsky's piano work of the same name, written a quarter-century earlier.

The ballet opens with a brief introduction, leading to the depiction of winter; its individual dances portray frost, ice, hail, and snow, respectively. Frost takes the form of a vigorous Polonaise, after which the violas and clarinets present a short dance suggesting ice. Hail takes the form of a scherzo, followed in turn by the waltz of the snow. Two gnomes then manage to dispel winter's grip by lighting a fire, in readiness for the arrival of spring, on the harp, to the gentle accompaniment of the zephyr, wild birds, and flowers. Following dances for each, the roses, the birds, and indeed the spring itself pass by, as the heat of high summer now approaches.

Summer's tableau is set amid the ripening corn, which dances along with wild poppies and cornflowers; all collapse exhausted in the heat, and as they rest, a group of water-bearing naiads arrive, dancing a graceful barcarole. A further dance follows, invoking the spirit of the corn, with an important clarinet solo. During the coda, fauns and satyrs try to carry off the spirit of the corn, but their attempts to do so are curtailed by the zephyr. Autumn is the season of new wine, and the fruits of the harvest. It is presented now by a wild dance to Bacchus, the god of the vintage. We hear fleeting references to themes from the earlier seasons, before the bacchanal of autumn returns, only to be eventually subdued as the leaves begin to fall from the trees. Finally, as the stage darkens, the stars of the heavens encircle the earth, a token of changeless, timeless eternity as the work draws to a close.

PIANO CONCERTO NO 2 IN F MAJOR

DIMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Allegro-Andante-Allegro

This concerto is the last, and most significant, of the pedagogical works Shostakovich wrote for his children. When his eldest offspring, Galina, began learning the piano Shostakovich would write short pieces for her to master one at a time. Six of these pieces (written between 1944 and 1945) were published as his 'Children's Notebook', Op. 69, with a seventh piece, written for her ninth birthday in 1945, later added to the collection.

Whereas Galina decided to make biology her profession - eventually enrolling at the Biology faculty of Moscow University - Maxim committed himself entirely to the study of music and the piano. While studying at the prestigious Moscow Central Music School, the 16 year old Maxim was presented with the one movement 'Concertino for Two Pianos', Op. 94. He gave the first performance of the work on 8 November 1954 at the Music School with a classmate, Alla Maloletkova.

In many ways the Piano Concerto No. 2 represents Maxim's coming of age. It was on the strength of his performance of the work that Maxim gained entrance into the Moscow Conservatoire.

Of the three pedagogical works this concerto is the most serious, immediately becoming a staple part of Shostakovich's own concert repertoire. The first performance was given by Maxim, on his nineteenth birthday (10 May 1957), in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire, with the USSR State Symphony Orchestra under Nikolai Anosov. In a letter to the composer Edison Denisov Shostakovich complained that the work had no redeeming artistic merits, yet the critics of the day praised it for its 'charming simplicity, carefree spirit and lyrical warmth'. And David Rabinovich, one of the first biographers of Shostakovich, suggested that the concerto 'shows the composer as though his own youth had returned to him'.

The work itself strays little from the formal archetype of an 18th-Century concerto - in three movements with a sonata form opening Allegro, a slow middle movement and a brisk climactic finale. One particularly idiosyncratic feature of the work is the pervasive use of bare octaves in the piano part, as if the work were conceived largely for a single-voiced instrument.

The first movement follows a concentrated and conventional sonata form structure and displays much of the octave piano writing that is a defining feature of the work. Perhaps the one bona fide cadenza of the entire concerto appears in this movement, just before the recapitulation, and is a development of the piano's opening theme in the manner of a Bach two-part invention.

The second movement is scored for piano and strings in the style of a Rachmaninov soliloquy. A movement of simplicity and clarity, this is perhaps one of Shostakovich's purest, most lyrical and affecting utterances.

The finale follows seamlessly with the aid of a motivic link and returns immediately to the spirit of youthful humour, mischief and piano octaves.

INTERVAL

- I. Introduction – *The Firebird and Its Dance* – *The Firebird's Variation*
- II. *The Princess' Khorovod*
- III. *Infernal dance of King Kaschchei*
- IV. *Berceuse*
- V. *Finale*

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Parisian public was fascinated by the foreign and exotic, eagerly demanding art, music, and theatre inspired by strange and distant cultures. Sergei Diaghilev, who had made a name for himself producing theatre and art shows in St. Petersburg, saw an opportunity to profit from this demand using his extensive network of artists, dancers, writers, and musicians.

Beginning with the *Exhibition of Russian Art* at the Petit Palais in 1906, Diaghilev began to whet the Parisian appetite for all things Russian. He followed the exhibition with a season of Russian music at the Paris Opéra.

After the wild success of a six-performance run of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* in 1908, Diaghilev launched the Ballets Russes, a new company with the goal of producing theatrical works by Russian artists which would blend all the arts— theatre, music, art, dance— into a unified whole. The first “Saison Russe” in 1909 featured ballets to existing Russian music by composers such as Borodin, Tcherepnin, and Arensky. For the following season, Diaghilev sought to create a production with an original score. When agreements fell through with two other composers and with deadlines rapidly approaching, Diaghilev turned in September 1909 to a young, unknown composer whose *Fireworks* he had heard in a St. Petersburg concert the previous year and whom he had subsequently commissioned to orchestrate a Chopin nocturne and waltz for the June 1909 premiere of *Les Sylphides*.

As difficult as it may be to believe, *The Firebird* was Igor Stravinsky's first large-scale work for orchestra; the 27-year-old had only published five prior compositions. The composer joined a creative team of young Russian luminaries, including choreographer Michel Fokine and artists Alexandre Benois, Léon Bakst, and Alexander Golovine. Benois had suggested to Diaghilev the idea of a ballet based on Russian fairy tales. By the time Stravinsky agreed to the project, the scenario had already been hashed out in a string of parlour discussions between these artists and their friends.

Stravinsky met with Fokine, who demonstrated the scenes and dances while Stravinsky took notes and improvised ideas at the piano. Stravinsky was dissatisfied with the divertissement concluding the work and suggested it be replaced with a grand transformation and coronation scene. Fokine was reluctant to discard his prior idea but acquiesced, resulting in one of the most iconic moments in the score.

The composer worked very quickly, delivering the final piano score on March 21. The music draws heavily on the work of Stravinsky's predecessors. Russian folk melodies are sprinkled liberally throughout, and one hears unmistakable echoes of Scriabin in the

Firebird's dance and Glazunov in the Khorovod (a type of Russian circle dance). Most obvious, however, is the influence of Stravinsky's teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, whose orchestration technique is evident throughout the entire score. Stravinsky made no attempt to conceal this, later referring to the work as "Rimsky-Korsakov with pepper."

Everyone involved was deeply impressed with the score, and excitement about the ballet began to build throughout Parisian society. During a late rehearsal, Diaghilev commented to his dancers regarding Stravinsky, "Mark him well. He is a man on the eve of celebrity." The work premiered in June to a wildly enthusiastic crowd which included Jean Cocteau, Maurice Ravel, Eric Satie, Manuel de Falla, Reynaldo Hahn, Marcel Proust, Sarah Bernhardt, and Claude Debussy, who invited Stravinsky to dinner following the performance.

Reviews were ecstatic about the integration of design, dance, and music, referring to the work as a "danced symphony" and emphasizing how different it was from most ballets, where the music was mere accompaniment. The buzz was so favourable that Diaghilev added two additional performances to the initial three. Although some musicians quietly commented that the piece was a bit derivative, they were so impressed by the quality of its execution that they were won over. Constant Lambert's comment is typical of this sentiment: "In *L'Oiseau de Feu* Stravinsky applied the rejuvenating influence of Debussy's impressionism to the by now somewhat faded Russian fairy tale tradition in much the same way that one pours a glass of port into a Stilton."

With the destruction of World War I, Stravinsky's financial situation became precarious. He sold the *Firebird* manuscript to Geneva oil baron Jean Bartholoni for 8,000 francs, but he was unable to make any more money off the full ballet due to the exclusivity agreement he had signed with Diaghilev. Stravinsky could still earn money from concert performances, and he had excerpted a suite for such use. This version (known as Concert Suite No. 1 or the "1911 Suite") uses the same massive ensemble as the ballet and proved too large to be fiscally viable for most orchestras.

In addition, the chaos following the 1917 Russian Revolution made it nearly impossible to obtain rental parts from the Moscow publisher. However, due to the intricacies of European copyright treaties and the abolition of property rights in Russia following the Revolution, it occurred to Stravinsky that a newly-published suite would be considered an entirely new work, allowing him once again to earn revenue from the piece (similar legal reasons would later result in the 1945 Concert Suite No. 3, which he created to secure his copyright in the US). He set to work in February 1919 re-orchestrating the music for a smaller orchestra which would increase the number of performance opportunities. Ernest Ansermet conducted the first performance of the Concert Suite No. 2 on April 12.

The ballet blended the stories of the Firebird and Kashchei the Immortal, two of Russia's most well-known legends. As the piece begins, Prince Ivan stumbles into an enchanted garden. While exploring, he spots and captures the Firebird. The bird agrees to assist Ivan if the prince will release it. Ivan subsequently falls in love with one of the

thirteen princesses he encounters. She informs him that he is in the realm of Kashchei the Immortal, a powerful wizard who captures and enslaves passing travellers. Despite her warning, he approaches Kashchei to request her hand in marriage. Kashchei orders his magic creatures to attack as he attempts to turn Ivan to stone. Keeping its word, the Firebird comes to Ivan's aid, enchanting the creatures into a dance and putting them to sleep. The bird bewitches Kashchei in the same manner.

Before the wizard can recover, the Firebird reveals to Ivan the secret of Kashchei's power: an enormous egg which contains and protects his soul. Ivan smashes the egg, breaking the wizard's spell and robbing him of his power and his life. Upon Kashchei's death, the creatures— those unfortunate captives whom he had bewitched and transfigured— are transformed back into human form and freed from bondage. Ivan marries his princess amid great celebration.



SUTTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Fancy joining us? If you've enjoyed the concert and are interested in joining the orchestra, or know someone who might be, then please get in touch. We're a friendly bunch and are always keen to welcome new members, particularly in the string section. Just go to our website suttonsymphonyorchestra.org for details of how to contact us by email, twitter and facebook.

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 express our gratitude to **Homefield Preparatory School, Sutton** for its generous provision of rehearsal space, **St Andrews United Reformed Church, Cheam** for the use of the building for tonight's concert, and **Sutton Music Service** for use of their music stands and percussion equipment.

FUTURE CONCERTS

Future dates for your diary:

28th March 2020 at St Andrews United Reformed Church, Cheam (see enclosed flyer)

27th June 2020 at All Saints Church, Carshalton ("A Night at the Musicals").

LIST OF PLAYERS

1ST VIOLINS

Annmarie McDade
Alice Ahearn
Paul Dickman
Liz Evans
Stephen Lock
Charlotte Dodwell
Gabriela Zukowicz
Matthew Norris

2ND VIOLINS

Joanna Lee
Sarah Hackett
Michael Boxall
Carol Disspain
Jane Stockton
Peshawa Ballek
Henrk Jansen
Pam Raine

VIOLAS

Miriam Grant
Penny Dispirito
Jonathon Bayley
Sue White
Pauline Dixon
Evelyn Newman

CELLOS

Niall Trainor
Lorraine Lenaghan
Marguerite Pocock
Alex Clark
Frances Burton
Clare Sturdy
Natasha Prewett

BASSES

Gaye Endler
Neil Dawson
Andrian Warwick
Miles Briggs

FLUTES/PICCOLO

Alison Blackwell
Juliet Porter
Becky Dawson

OBOES

Kathryn Gunn
Cynthia Betts

COR ANGLAIS

Cynthia Betts

CLARINETS

David Cox
Hannah Gravett

BASSOONS

David Silvera
Alun Stockton
Janet Martin

HORNS

Caroline Auty
Janice Barker
Chris Pocock
Ollie de Cataret
Simon Davey

TRUMPETS

Joe Matthews
Sam Rees
Mick Ahearn

TROMBONES

Roger Willey
Vince Freeman
Jo Holden

TUBA

Charlie Yuxiang Zhang

TIMPANI

Helen Burgess

PERCUSSION

Stephen Matthews
Cameron Reed
Liam Roberts
Jo Evans
Sophie Simpson

HARP

Daniel De-Fry

PIANO

William Vasudevan