



BROMLEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONDUCTOR - ADRIAN BROWN

LEADER - BERNARD BROOK

PROGRAMME

SATURDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2002 AT 7.45PM
THE GREAT HALL, RAVENSBORNE SCHOOL, BROMLEY

£1.00

www.bromleysymphony.org.uk

PROGRAMME

BRAHMS — 'ACADEMIC FESTIVAL OVERTURE'

BRAHMS — HUNGARIAN DANCE No 6

(ADDITIONAL ITEM — A 'LOLLIPOP' FOR GRACE*)

BEETHOVEN - PIANO CONCERTO No 3

SOLOIST — LUCY PARHAM

INTERVAL - 20 MINUTES

WALTON - SYMPHONY No 1

*RETIREMENT OF GRACE FOLLETT, PRESIDENT

We are pleased to include an additional short 'lollipop' item in today's programme, to mark the retirement of our President, Grace Follett. Grace has been playing with the orchestra since 1936 – a remarkable 66 years. Brahms is one of her favourite composers.

In addition to being a valuable member of the violin section of the orchestra, she has served for very many years on the organizing committee taking on many of the key roles, including treasurer, secretary and librarian. Though she is now no longer playing with us, we are grateful that she continues to serve on the committee.

ADRIAN BROWN – CONDUCTOR

John Carmichael



After graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in London, Adrian Brown studied with Sir Adrian Boult with whom he worked for several years. He remains the only British conductor to have reached the finals of the Karajan Conductors' Competition and the Berlin Philharmonic was the first professional orchestra he conducted.

In 1992 he was engaged to conduct one of the great orchestras of the world, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra and was immediately invited to return. In 1998 he was invited to work with the Camerata Salzburg, one of Europe's foremost chamber orchestras and again he was invited back. Adrian works regularly with many leading British orchestras including the City of

Birmingham Symphony, the BBC Symphony, the BBC Scottish Symphony and the London Sinfonietta. He is also a great proponent of contemporary music and has several first performances to his credit

Working with young musicians has been an area where Adrian has made a singular contribution to the musical life of Britain and also further afield. He has been a frequent visitor to conduct both the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, working closely with Sir Colin Davis and Sir Roger Norrington, and the National Youth Wind Orchestra. He regularly runs courses for young musicians and his success in this general area was recognised when he was given the Novello Award for Youth Orchestras at the 1989 Edinburgh Festival conducting Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra with whom he has been Musical Director for thirty years.

He recently returned to the Royal Academy of Music on a number of occasions, to work with their Senior Orchestra. He has been a regular chairman of the jury for the National Association of Youth Orchestras' Conducting Competition. In 1996 he went to Japan to work with the Toyama Academy Orchestra, a visit that was received with much acclaim from all those with whom he worked.

Recent engagements have included a Millennium performance of Tippett's "Child of our Time", "Die Fledermaus" and he received rave reviews in The Guardian for a performance of Strauss's "Feuersnot". He has performed successful concerts with the Salomon Orchestra and Goldsmith's Sinfonia and Chorus.

In June Adrian was presented with a prestigious Classic FM Award at their Tenth Birthday Honours Celebration.

LUCY PARHAM - PIANO

Sven Anstein



Acknowledged as one of Britain's finest pianists, Lucy Parham first came to public attention on winning the 1984 BBC "Young Musician of the Year" Piano Class. Since then she has performed extensively throughout the UK and worldwide. As soloist abroad she has appeared with the Russian State Symphony Orchestra in Moscow, L'Orchestre Rencontres Suisse, Bergen Philharmonic, L'Orchestre National de Lille. In January 2002, she was the soloist with the BBC Concert Orchestra on their 6-week fiftieth-anniversary tour of the USA. Next year she will tour Mexico with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Since her highly successful Wigmore Hall debut in 1989, she has appeared regularly at all the major London venues and at many international festivals. As concerto soloist in the UK she has played with most of the major British orchestras, particularly the Royal Philharmonic, with whom she has also toured in the UK and Europe. She has also made three UK tours with the Polish National Radio SO and the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra.

In recent years, Lucy Parham has established herself as one of the leading interpreters of Robert and Clara Schumann. Her unique recording of their piano concertos won the prestigious BBC Music Magazine "Critics' Choice of the Year." Her special interest in the Schumanns led to her being asked to present "Composer of the Week" on Radio 3, a feature for Classic FM and a programme for BBC World Service. She has also broadcast on ITV, BBC TV and BBC Radio 3. Her other commercial recordings include concertos by Ravel, Franck and Fauré, Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' and a solo Chopin disc. She has recently recorded the Rachmaninov and Tchaikowsky concertos with the RPO for RPO Records.

Lucy Parham studied with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music where she won all the major prizes including the Gold Medal Rosebowl. Recent engagements have included concerts with the Hallé, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, BBC Concert Orchestra, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. London engagements this year include concertos with the BBC Concert Orchestra (for Radio 3) and the RPO at the Royal Festival Hall, and a further concert in the Wigmore Hall 'Masters Series' with actors Malcolm Sinclair and Eleanor Bron exploring the lives of Brahms, and Robert and Clara Schumann.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897) – ‘ACADEMIC FESTIVAL OVERTURE’

There's a well-known picture of Johannes Brahms. He's an elderly man with a thick beard, resembling Karl Marx or some equally severe German philosopher. A stern, serious man, who wrote stern, serious music. And plenty of his 19th-century supporters were happy to promote this image – a powerful coterie of conservative critics (the “Brahmins”) spilt a lot of ink establishing Brahms as the lofty genius of German music, the heir to Beethoven, a scholarly master in the tradition of J.S. Bach. So the professors of Breslau University must have felt on safe ground when, in March 1879, they conferred an honorary degree on the man they described as “First amongst contemporary masters of serious music”; and politely suggested that he might write a suitably academic “Doctoral Symphony” for the occasion. Little about Brahms's public persona suggested that he'd address his Doctoral composition not to the learned professors but to the undergraduates, and turn out a light-hearted overture based entirely on student drinking songs.

Brahms, it seems, took himself a lot less seriously than did his own followers, and there's no escaping the suspicion that the *'Academic Festival Overture'* is just a big musical leg-pull, right from its spoof-serious title to the mock-heroic peroration with which it closes. Everything is correct and in the right place for a classical, sonata-form overture: “dark” (actually mischievous) C minor opening, a noble chorale for trumpets (the drinking song “*Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus*”), a bustling sonata-allegro with first and second subject-groups, a noisy, “complicated” development section, a recapitulation and a grand C major coda (on “*Gaudeamus Igitur*”). But the musical material is decidedly frivolous; terrific tunes set with affection and a real sense of fun. Of course, Brahms being Brahms, it's not all frivolity – there are quiet moments of real poetry – but the music is never Serious with a capital S. It must have been a delightful surprise for that University congregation in Breslau in January 1881, as they sat down expecting a quarter-hour of Teutonic counterpoint and heard, instead, a great composer setting out simply to amuse and entertain. The students showed their appreciation by singing along, and the *'Academic Festival Overture'* has held its place in the repertoire ever since.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) – PIANO CONCERTO NO 3 IN C

1. *Allegro con brio* 2. *Largo* 3. *Allegro*

Beethoven's concerti were initially much influenced by Mozart, but in the third concerto we see signs of the innovation which was to follow in the later piano concerti and the violin concerto. A scribbled note referred to the work as early as 1796, but it wasn't performed until April 1803, with the composer as soloist. Beethoven was just becoming apparent of his deafness at this time: his “*Heiligenstadt*” Testament, a draft letter to his brothers while apparently contemplating suicide, preceded the first performance by only a few months.

There are two main elements in the first movement: a quiet but dramatic theme with an important, dominating rhythmic figure, and a more smoothly flowing second subject. The piano's opening flourish of three upward scales reappears in various guises all through the movement. At the end of the cadenza, the orchestra creeps in softly with the rhythmic figure tapped out on the timpani.

The slow movement is an expressive largo. Its contrast with the pathos of the outer movements is heightened by the brighter colour of the tonic E major key. Although only 89 bars long, it is very slow, with three sections. The opening theme is “beauty in suspended animation”. The key changes to G major where, against a background of quiet woodwind phrases, the piano delicately traces intricate arabesques, returning eventually to the first theme. After a short cadenza the orchestra makes as if to end pianissimo, but surprises us with one chord, forte.

The rondo third movement begins with a lively tune, once again in C minor, which at its every appearance, slows up to allow the piano a short cadenza, each more brilliant and showy than the last. There are two interludes for the orchestra, the second more extended and elaborate than the first. Neither of these can keep the tune down for long, however, and there is a great build up to a short cadenza. Then away skips the piano in the major, a glimpse of opera buffa among the pathos, and the concerto sweeps to a brilliant conclusion.

SIR WILLIAM WALTON (1902-1983) – SYMPHONY NO 1

1. *Allegro assai* 2. *Presto, con malizia* 3. *Andante, con malinconia*
4. *Maestoso - Briosso ed ardentamente - Vivacissimo - Maestoso*

We open our season of “anniversaries” by celebrating the centenary of Walton’s birth with a performance of his brilliant and tumultuous first symphony.

Walton’s early attempts at composition were as a young cathedral choirboy at Oxford, where a music professor gave him some coaching; but after the age of sixteen he was virtually self-taught. As an undergraduate he became friendly with the Sitwell family; this led to his music for Edith’s *‘Façade’* which created such a stir at its première in 1923. The 1929 Viola Concerto and the 1931 oratorio *‘Belshazzar’s Feast’*, established the composer as a major figure in English music.

In early 1932, Sir Hamilton Harty invited Walton to write a symphony for the Hallé Orchestra. It was to cause its composer much trouble, both emotionally and technically. In 1929 he had fallen in love with Imma Doernberg, widow of a German Baron. They spent most of the summer of 1932 together in Ascona in Switzerland, but their relationship was turbulent and he made little headway with the symphony until the autumn and following spring, completing the first three movements.

By September 1933, he was already sketching the opening and coda of the last movement but then reached an impasse over suitable material for its central section. In February, Harty had resigned from the Hallé to devote more time to his new position as Principal Conductor of the LSO. The orchestra had decided to announce the première for March 1934, with a second performance under Boult by the BBC in May. But Walton, rather than seek to complete the last movement, chose instead to orchestrate the three completed movements; the première was abandoned.

Most of the summer of 1934 was taken up with composition of the music for *‘Escape Me Never’*, the first of his fourteen film scores. And in August, Walton and Imma decided, amicably, that they should go their separate ways. He nevertheless retained the dedication of the symphony to her: so much of the turmoil of their relationship is reflected in the music he’d written.

Whether reflecting Walton’s wishes or at the orchestra’s bidding, the première of the first three movements was given by Harty and the LSO on 3 December 1934. The unfinished work received enthusiastic critical and public acclaim.

The Symphony had two further performances in this form in April 1935. Walton resumed work on the finale about this time, still not knowing what to do about the central section. He rang up his friend Constant Lambert who suggested a fugue: *“But I don’t know how to write one.”* *“There are a couple of rather good pages on the subject in Grove’s Dictionary.”* So Walton wrote his fugue, though not without some misgivings as to the artificiality of such a device. The première of the complete work with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Harty took place on 6 November 1935. The reception was ecstatic.

Each movement is based on groups of themes, each having in common some musical element: themes when they reappear are liable to be rhythmically or melodically altered, avoiding exact repetition. The second violins’ initial rhythm and the expressive oboe melody that follows are the most important features of a volatile first movement, with its ferocious final climax. The second is a cruel scherzo evoking differing degrees of malevolence by a wide variety of strong rhythms, timbres and dynamics: a climax may be broken off for a moment of stunned silence, or near the close, by a wider gap. Boult in old age said that he did not want to conduct the work again because he could not face *“all that malice”*.

The slow movement begins in a mood of unsatisfied longing which gradually builds to an agonised peak, ultimately to subside into a brief return of the opening mood. The more light-hearted, or at least more hopeful, finale falls into four distinct sections. The fanfare-like maestoso prologue is followed by a vigorous briosso, which leads to the fugue with its own quieter interlude. The fugue broadens to make way for a rapid 3/8 section; at its shattering climax, six timpani are in action beside cymbals and tam-tam before the triumphant return of the maestoso theme.

BROMLEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Bromley Symphony Orchestra was formed in 1918 by Miss Beatrice Fowle and Miss Gwynne Kimpton, teachers at Bromley High School for Girls. Over the years, it has earned a high reputation for concerts of professional standard and has worked with many famous soloists and conductors. Sir Adrian Boult conducted regularly in the 1940s and in 1952 Norman Del Mar took over. Soloists who have performed with the orchestra include Paul Tortelier, John Lill, Ralph Holmes, Hugh Bean, Emma Johnson and Leslie Howard.

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You are reminded that a bequest in your will, as well as being a “painless” form of giving, is particularly valuable since, being a gift to a charity, it does not form part of your estate, thus reducing your Inheritance Tax liability.

The Orchestra is most appreciative of the help kindly given by many other individuals in the provision of such services as stewards, interval refreshments, ticket and programme sales, etc.

Finally, you will realize that putting on quality concerts with attractive programmes while trying to keep down ticket prices is a problem faced by all symphony orchestras. If you are able to identify or open up any opportunities for corporate sponsorship arrangements, however modest, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Likewise we would welcome any offers of more direct help, eg serving interval drinks, selling programmes, etc.

MAILING LIST

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* denotes a member of the organising committee

PROGRAMME NOTES

Brahms: R.G. Bratby 2002 – Copyright Classicalnotes.co.uk

Beethoven: Mike Ibbott, based on those supplied through the Programme Note Bank of 'Making Music', to which this society is affiliated

Walton: Mike Ibbott, based on various sources.

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