



Harmony Sinfonia

Musical Director: Lindsay Ryan

Saturday 27th March 2010 7.30pm

Church of St Mary the Virgin
Lewisham High Street London SE13 6LE



Programme
£1.00

harmonysinfonia@googlemail.com
www.harmonysinfonia.co.uk

PROGRAMME

CARL MARIA VON WEBER
OVERTURE TO “DER FREISCHUTZ”

JOHANNES BRAHMS
VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF HAYDN

INTERVAL – 20 MINUTES
REFRESHMENTS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE REAR OF THE CHURCH

GUSTAV MAHLER
SYMPHONY NO. 1

Our next concert is on Saturday 3rd July 2010

“**Music from the Movies**” including Gabriel’s Oboe, the Star Wars Suite and the premiere of a
new work by Andy Bungay

LINDSAY RYAN – MUSICAL DIRECTOR



Lindsay has a Bachelor of Music (French Horn) and a Bachelor of Teaching (Honours) gained from the University of Melbourne, Australia. She also has an Associate of Music, Australia performance diploma from the Australian Music Examinations Board.

Lindsay has a passion for conducting that commenced in Australia prior to her arrival in London in 2006, including the completion of her Australian Choral Conductors Education and Training choral conducting qualification in 2000 under the tutelage of Graham Abbott and Faye Dumont and studies at the University of Melbourne in 2001 with Professor John Hopkins. In May 2008, Lindsay was invited to participate in the RNCM conducting workshop with Mark Elder, Mark Heron and Timothy Reynish. In February 2009, she was invited to participate in a conducting master-class with Mark Heron, focusing on the “Rite of Spring” by Stravinsky.

Her performance experience in London has included performing with the Bromley Symphony Orchestra and Lewisham Concert Band as well as freelancing.

In addition, Lindsay’s expertise includes the establishment of ensembles in various schools, enabling young people to experience creative music-making in choirs, bands, orchestras and drumming ensembles. In 2008 she was the Musical Director and Conductor of Cator Park School’s inaugural performance of “The Wizard of Oz” at the Churchill Theatre, Bromley, as well as conducting the school’s choir at the O2 Arena for Young Voices, Bromley School Proms and the orchestra, brass ensemble and string group for school and community events.

Lindsay is the Conductor of the London Classical Consort of Winds, Associate Conductor of Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra, as well as Assistant Conductor and Outreach Co-ordinator for Dulwich Symphony Orchestra.



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CARL MARIA VON WEBER – OVERTURE TO “DER FREISCHUTZ”

Composed in 1819-1820 and widely considered to be the first important German romantic opera, *Der Freischutz* was an influence on many artists including a young Richard Wagner. The opera itself tells the story of Max, a forester who has recently lost his talent as a shot, and who must with this knowledge now compete in a prize shooting in order to win the hand of Agathe, his love. Persuaded by the dark and forbidding character of Kaspar to use some “charmed” bullets in the competition, Max effectively sells himself to the Devil, Zamiel – for Kaspar is Zamiel’s slave. Zamiel creates seven charmed bullets – the first six will go straight to the heart of the target, however unknown to Kaspar the seventh will go wherever Zamiel wills it. Max wastes the first six bullets showing off to his friends and reaches the competition with only the seventh bullet left. He aims at a dove in the sky but as he fires Agathe warns him not to shoot or he will hit her – having had a premonition that this will happen. Alas, it is too late and Max believes he has killed Agathe, however she has simply swooned and the bullet has in fact hit Kaspar, Zamiel’s intended victim. Max is forced to confess to using the charmed bullets, but it forgiven and united with his love.

Several melodies from *Der Freischutz* have been adapted as hymn tunes and are often sung in church. The opening passage of the overture, a beautiful horn quartet, is one such melody, which some believe is intended to signify the happiness of simple woodland life. We then hear the tension and contrast between Kaspar and Zamiel, featuring string tremolos, clarinets and drums. An allegro passage introduces the music of Max at the close of the first act as he laments his poor shooting and resolves to claim the charmed bullets for his shooting contest. The full orchestra enters with the Incantation music, which is then contrasted by the clarinet with the music of Agathe’s aria as she sees her lover approaching - “Alle meine Pulse schlagen” (All my pulses now are beating). Phrases and fragments of the incantation music break in and alternate with Agathe’s aria until the original themes are re-stated. Some short pauses precede a coda for full orchestra united in Agathe’s aria, drawing the overture to a joyous conclusion.

JOHANNES BRAHMS – VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF HAYDN

A leading composer of the romantic period, Brahms advocated the compositional techniques of the baroque and classical masters such as Bach and Mozart, advancing them into the romantic idiom with new approaches to harmony and melody. He became a master of both counterpoint and development, and whilst his contemporaries found his style too “academic”, composers as diverse as Arnold Schoenberg and Edward Elgar have since been admirers of his work.

The *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* were composed in 1873, whilst Brahms was employed as director of concerts at the Vienna Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde and during the period when he was finally recognised for his talent - five years after the premiere of his *German Requiem*, and three years before he at last found the confidence to publish his first symphony which had actually been written in the early 1860s. There has been much debate as to whether the original theme – known as the *St Anthony Chorale* - was actually written by Haydn at all, with some attributing it to Ignaz Pleyel. Either way, the unusual ten bar structure of the theme was the quirk that almost certainly caught Brahms’ attention. The eight variations follow this phrasal structure, and less strictly the harmonic structure as well.

1. Theme - St. Anthony Chorale
2. Variation I. Poco più animato – a pulsing accompaniment built from the chords of the main theme forms the backdrop to two contrapuntal moving parts.
3. Variation II. Più vivace – a dance like movement featuring syncopated rhythms, in the minor key.
4. Variation III. Con moto – a steady, flowing version of the theme moves back and forwards between the various instruments of the orchestra.
5. Variation IV. Andante con moto – lower strings and winds turn the theme into a broad, minor key melody.
6. Variation V. Vivace – a fast variation with a scherzo feel.
7. Variation VI. Vivace – a regal variation featuring the brass.
8. Variation VII. Grazioso – a pastoral and romantic siciliano.
9. Variation VIII. Presto non troppo – the theme is hidden amongst the fast moving parts.
10. Finale – a passaglia with theme and variations over a ground bass, culminating in a triumphant restatement of the chorale theme.

GUSTAV MAHLER – SYMPHONY NO. 1

1. *Langsam, Schleppend (Slowly, dragging) Immer sehr gemächlich (very restrained throughout)*
2. *Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell (Moving strongly, but not too quickly), Recht gemächlich (restrained)*
3. *Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen (Solemnly and measured, without dragging), Sehr einfach und schlicht wie eine Volksweise (very simple, like a folk-tune), and Wieder etwas bewegter, wie im Anfang (something stronger, as at the start)*
4. *Stürmisch bewegt - Energetisch (Stormily agitated - Energetic)*

Composed between 1884 and 1888, Mahler's first symphony was originally presented as a five movement symphonic poem in two parts. The premiere in Budapest, conducted by the composer himself, did not receive an overwhelming reception – it was reported that there was booing as well as applause. Mahler described its reception as “a mixture of furious disapproval and wildest applause - it is amusing to hear the clash of opinions in the street and in drawing-rooms” (though in the same letter he explains the orchestra's apparent approval of the work – “Orchestra retrospectively extremely satisfied with symphony as result of barrel of free beer.”). Even Mahler's friends were disappointed, and the composer was accused of deliberately indulging in music that was nonsensical, vulgar and which blasphemed all the canons of music.

Within ten years, Mahler had labelled it “Titan” (supposedly after a novel by Jean Paul Richter though he always claimed that the music bore no relation to the book), and redefined it as a tone poem in the form of a symphony. Despite this, another performance in Hamburg did not gain a reaction any more favourable than Budapest. After further revisions, Mahler dropped the title and the andante second movement, calling the work “Symphony in D Major”. This revised four-movement version is the one most commonly performed in concert today.

The score calls for an orchestration that is Wagnerian in size and force – quadruple woodwinds, full brass, two timpanists, multiple percussionists, harp and strings, topped off with at least seven French Horns – though Mahler does not make use of the full orchestration until the final movement. The symphony was composed around the same time as *Songs of a Wayfarer*, and the influences of the songs on this work can be seen throughout, as *Wayfarer* melodies are quoted in the first and third movements.

Langsam, Schleppend - Immer sehr gemächlich

Opening with a unison A over seven octaves, Mahler evokes “the awakening of Nature from the long sleep of winter”. Cuckoo calls in the woodwind pierce the texture (and will recur throughout the symphony) and horns can be heard giving a hunting call. The sprightly tune that grows out of this mysterious opening is “*Ging heut’ morgen übers Feld*”, the first of the *Wayfarer* songs.

Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell - Recht gemächlich

The second movement demonstrates Mahler’s love of dance forms, consisting of a rustic peasant dance – a *Ländler* - framing a gentle waltz, both of which are derived from Austrian folk music. Many of the motifs used in this movement are taken from a Lied that Mahler had composed some years previously - *Hans und Grethe*. The orchestration calls for the woodwind players to raise their instruments “to the heights” at certain points in the score.

Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen - Sehr einfach und schlicht wie eine Volksweise - Wieder etwas bewegter, wie im Anfang

A funeral march based on the French nursery rhyme *Frère Jacques* – though Mahler identified it the tune *Bruder Martin*. A solo double bass introduces the theme, which is then passed around the various instruments of the orchestra. Mahler wrote this theme in a minor key rather than the familiar major key of the nursery rhyme – this was the way it was sung in Austria during his boyhood. The movement then moves through a variety of colourful themes demonstrating Jewish and gypsy influences – one of the tunes being virtually identical with a Jewish liturgical theme that was well known in central Europe at the time. The central sections represent the animals of the forest accompanying the funeral procession on its way to the graveside.

Stürmisch bewegt – Energisch

The last movement is where Mahler finally makes use of his Wagnerian orchestra, opening with a chaotic flurry of strings and a four note falling motif, mainly heard in the muted brass. Mahler himself described this movement as “the outburst of a wounded heart”. The main theme is almost a march in style and has been described as “warlike” This contrasts with a lyrical second theme in D \flat major. There then follows a development of the march, before the theme from the first movement makes a reappearance. The symphony draws to a close with a triumphant statement from the whole orchestra, with woodwind instruments once more “to the heights” and the horns instructed to stand, so that the audience can receive the full effect of this dramatic ending.



Formed in 2009, Harmony Sinfonia is a vibrant symphony orchestra performing three concerts a year and promoting classical music to audiences within the borough of Lewisham and its neighbouring boroughs. Offering a performance platform for both local amateur players of a high standard and music students from local universities, Harmony Sinfonia also strives to promote contemporary orchestral music by local composers and will feature some of these works in future performances. The orchestra also aims to work with local music services to provide performance opportunities to school pupils of an advanced standard, and will be developing an outreach programme from Spring 2010.

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