

Saturday 27 November 2021, 7.30pm
Great Hall, Trent Building

PROGRAMME

L'Arlesienne: Suite No.1

Prélude

Minuet

Adagietto

Carillon

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

Alphonse Daudet's play *L'Arlesienne* tells the story of a beautiful girl from Arles ('L'Arlesienne' of the title, who never appears on stage), with whom Frédéri is in love. He is appalled to learn that she is already in love with another man. Reluctantly, Frédéri makes plans to marry Vivette, but on the eve of the wedding he finds himself unable to live without the glamorous Arlésienne and throws himself to his death. The first performance of the play, including Bizet's incidental music, was given at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris on 1 October 1872. The orchestration included a prominent part for saxophone, making this one of the first works to make use of Adolphe Sax's most famous invention in an orchestral context.

Dances of Galánta

Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967)

In 1903, after three years reading Hungarian and German at the University of Budapest while simultaneously studying music at the Budapest Academy, Kodály developed a keen interest in Hungarian folksong. He began a series of tours around the countryside with his lifelong friend and compatriot Béla Bartók, collecting specimens of folk melodies with the aid of an Edison phonograph; and his work in this field was to culminate in 1906 with the completion of a pioneering doctoral dissertation, which helped earn him a Professorship at the Academy two years later. Following the fall of the First Hungarian Republic in 1919, Kodály was subjected to considerable political slander and persecution, but in 1923 the success of his oratorio *Psalmus Hungaricus* gained him an international reputation as one of the foremost of contemporary composers.

The *Dances of Galánta* were written in 1933 in response to a commission from the Budapest Philharmonic Society for a new work to mark its eightieth anniversary. Kodály had spent the years 1885–92 in Galánta when his father, a railway official, was stationmaster there. It was in Galánta that the composer had first encountered Hungarian folk music, in the shape of a celebrated local gypsy band. In the *Dances of Galánta*, Kodály aimed to preserve this tradition by incorporating melodies characteristic of the region in his own composition. As a framework for the preservation of this traditional melodic material, Kodály chose to use an extended rondo form: the principal theme, announced by a solo clarinet after the slow introduction, recurs four times as punctuation between the various contrasting dances. The latter are largely lyrical, with much of the thematic material given to the woodwind; but towards the conclusion the music becomes infectiously vigorous and virtuosic, the momentum only momentarily checked by a brief reminiscence of the rondo theme before the final exuberant flourish.

Symphony No.2 in D, Op.73

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo

Adagio non troppo

Allegretto grazioso (Quasi Andantino) – Presto non assai

Finale. Allegro con spirito

Having successfully completed his First Symphony after a protracted creative struggle of some 15 years, Brahms began composing his Second almost immediately, working on it in the Summer of 1877 at Pörttschach-am-Wörthersee and finishing the score that October at Baden-Lichtenthal. Such pairs of contrasted but related works were quite characteristic of the composer, his engagement with a particular genre leading to a flow of ideas and possibilities too copious, and perhaps too varied, to be realised in just the one piece.

Brahms's friend, the scholar Philipp Spitta noted that 'the first two symphonies form a diverse imaginative pair entirely characteristic of the composer, and they must be regarded as stemming from a single deeply-hidden root'. This is true in several senses, including the melodic, for the Second Symphony opens with a four-note motto figure in the cellos and basses which has its immediate origins as a précis or simplification of the opening of the main theme in the finale of the First Symphony. This 'pre-thematic' motto (as it were) for the Second acts as starting point for other themes throughout the work and is quoted in various guises at pivotal moments. Brahms called the work 'the happy Symphony' and its narrative trajectory, from the pastoral lyricism of the first movement, through the rich and serious drama of the second, the high-society dances of the third, to the joyous energetic finale, carries forward and meaningfully complements the dramatic journey from darkness into light of its predecessor.

Brahms was the first to suggest the importance of a sense of place for his Second Symphony, writing to his friend, the critic Eduard Hanslick: 'you will say: this is not a serious work of art, Brahms has been sly, the Wörthersee is virgin territory, with melodies flying around all over, such that one has to be careful not to tread on any'. His other friends, Theodor Billroth and Max Kalbeck, offered poetic interpretations emphasising outdoor joys in summer sunshine, and Hanslick went on to suggest it was Brahms's 'Pastoral'. Brahms himself played tricks on those who had not yet heard the Symphony by characterising it as particularly mournful, writing, for instance, to his publisher Fritz Simrock: 'The new Symphony is so melancholic that you won't be able to bear it. I have not yet written anything quite so sad, so 'minor': the score must appear with black borders and in mourning.' These tricks serve to underline both his delight in the work and his understanding of it as an expression of happiness.

Yet he also regarded it as having a dark side, as he revealed in a letter to his friend, the composer Vincenz Lachner, who had criticised the use of low brass in the first movement. Brahms wrote: 'I had very much wanted and attempted to get through the first movement without trombones. [...] But their first entry, that belongs to me and thus I cannot do without it and the trombones. If you wanted me to defend that passage I would have to go further. Then I would have to acknowledge that I am in addition a deeply melancholic person, that the black wings flutter continually over us, that – perhaps not completely accidentally in my oeuvre this Symphony is followed by a small discourse on the great question 'Why' [the Motet: *Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen?* Op.74 No.1]. If you don't know it (the motet) I will send it you. It throws the necessary deep shadow onto the happy Symphony and perhaps explains those kettledrums and trombones.' In a characteristic withdrawal, after this most personal of revelations, he added 'but please don't take all this or the trombone entry too seriously or tragically'.

His delight in integrating character variations within the drama of sonata form takes on a new range and fluidity in this work, creating expressively rich perspectives on the prevailing idyllic mood.

Thus, in first movement the gentle pastoral opening – with, indeed, that most pastoral of instruments, the horn – leads to the melancholy low brass chords, followed by a sinuous legato violin melody, an emphatic, almost violent arpeggio variant, and a brief scherzo interlude, before the second subject emerges – as a minor version of Brahms’s famous cradle song (a resonance noted by the composer himself). The development grows in energy, including strict fugato, grinding trombone and tuba entries on the motto figure, and a passage of climactically wide-ranging fortissimo arpeggios. The coda maintains this impetus to variation with a yearning horn solo, a waltz-like version of the opening, and more scherzo music – now combined with a brief quotation from his song *Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenz!* (Love is so lovely in the Spring).

Brahms uses his four low brass instruments in the slow movement to enrich the sumptuous opening melody on cellos and so point up the contrast with the lighter dance-like middle section on woodwind; but he also characteristically inflected his contrast-based forms with sonata-style developments and, during a violent working-out here, the low brass gives the pre-thematic motto a sinister twist. For the third movement Brahms inverts and extends this motto into a graceful minuet melody, which he transforms in the contrasted faster sections, bringing new dance-types into play – a galopp including march-like material, and a fast waltz. In the finale, each of the sonata-form sections (exposition, development, recapitulation) opens quietly with the main theme, which elaborates and extends the motto. In exposition this leads to a jovial energetic variant, a sweeping *largamente* second subject, and a lively scotch-snap conclusion. The development introduces a more serious feel, splitting up motives, altering the key to minor, and introducing inversions, diminutions and augmentations. As further contrast Brahms includes a *tranquillo* lyrical episode here, which recurs in the coda just before the final blaze of glory – in which joyous trombone scales and trumpet fanfares ultimately resolve the earlier, more troubled world of the low brass.

The first performance was given by the Orchestra of the Philharmonic Concerts (today known as the Vienna Philharmonic) conducted by Hans Richter on 30 December 1877; the third movement was encored. Press reviews were almost uniformly enthusiastic, but Wagner had other ideas, criticising in vicious terms Brahms’s melodies and his chamber-like approach to orchestral writing: Brahms was now a serious rival for the older master!

Jonathan Tilbrook

Jonathan Tilbrook is an exciting and versatile conductor of repertoire ranging from the 14th to the 21st century, whose career has included performances at major venues throughout the UK, Europe, Scandinavia, New Zealand and the Far East. Highlights have included appearances with the Croatian Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Croatian National Theatre, Zagreb; at Symphony Hall, Birmingham (with the Birmingham Philharmonic); London’s Barbican Hall with the English Chamber Orchestra, Handel’s *Xerxes* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, critically acclaimed performances of Bach passions in France with Florilegium, Walton’s *Façade* at the Albert Hall, Nottingham with musicians from Sinfonia Viva, and appearances with the contemporary music ensembles One Voice and the Orlando Consort.

Early achievements included his appointment as Assistant Conductor with the Martinů Philharmonic (Czech Republic), and invitations to guest-conduct the Janáček Philharmonic and Košice State Philharmonic orchestras. He has since worked with a wide range of ensembles including the Moravian Philharmonic, Olomouc and Kroměříž chamber orchestras (Czech Republic); Košice State Philharmonic (Slovak Republic); Hong Kong Sinfonietta; contemporary music groups Gemini, and Mephisto Ensemble, and the early music ensemble Florilegium. Opera productions have included *Don Pasquale*; *Die Fledermaus*; *La Bohème*; *Carmen*; *Madama Butterfly*; *Cavalleria Rusticana*; *I Pagliacci*; *Le nozze di Figaro*; *Don Giovanni* and *L’Incoronazione di Poppea*, at major UK festivals including Brighton, Cheltenham, King’s Lynn and Holland Park.

Jonathan holds the position of Head of Orchestral Studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London, where he works regularly with the conservatoire's Symphony Orchestra and other ensembles. He is the Sir Charles Mackerras Conducting Fellow at the University of Nottingham.

University Philharmonia

Jonathan Tilbrook, Sir Charles Mackerras Conducting Fellow

Ella Townsend, Assistant Conductor

Eleanor Conroy & Vandita Vinod, Arts Administration Ensemble Trainees

University Philharmonia is an auditioned symphony orchestra comprising students from more than 20 academic disciplines from across the University. It performs exciting, varied and challenging repertoire in several concerts annually. Every year opportunities are provided to talented students to perform a concerto with the orchestra, receive mentoring as Assistant Conductors and work with the Lakeside team as Arts Administration Trainees.

Flute

Jessamy Robinson
Freya Sage
Jerusha Atputharatnam

Horn

Henry Osmond
Tamzin Wild
Matthew O-Reilly
Billy Murphy

Percussion

Harry Jackson
Rosie Clark

Oboe

Samuel Davis
Adriana Lo Polito

Trumpet

Ollie Cowling
Ella Townsend

Piano

Ned Hooley

Clarinet

Sophia Guttierrez
Amy Gower - Jones

Trombone

Paul Emmett
Emily Shell
Aileen Hill

Bassoon

Alice Gore
Joe Carter

Violin 1

Daniel Seow
Ai-Ling Woolston
Elizabeth McShane
Abigail Snow
Hazel Cooper
Solee Jung
Edmund Hallam
Gabriela Delgado
Lydia Ward
Sophie Davison

Violin 2

Rebecca Hart
Ashley Tan
Kim Jeffs
Vandita Vinod
Molly Young
Louise Marshall
Shriya Tank
Frances Chatto
Elena Wilcox

Viola

Zi (Sara) Wang
Phoebe Knight
Jonathan Kightley
Lingde Yang

Cello

Eleanor Conroy
Simon Stockwell
Samuel Cavendish
Gruffydd Jones
Kara Kordtomeikel
Alan Gurung-Lama
Hannah Thomas

Bass

Walter Mann
Sam Grimes
Andy Knights