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Saturday 8th March 1997
Programme 80p

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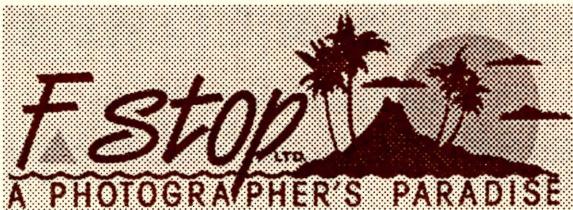
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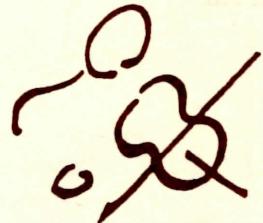
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Banbury Symphony Orchestra



Peter Adams
Cello

Peter Adams

Peter Adams obtained a post with the orchestra of London Festival Ballet in 1979 when he was sixteen, having studied first with Dennis Nesbitt and later Maurice Zimbler. He is currently principal 'cello with the Academy of Oxford, the City of Oxford Orchestra, Orchestra da Camera, and the London String Orchestra. He is also the director of the Elizabethan Consort of Viols, with a long list of acclaimed recordings.

Between 1984 and 1987 Peter held the post of Professor of Viola da Gamba at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He travelled to Bloomington, USA, in 1989 to take lessons and masterclasses for eighteen months with, amongst others, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, Janos Starker, Paul Tortelier and Leslie Parnas.

Much of his time is spent touring and recording, with Nadia Myerscough and Yoshiko Endo, collectively the Rogeri Trio. In 1996 Peter joined the Bochmann String Quartet. All this performing is combined with a substantial amount of teaching, both privately and as a visiting lecturer at Leicester University.

Paul Willett

Paul Willett studied the French Horn with Ifor James and gained his performance Diploma from the Royal College of Music at 16.

He read music at The Queen's College, Oxford, on scholarship, and now combines teaching and freelance playing. He has given solo recitals and performed concertos throughout the country. He was a member of The Five Winds for many years, a group which performed both at home and abroad, and also on BBC radio.

He is currently Acting Head of Music at Fitzharrys School in Abingdon, and is the conductor of Oxfordshire Schools Senior Orchestra.

**Engelbert Humperdinck
(1854 - 1921)**

Hansel and Gretel Overture

Just as some composers are known for one piece only, so are others known for just one Opera, and Humperdinck is one of them. His *Hansel and Gretel*, based on the fairy story by the Brothers Grimm, began as a set of songs for his sister and was developed into a "Singspiel", and finally became a full-scale opera; no less a musician than Richard Strauss conducted the first performance at Weimar in 1893. It has been a great success ever since.

Humperdinck was a fervent admirer, indeed a disciple, of Wagner, whom he helped in the preparation of his scores and the organisation of his productions in Bayreuth in 1881/82. Wagner inevitably influenced the young composer, and the melodious overture to *Hansel and Gretel* shows how well he absorbed some of the great pioneer's style and methods.

**Edward Elgar
(1857 - 1934)**

'Cello Concerto, Op. 85

Adagio, Moderato; Allegro Molto; Adagio;
Recitative; Allegro ma non troppo

Elgar was the first great English composer to emerge for two centuries, that is since Henry Purcell (1659-95). He was a Worcestershire man, born at Broadheath, near Worcester, in a house which is now an Elgar museum. The family soon moved to Worcester where Edward's father, organist, violinist and piano tuner, kept a music shop. Edward's musical instincts were stimulated by the scores and instruments in the shop. The violin became his main instrument; he also played the piano, organ and bassoon and as a young musician played in local orchestras and conducted the Worcester Glee Club. He was soon composing trifles but his request to study in Leipzig had to be refused; his father could not afford it.

Thus Elgar, the emerging composer, was self-taught. The influences on him included Schumann, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Gounod, Saint-Säens, Liszt, Franck and Brahms. From this background he distilled his own musical personality, a quality of Englishness hard to define, owing nothing to folk music that attracted Vaughan Williams. He learned to compose to large designs, produced a rich fund of melodies and had great gifts as an orchestrator. In the 1890's he composed five

works for the English choral society market but it was the orchestra that mainly interested him and it was not until 1899, when over 40, that the first performance of the *Enigma Variations* won him a national reputation. *The Dream of Gerontius* and the *Sea Pictures* followed and urged on by his wife (he had married in 1899) his success, early in this century, can also be measured by university doctorates, a knighthood, the Order of Merit and the presence of royalty at the Covent Garden Elgar Festival in 1904. The *Pomp and Circumstance* marches earned him wide popularity giving musical expression to the patriotism, optimism and splendour of the Edwardian era, but it was the two symphonies and the violin concerto of this period that figure among his finest creations and increased his international standing.

Elgar took naturally to a warm romanticism and put the whole of himself into his music. This wholeness encompassed music expressing the pomp of public ceremony, ecstatic delight, an other-worldly dreaminess and always an undertow of deep feeling that belied his appearance for he looked like an English country gentleman. Like Hamlet, Elgar had "that within that passeth show".

It was the inner side of Elgar's musical personality that mainly emerged after the Great War. He was affected by the slaughter, the suspense of music-making and the severance of ties with his German friends. He turned away from "public" music and wrote three chamber works in 1918 and the 'Cello Concerto in 1919.

It may seem strange to group a concerto with chamber music but the spare texture of the 'Cello Concerto often suggests the intimacy of chamber music. To quote Basil Maine, it is "reticent and philosophical", possesses a "mood of heavy sorrow" and sums up "a whole lifetime of experience". For such music Elgar preferred the veiled poignancy of the 'cello and abandoned the expansive three-movement design used for his Violin Concerto for a more ascetic scheme; there are four short movements with concise leading themes. The music moves forward, pauses to reflect and then moves again with considerable freedom given to the soloist. The orchestration is not brilliant but, to quote Tovey, "there is no lack of subtle and beautiful tone-colour inexhaustibly varied within narrow limits and by the simplest means".

The concerto starts with its motto theme, both noble and full of feeling played by the 'cello, almost unaccompanied. We hear it again, briefly, before the second movement and again close to the end of the work. The first movement is plaintive and lyrical. The motto theme gives way to a simple, swaying melody from unaccompanied violas. Later clarinets and bassoons introduce a second

gently swaying theme. A single mood of quiet sorrow is maintained throughout. In the Scherzo, launched by the soloist after considerable hesitation, a breathless, ghostly *moto perpetuo* skims away into thin air. It is arrested from time to time by a broad worldly second subject but the scurrying theme returns and "vanishes with the detonation of a burst bubble", to quote Tovey. The brief elegiac Adagio is concerned with painful, private sorrows expressed through one of Elgar's most beautiful lyrical tunes. The movement ends on the dominant and hangs there inconclusively as if asking a question to which there is no answer. The bluff Englishman in Elgar only appears in the last movement. After a meditation the 'cello launches into a confident theme. The movement is a free rondo expansively developed with a cheeky second subject. However Elgar's world collapses again into chromatic despair in the most poignant episode of all. No release seems possible. The Adagio is recalled but Elgar then seems to say "This is no way for an Englishman to behave!" The bluntness returns as if dispersing the gloom forever!



INTERVAL

Many thanks to the Church Social Committee for arranging the refreshments



Tchaikovsky

Symphony no. 1 in G minor - "Winter Dreams"

Allegro tranquillo; Adagio Cantabile ma non tanto;
Scherzo: Allegro scherzando giocoso; Finale: Andante Ingubre

Tchaikovsky's first symphony was sketched out in 1866 at a time when the art of symphony-writing was being established in Russia. He set himself a difficult task for his first symphony by expressing his love of Russian nature in winter. He said "I love our Russian nature more than anything else. Even the Russian winter landscape has in my opinion an incomparable charm of its own".

The first movement, "Dreaming on a Wintry Road", is the core of this predominantly lyric symphony. The second movement conveys the impressions of a sledge drive across the frozen Ladoga Lake. It is inscribed as "Bleak Countryside, Misty Landscape". The third brings a brighter picture of the winter landscape, fog has lifted and an azure sparkling mood penetrates the icy whiteness. The finale is a jubilant, dancing picture of a national holiday, full of bright colours and contentment.

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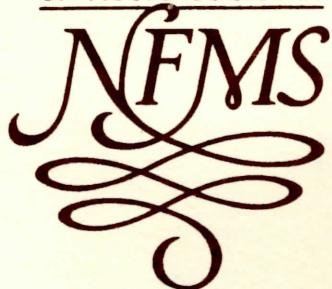
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