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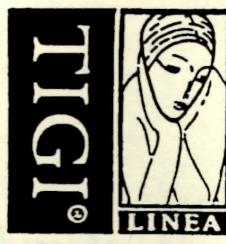
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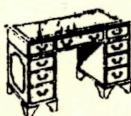
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Alison Dods

Alison Dods studied violin with David Takeno and Emanuel Hurwitz whilst reading Theology at Cambridge University. She subsequently studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Erich Gruenberg, winning the Harold Craxton Prize for Chamber Music. She is currently violinist with the Cosmos Quartet, studying part time at Yale University with the Tokyo Quartet. The Cosmos Quartet have been selected as Leverhulme Fellows of the Royal Academy of Music. As a member of the string-playing music theatre group, the "Gogmagogs", she performed last year at the City of London, Edinburgh and Aldeburgh Festivals. In October 1997 Alison was selected for the Thames Valley Young Musicians' Platform.

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 Head of Music at Fitzharry's School in Abingdon.

Glinka (1804-57)

Overture: Russian and Ludmilla

All the giants of late nineteenth century Russian music owe an enormous debt to Glinka who, on his own, established a Russian national musical tradition, although his early music betrayed all the foreign influences, especially Italian, that dominated the Russian concert hall and opera house. After a period of study abroad in the early 1830's Glinka returned to his homeland to compose the two operas, *A Life for the Tsar* and *Russlan and Ludmilla* that made him the father of Russian music. "A Life for the Tsar", first performed in St.Petersburg in 1836, was influenced melodically and rhythmically by Russian and Polish folk music and was an instant success: it was to be performed every season in both St.Petersburg and Moscow until the 1917 Revolution.

Russlan and Ludmilla's fate was less fortunate. It was based on a story in verse, including a wicked dwarf and a magician, by Pushkin, who undertook to prepare a dramatic version for Glinka, but was killed in a duel before he could do so. The subsequent unsatisfactory libretto was the work of no fewer than five writers and because the music Glinka wrote for it was so uneven and dramatically often unconvincing, it had a mixed reception when first performed in St.Petersburg in 1842. However, although unsatisfactory as an opera, it provided, melodically and harmonically, a rich source of ideas and inspiration for later Russian composers, including the element of "orientalism" some of them favoured.

The overture to *Russlan* is in sonata form and is a summarised account of the opposing forces encountered in the opera. It starts with a sequence of loud chords played by the whole orchestra, followed by the main bustling theme given to violins, violas and flute. The wind instruments then playfully toss fragments of this theme to each other before violas, cellos and bassoon play the lyrical second subject which is then repeated by the full orchestra. All these ideas are expertly treated in the development section before the recapitulation repeats them. A feature of the coda is a descending whole tone scale, well before Debussy, which represents the wicked dwarf Chernomer.

Mendelssohn
(1809-47)

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E minor

Op.64

*Allegro molto appassionato; Andante;
Allegretto non troppo - Allegro molto vivace*

Mendelssohn first mentioned his idea of composing a violin concerto in July 1838 in a letter to his friend Ferdinand David, who was also one of the leading violin virtuosi of the day. Much care was taken in its composition and the first performance was not given until March 1845, with David as soloist. The concerto met with immediate and lasting success and has become one of the best loved and best known of all concertos. In many ways it broke away from the usual classical mould and had a great influence on succeeding generations.

We hear something of this unconventionality immediately, as the usual orchestral opening to the first movement is dispensed with, and the soloist proclaims the passionate and intense theme upon which the movement is built. After an orchestral repeat of this theme, the soloist enters again with arching arpeggios and repeated notes. These lead to low sustained notes above which the poignant second theme is heard, first in the woodwind and then taken up by the pleading tones of the solo violin. It is interesting to note the unusual position of the cadenza in this opening movement, just before the recapitulation of the main theme. Indeed, as the opening theme is heard again in the orchestra, the soloist is still weaving an intricate web of arpeggios around it.

A sustained note in the bassoon links the slow movement with the opening *Allegro* and the beautifully lyrical melody is introduced by the soloist. There is a more agitated middle section before the poignant opening theme returns.

The Finale, which is also designed to follow without a break, has a short introductory section before the playfulness of its main theme bursts upon the listener. The mood is transformed, the movement dominated by the sparkle and brilliance of the solo violin.



INTERVAL

Many thanks to the Church Social Committee for arranging the refreshments



Tchaikovsky
(1840-93)

Symphony no. 4 in F minor
Op. 36

*Andante sostenuto; Andantino in modo di canzone;
Scherzo: Allegro; Finale: Allegro con fuoco*

Tchaikovsky started to write his Fourth Symphony in 1876 but its character was to become influenced by associations with two women during the same period so that, by its completion in January 1878, it directly reflected how they had impinged on his life.

On the symphony's manuscript was written: "Dedicated to my best friend". This was Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow and a lover of Tchaikovsky's music. She made contact with him in December, 1876 and, although by a curious but mutually agreed arrangement they were never to meet, their relationship became intimate through a copious and revealing correspondence. Furthermore she became his patroness, and gave him a regular allowance from October 1877. She became the Fourth Symphony's dedicatee because, as Tchaikovsky wrote, "I think you will find in it echoes of your innermost thoughts and feelings". Thus it became "our symphony".

The relationship with Mme. von Meck was creative, but the second, with Antonina Milyukova, who became Tchaikovsky's wife, was emotionally devastating. Despite his homosexuality he wrote in September, 1876, "I have decided to marry. I cannot avoid this." Somehow he felt that marriage would deal with his sexual condition. Antonina was a former conservatoire student who became infatuated with Tchaikovsky and wrote three letters to him offering him marriage. His response to her emotional outpourings was cool, but when she threatened suicide he agreed to meet her. He found he could not love her and said so, but nonetheless agreed to marriage. At the time he wrote to Mme. von Meck saying that he was averse to marriage but accepted the circumstances that had forced him to become a bridegroom: "If it is to be, let it be!" The marriage took place in July and soon after, finding his wife repulsive, he left her in despair for his sister's home in the Ukraine, and it was now he who had suicidal leanings.

In these two relationships, Tchaikovsky saw the unavoidable workings of Fate, a key factor to understanding the Fourth Symphony. The effect of Antonina was devastating but who knows whether his mental imbalance would have been restored without his confidante, Mme. von Meck?

Tchaikovsky provided Mme. von Meck with a programme for the Fourth Symphony. He described the insistent introductory theme as "that fateful force which prevents the impulse to happiness from attaining its goal". Not only is it interwoven with the first movement's other themes but it also brutally interrupts proceedings twice during this movement and once again near the end of the Finale.

It is the first movement that bears the burden of the emotional tempest raging within Tchaikovsky. Within its masterly sonata structure his soul is storm-tossed hither and thither by Fate, as helpless as a leaf. He described the plaintive main theme which follows the introduction as representing "depression and helplessness", a mood which is only partly dispelled by other gentler themes attempting to escape from grim reality.

The two middle movements, both in ternary form, offer light relief. The *Andantino* is lyrical and melancholy and the *Scherzo* strikingly contrasts pizzicato strings with wind and brass.

The principal ideas in the *Finale* are a festive, boisterous figure and a Russian folk-song. A happier world is observed remote from Tchaikovsky's troubles. Of this movement he wrote: "Rejoice in others' rejoicings. To live is still possible!"

Notes supplied by the Programme Note Bank of the NFMS

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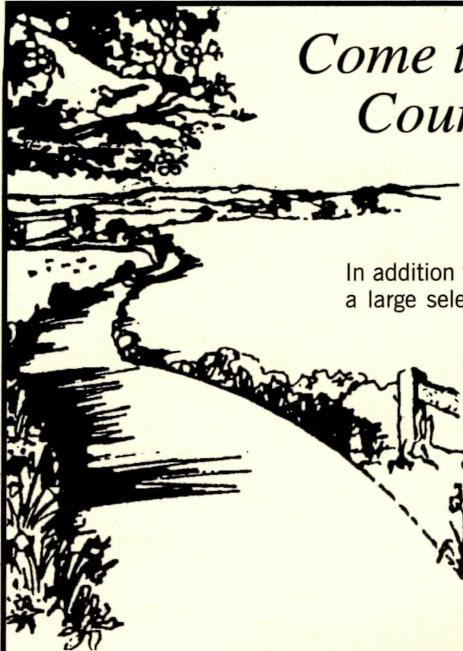
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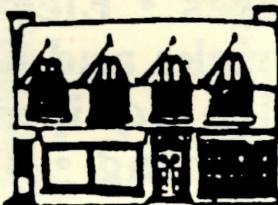
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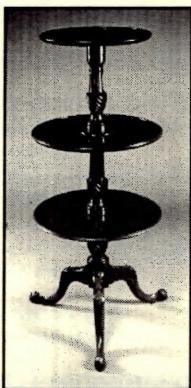
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