



EDINBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Conductor: Gerard Doherty
Leader: Sheena Jardine

**Spring
Concert**

Saturday 9th March 2024
7.30pm Greyfriars Kirk

Programme Notes

www.edinburghsymphonyorchestra.co.uk

Symphony No. 10 in E Minor – Dmitri Shostakovich

(1906-1975)

1 *Moderato*

2 *Allegro*

3 *Allegretto*

4 *Andante Allegro*

Shostakovich was born in St Petersburg on the 12th September 1906 at a time of great turmoil in Russia. He was just 12 when the October revolution occurred in 1917. After studying piano at home with his mother he became a student at the Petrograd Conservatory studying piano with Leonid Nikolayev and composition with Maximilian Steinberg. His first major work was his *First Symphony* composed in 1925 and this thrust Shostakovich into the public eye. In his early period Shostakovich composed several Avant Garde works, culminating in his two operas *Lady Macbeth of Mitensk* and *The Nose*. Unfortunately for Shostakovich, Stalin had come to power and insisted that all experimental composition should cease. Russian composers were to compose music, directed towards the welfare of the state and Shostakovich was forced to abandon many of his current works, such as his *Fourth Symphony*. His opera *Lady Macbeth of Mitensk* was condemned by Pravda as “Chaos instead of music”.

In response to this censorship, Shostakovich produced his Fifth Symphony, which was dubbed ‘a Soviet artist’s reply to just criticism’, though it didn’t stop him inserting a few quotes from his Fourth Symphony. The Second World War ensued, and Shostakovich wrote his Seventh Symphony, the Leningrad, which was written with the aim of providing a morale booster for the citizens of Leningrad and Russia as a whole. A more pessimistic Symphony, the Eighth followed in 1943. At the end of the war, to the annoyance of the Russian authorities, who were expecting a grand celebratory symphony Shostakovich wrote a short satirical symphony. Clearly Shostakovich (as presumably many other

Russians were also) wasn't in the mood to celebrate the triumph of Stalin's regime. A further set of purges of Russian Composers, led by Zhdanov followed and Shostakovich hid himself from public view, concentrating on Chamber music and piano works, including his tribute to J. S. Bach; *The 24 Preludes and Fugues (Op 87)*. He also wrote several String Quartets during this time.

With the death of Stalin in 1953, Shostakovich felt able to write large scale works again including his 10th and 11th Symphonies. However, relations between Shostakovich and the Russian state remained uneasy. He died on the 9th of August 1975.

Shostakovich's 10th Symphony in E minor was written shortly after the death of Stalin and first performed by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under Yevgeny Mravinsky on 17 December 1953. Despite initial denials by Shostakovich, that the symphony had a program, it is generally recognised now, as a depiction of the conflicts that Shostakovich had with the Stalinist regime.

The first and longest movement is in the key of E minor. It begins with a slow introduction on the lower strings consisting of two rising phrases of three notes each. The first rising by step whilst the second rises by thirds. This becomes a motto that is frequently heard throughout the movement and nearly always in the bass register. The music continues to meander played solely by the strings, until after several stops and starts, a clarinet brings matters to a focus. The music played by the clarinet is a direct quote from the song by Mahler, *Urlicht (Primal light)* which occurs in his second Symphony. The clarinet theme and the motto of the introduction are built up into a powerful climax. This dies away and a restless chromatic theme in quavers is introduced by the flute, this is greatly extended by the strings and another climax is reached after which the music thins down to almost nothing consisting of bassoons and contrabassoon accompanied by a series of soft timpani rolls. This signals the start of the development section in

which the Mahler theme is explored further leading to a brutal triple *forte*. The nervous flute theme is bought back quite transformed in character, accompanied by snarling trumpets and horns. The high-level tension continues for some time with fierce interventions from the timpani and snare drums. The music changes rapidly from key to key, until it quietens down for a recapitulation. The opening music and the Mahler theme are rapidly dispatched. In contrast the flute theme is enhanced by being played by two clarinets in operatic thirds. The coda revisits the introduction, ending quietly with a single piccolo, accompanied by the timpani and the strings firmly settled in the home key of E minor.

The second movement is widely seen as a brutal portrayal of Stalin and his regime. It is a simple ABA form. The thematic material is derived from the six note motto of the first movement. The melodic lines are quite chromatic creating a crazed unsettling mood as the tonality changes quite quickly. The dynamic level is almost an unbroken *forte/fortissimo* played at a frenetic pace. This gives the movement, the impression of a relentless well-oiled machine destroying anything that is in its way. It has a militaristic feel reinforced by frequent use of a snare drum. A brief *pianissimo* precedes the final explosion.

The third movement has a nocturnal feel to it. It opens hesitantly with another variation by the strings on the opening motto theme of the first movement. It's as if Shostakovich is asking if it is safe to come out now that Stalin is dead. A second waltz like theme is introduced which modulates until it reaches C minor the home key of the movement. A four note motto is introduced this consists of the notes D Eb C B which rewritten in German notation, becomes D S C H and spells out the four letters of the German transliteration of Shostakovich's own name. Dimitry SHostakovitch. This motto would be repeatedly used in later works by Shostakovich. It is essentially Shostakovich asserting his own identity, in the face of Stalin's Russian totalitarianism. A

Mahlerian horn call changes the atmosphere and introduces another 5 note motto E A E D A. Some critics claim that this represents the name of one of his students Elmira Nazirova with whom Shostakovich was reputed to be having an affair. The horn motif is repeated a number of times, then towards the end of the movement, the DSCH motif is heard with increasing excitement, but the movement dissolves into a bleak coda.

The last movement begins slowly, then breaks into the first theme, which is a series of quick flashy, lighthearted reinventions of the woodwind themes, from the introduction. This is followed a heavy Russian dance on the strings, incorporating the six note motto of the first movement in the cellos and basses. As the movement progresses the themes of the second movement return championing Stalin in all his grim glory. The music is accompanied by cymbal crashes, representing the sound of battle. A conflict ensues between the DSCH motto and this music eventually overcoming the Stalin music with the orchestra blaring out DSCH triumphantly. A joyful, glorious conclusion follows, representing a cathartic release of tension. For now, at least, Shostakovich had won the battle of wills, between his own personal identity and the Russian totalitarian state. The 10th symphony soon became acknowledged as one of Shostakovich's greatest and is regularly performed today.

Chris Finlay February 2024.

Interval

Violin Concerto in D Major – Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

1 *Allegro Ma Non troppo*

2 *Adagio*

3 *Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace*

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg on 7 May 1833 to a respectable musical family. He soon showed promise as a talented pianist and gave his first concert at the age of ten. To help with his family's finances, he played the piano in many taverns, hotels and dance halls. He embarked on a tour to Hanover, where he met and became friends with Joseph Joachim, a leading violinist and for whom he would eventually write his Violin Concerto. Joachim introduced Brahms to Liszt and Berlioz and more significantly Clara and Robert Schumann. Schumann recognised Brahms's talent and encouraged him to take up composing. However, tragedy struck when Schumann attempted suicide in February 1854 and Brahms's first phase as a composer came to a halt. Brahms helped Clara Schumann to cope with the aftermath of Schumann's death in 1856 and fell in love with her. However, this was not requited as Clara wished to resume her career as a concert pianist and probably had enough of coping with neurotic men. However, they remained close friends throughout Brahms's life.

To deal with the emotional impact of Schumann's death, Brahms composed his *First Piano Concerto in D minor Op 15*, a work with a tempestuous first movement. After a restless period, Brahms settled in Vienna in 1871 where his style became mellower. There he composed his first purely orchestral work, *Variations on a theme by Haydn. Op 56a*. He then wrote his *First Symphony in C minor Op 68*, which has been somewhat unfairly dubbed as Beethoven's 10th. Brahms went on to write three more Symphonies, another Piano Concerto, more orchestral works including the *Tragic and Academic Overtures*, a *Double concerto for Violin and Cello* and finally the *Violin Concerto*. Brahms also wrote many other works for Piano, Chamber Ensembles, Choral Works and Lieder. Of these

works, the ones that stand out include the *Clarinet Quintet op 115*, *The Variations and Fugue for Piano on a theme by Handel Op 24* and the *German Requiem Op 45*. His last work was the *Four Serious Songs Op 121*. He died in Vienna, of cancer on the 3rd April 1897.

The Violin Concerto was conceived in the summer of 1878 and written for his friend Joseph Joachim. It received its first performance on New Year's Day 1879 at the Leipzig Gewandhaus with Joachim as the soloist and conducted by Brahms himself. It was preceded by Beethoven's Violin concerto, also in the Key of D major and an obvious influence on Brahms.

The first movement in D major sets the lyrical mood of the piece. It begins with a gentle introduction in triple time and a full orchestral ritornello ensues. Brahms uses the rhythmic device of a hemiola, where three beats are spread over two bars. In this ritornello, all the main themes apart from the true second theme, introduced by the soloist are presented. They are all lyrical, apart from the last one, heard prior to the soloist's entry. This is quite rhythmic and forward moving. Eventually over a pedal point the soloist enters with an introductory display of 46 bars. At first the orchestra and soloist are juxtaposed against each other, but eventually they come together. The soloist makes use of difficult devices such as double and triple stopping. Towards the end of the exposition, the violinist introduces a gorgeous lyrical theme in the dominant key of A major. The development section, as in Beethoven's concerto, moves from C major to C minor, with the soloist in counterpoint with the orchestra. The recapitulation reproduces much of the opening ritornello. This leads to a cadenza, originally left to the soloist to improvise, but these days one written by Joachim himself is commonly used. In the coda the soloist restates the opening theme tranquillo, in a high register after which the movement comes to a rapid conclusion, peppered with many double stops.

The second movement is in F major, with a mid-section in F sharp minor. The winds (without trumpets) play the opening 29 bars, with

the main theme of this section introduced by the oboe. The rest of the movement consists of several variations of this theme with the soloist making use of the high register, giving the movement an ethereal quality.

The last movement is a six part rondo ABACBA and shows strong Gypsy or Hungarian like tendencies. The movement gives prominence to the soloist. The A section has a rustic feel to it. The B theme opens with an ascending scale passage and is quite strident. The C section in contrast is more lyrical. Towards the end of the movement a mini cadenza is heard. Here Brahms plays an aural trick, such that the triple time of the movement, is made to sound like a march in 6/8. The B theme also returns having given up its strident quality.

Overall, the work shows Brahms in a genial mood and the piece rapidly became one of the leading Violin concertos of the concert repertoire.

Chris Finlay February 2024.

Date for your diary

Saturday 1st June 2024 – 7:30 Greyfriars Kirk

Debussy – Images

Hummel – Trumpet Concerto

Solo trumpet – Ana Romero

Vaughan Williams – Symphony No 5

SOPHIE WILLIAMS



Born in Edinburgh in 1999, Sophie Williams is at the beginning of her career as a passionate and versatile chamber musician, soloist and orchestral musician having already performed in many major concert halls around the globe. Her musical upbringing has been shaped by her time in St. Mary's Music School before studying at the Royal College of Music, London and in the Musikhochschule, Stuttgart with professors Gaby Lester and Nurit Stark. She is now pursuing a Masters of Performance in the Musik Akademie, Basel with Professors Rainer Schmidt and Raphael Oleg.

Sophie has performed in chamber music festivals such as Mendelssohn on Mull, the Edinburgh Fringe, Schiermonnikoog (NL), Podium Esslingen (DE), Manchester and Chipping Campden International Music Festivals. This summer she will be attending the Yellow Barn festival in Vermont, USA. She was also invited to the Barenboim-Said Akademie Masterclasses in Berlin to work with Arnold Steinhardt (Guarneri Quartet) and IMS Prussia Cove with Andras Keller. Her musical mentors and influences have included members of the Doric String Quartet, Alina Ibragimova, Pekka Kuusisto, Nicola Benedetti, Lorenza Borrani, Nicholas Rimmer, and David Watkin, bringing a diverse range of inspirations to her playing.

For two years Sophie was principal second violin of the European Union Youth Orchestra with whom she toured throughout Europe, South America, the UAE and China, including performances at the BBC Proms, Konzerthaus and Philharmonie Berlin, Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Elbphilharmonie Hamburg. She was subsequently invited to play with Spira Mirabilis in Italy and the Budapest Festival Orchestra under the direction of Ivan Fischer. Sophie is also experienced in historical performance practice, playing on historical instruments and bows, and performs regularly with period ensembles such as the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble, Ensemble Resonanz and the Gabrielli Consort.

Sophie is thrilled to be returning to play with the Edinburgh Symphony Orchestra and Gerry Docherty following her previous collaboration with them performing the Beethoven Violin Concerto in 2019 and is very grateful to be playing in her hometown once more.

GERARD DOHERTY



Gerard Docherty studied violin and conducting at the Royal Scottish Academy. He studied conducting at post graduate level with Martin Brabbins at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire and also won a scholarship to study for two seasons at the American Academy of Conducting, Aspen, with Murry Sidlin, David Zinman, Jorma Panula and James Levine.

Gerard's natural gift as a conductor first came to prominence when he conducted the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) in Debussy's *La Mer* in the presence of Walter Weller. With Weller's highest recommendation, Gerard made his debut as a conductor, which led him to conduct the RSNO on numerous occasions, including when he had to step in during a recording session, as the conductor was indisposed, to complete a recording of opera arias, which were highly acclaimed.

His conducting has taken him to the United States, Europe and the Middle East. Gerard is currently Principal Conductor of the Glasgow Sinfonia and the Edinburgh Symphony Orchestra and also guest conducts a number of other Scottish ensembles.

He has conducted a wide range of choral and symphonic works and is much admired for his natural musicianship, clear understanding, integrity and breadth of repertoire, which spans baroque to contemporary. His reviews have described his music making as "thrilling", "exhilarating", "triumphant" and "vibrant". He is also a well established conductor of choral music having spent 20 years as conductor of the Ayr Choral, conducting many major symphonic and sacred choral works as well as 'A Capella' repertoire.

His wide experience and in-depth knowledge of orchestral technique and repertoire are also in demand with the next generation of musicians. He was for 10 years Principal Conductor of the Strathclyde University Symphony Orchestra. He has been course director and conductor of the NYOS repertoire course on three occasions and has also conducted the Symphony Orchestra of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music, the Orchestra of the University of Castel Branco, Edinburgh University Chamber Orchestra, Renfrewshire Schools Symphony Orchestra, West of Scotland Independent Schools Orchestra and Glasgow Schools Symphony Orchestra, the National Youth String Orchestra of Scotland. He is at present conductor of the East Renfrewshire Schools Symphony and Senior String Orchestras, winning numerous awards.

He played violin for all of the major orchestras in the country, including 23 years as first violin in the RSNO. He is also a renowned violin teacher.

THE EDINBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Edinburgh Symphony Orchestra was the brainchild of its first conductor, Donald James – then the Head of Music at Edinburgh Academy – and gave its first concert in aid of Oxfam at the Reid Concert Hall in June 1963. Since then, for over 60 years, it has given amateur players the opportunity to perform a symphonic repertoire to a high standard under the batons of Donald James (1963-67), Henry McGlone (1967-72), Neil Butterworth (1972-73), Leon Coates (1973-85), Alasdair Mitchell (1985-2004) and Gerard Doherty, the present conductor.

Many young soloists in the early stages of their professional careers have been given the opportunity to play with the ESO, and the work of local composers has been commissioned. The repertoire includes not only the best-known pieces, but also music which is not so regularly performed. The Orchestra has, on occasion, combined with choral societies and in May 2005 was invited to accompany a huge choir of volunteers from all of Scotland in a charity performance of Verdi's Requiem in the Usher Hall. There are usually 3 or 4 performances each year: November, February and May – normally in Greyfriars Kirk. ESO is a subscription orchestra managed by an elected committee. The orchestra is always pleased to hear from amateur musicians who would like to play. Anyone interested in joining the orchestra should contact esoenquiries@gmail.com

Violin 1

Sheena Jardine
Helen Adamson
Sheila Beattie
Una Fairley
Adam Hamer
Alison Lucas
Claire McLean
Caroline Mortimer
Verena Schwarze
Iain Scott
Claire Shortt
Aimee Truesdale
Graeme Wilson

Violin 2

Nigel Hambly
Barbara Bell
Kaye Brewster
Henry Buckley
Helen Downes
Melissa English
Jessie Jungels
Malcolm McKitterick
Song-Su Oh
David Scott
Ute Skiba
Emma Waite

Timpani

Russell Wilson

Percussion

Ian Munro

Viola

Kay Smith
Rachel Ademokun
Brianna Banting
Gillian Cloke
Vanessa Fisher
John Halliday
Cheuk Ting Hon
Jennifer Meakin
Eleanor Merton
Anne Parker

Cello

Gerard Delaney
David Beattie
Dianne Beattie
Mike Evans
Murdo Homewood
Robin Nelson
Jennifer Orr
Alice Paine
John Tanner
Emma Veitch

Double Bass

John Wilkinson
Angela Dimmock
Ray Leonard
Patrick Sturt

Flute

Catriona Crosby
Stella Henzell
Elizabeth Wells

Piccolo

Stella Henzell

Oboe

Jo Watts
Sheila Hyde
Anne Wilson

Cor anglais

Anne Wilson

Clarinet

Vaughan Townhill
Hilary Saunders
Nadine Thompson

E♭ Clarinet

Nadine Thompson

Bassoon

Rainer Thönnies
Andrew Hazard

Contrabassoon

Kathy Humphry

French Horn

Marian Kirton
Stephen Bradley
Hamish McRitchie
Gary Nichol
Victoria North

Trumpet

Elliot Longworth
Rhona Carse
Cameron Sutherland

Trombone

Daniel Richards
Murray Campbell

Bass Trombone

Ruth Andrew

Tuba

Arnold Myers