

London Concertante

The following is reproduced from the Ensemble's website:

"London Concertante is one of the finest chamber ensembles in the country, its players brought together through a shared passion for chamber music. The group has the rare ability to combine flexibility of instrumental grouping and consistently maintain superb artistic endeavour. With an enviable array of critical acclaim, a stunning selection of recordings on such prestigious labels as Chandos, Toccata Classics and Harmonia Mundi, and performances throughout the UK and Europe, London Concertante rightfully claims its position at the forefront of classical performers in the UK.

"Quality musicians. Quite excellent...pursuing each new pulse with the unanimity of a shoal of fish. [They] play with tone as soft as velvet, bow strokes that really sing and a Romanticist's wide volume range."
Evening Standard

Under the dynamic leadership of international recording artist, Adam Summerhayes, ("to die for" The Strad), the ensemble thrives on inspired programming and the loyalty of some of the country's finest instrumentalists, giving around 90 concerts a year, performing for festivals, music clubs and at theatres.

"an absolutely superb performance." The Strad

The ensemble enjoys an ever growing reputation for exciting and memorable performances, thanks to its exceptional players, inspired programming of Artistic Director, Chris Grist, and the opportunity to tour with the most significant and demanding of chamber music masterpieces. As well as concerts at the South Bank, St. Martin-in-the-Fields and Wigmore hall, during the next year London Concertante will be touring to Spain, the Middle East and a return visit to the USA in 2011.

"Drum-tight. This is superb chamber playing" - The Scotsman

As well as giving performances at festivals, music clubs and theatres, London Concertante also has a thriving education programme; inspiring youngsters to enjoy classical music, both as listeners and performers."

www.londonconcertante.com

Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-ninth
season
2009-10

4.00 pm
Sunday
11 October 2009

St. Mary's Church
East Bergholt



SVAM is a member of Making Music
and a Registered Charity (No 276640)

London Concertante

Fenella Humphreys - Guest Leader
Philippa Barton - Violin
Eleanor Parry - Violin
Susie Watson - Violin
Matthew Quenby - Viola
Chris Grist - Cello
Richard Pryce - Bass

PROGRAMME

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Divertimento in D, K 136
Allegro – Andante - Presto

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)
Serenade for Strings
Allegra piacevole – Larghetto – Allegretto

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)
String Sonata No. 2 in A major
Allegro - Andante – Allegro

Bela Bartok (1881-1945)
Roumanian Folk Dances
Joc cu bâta (Stick dance) - *Braul* (Sash dance) -
Pe loc (In one spot) - *Buciumeana* (Song of
the mountain horn) - *V Poarca Româneasca*
(Roumanian polka) - *Maruntel* (Fast dance)

INTERVAL

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
Adagio for strings

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
St. Paul's Suite
Jig: *Vivace*
Ostinato: *Presto*
Intermezzo: *Andante con moto*
Finale: *Allegro*

Programme Notes

After a performance by **Mozart** in January 1770, the *Gazetta di Mantova* noted 'the amazing talent and extraordinary mastery which he already possesses in music at the age of thirteen'. As well as compositions of his own, Mozart had played unseen sonatas at sight, improvised variations on a theme provided, sung and accompanied himself in an impromptu setting of a poem he had just been given, and improvised a fugue. Mantua was only one of many Italian cities to be astonished by his abilities during fifteen months of travelling around with his father. He received a number of commissions, and two further tours were planned. Before setting out on the last of these, he wrote three pieces, the first of which is this evening's Divertimento in D. We can deduce its likely purpose from its form. Austrian musicians generally used the term *divertimento* to describe an easy-going composition in several - often five - movements, frequently including two minuets. However, these three works display a much tauter structure: three movements, fast-slow-fast. Thus, despite their titles, they are actually Italian symphonies, needing only the addition of wind parts to assume a form that might well have had occasional use during Mozart's stay in Italy (they are often referred to in German as the Salzburg Symphonies). They can be played equally effectively by a solo quartet or a string orchestra – such widening of the potential market was always attractive to publishers.

Elgar's marriage (1889) brought a measure of financial security and enabled a move to London. There, he could hear music not accessible in the provinces – operas by Wagner, and orchestral works by many others. He wanted to establish himself on the metropolitan scene, though things did not work out quite as he had hoped. A strongly Anglican community was in no hurry to embrace a Catholic, and moreover one who, in a class-conscious age, was known to be a shopkeeper's son who had married above himself. He found it difficult to achieve performances of his works or recruit pupils, and after eighteen dispiriting months, the couple moved back to Worcestershire. Elgar returned to his former activities of teaching and performing, as violinist or conductor. During this period, he reworked three earlier pieces for strings into the *Serenade*. It was accepted for publication, but received no professional performance for some years. During this time Elgar's reputation was growing gradually, through such works as *Froissart*, *King Olaf*, and *Caractacus*: it was finally cemented at a national level by the *Enigma Variations* of 1899. The *Serenade* is a relatively early work, but gives strong indications of things to come. The first movement generates a memorable wistfulness through its minor key and lilting viola rhythm, though the most remarkable of the three movements is the second. Phrasing and harmony are managed in a way which creates the impression of a seamless, continuously unfolding melody – a prominent characteristic of many of Elgar's later works.

Mozart's precocity as a composer has often been thought unique, but recent writings by Professor Barry Cooper of Manchester University show that a surprising number of musicians began to compose whilst very young. Possibly the earliest was Frederick Ouseley, later a cathedral organist, who, at three years old, played tunes which were written down by his elder sister. Another early starter was Gioacchino **Rossini**, who penned his six string sonatas at the age of twelve, before he had received any formal musical training, indeed they are almost his first efforts at composition. For many years, the manuscript was lost, but came to light in 1954 at the Library of Congress. The four parts – violin, viola, cello, double bass - are labelled by Rossini in the singular, and thus were intended for four solo players. Nowadays they are sometimes played that way, and sometimes by a

full string orchestra. In each sonata, the first movement is the most substantial, though, unlike contemporary works by Austrian composers, does not develop musical argument through the interplay of short motives. Instead, Rossini relies on spans of lyrical melody with decorative passages, reminding us that his future was to be concerned with vocal, rather than instrumental music. The central slow movement of this evening's sonata displays an expressive quality which belies its composer's tender age.

In 1906 **Bartok** and Kodaly announced their aim of collecting and publishing a comprehensive collection of Hungarian folk music. They wanted Hungary to develop its own musical style, rather than merely copying German tradition. Bartok broadened his interest to include Slovak folk music, and in 1908 that of Roumania. The arrival of WW1 put paid to his collecting trips, and so he turned to editing for publication the abundance of material already in his possession. 1915 saw the appearance of many works based on Roumanian sources, including the Six Roumanian Folk Dances, which are amongst Bartok's most popular and accessible works. They exist in various versions - for solo piano, for different solo instruments with piano, and for orchestra.

Samuel **Barber's** mother was a pianist, whilst his aunt Louise Homer was a leading contralto at the Metropolitan Opera. Through her, Barber had access to many great singers and songs. In 1924, aged fourteen, he began to study singing at the newly-founded Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. As years went by, he proved himself an outstanding student of voice, piano, and composition. His vocal background helps to explain the lyrical nature of much of his music: his propensity for elegiac, long-lined melodies is vividly exemplified in two of his most famous works, the Violin Concerto and the Adagio for Strings. The latter was arranged from the slow movement of the String Quartet, Op. 11, and was performed by the NBC Symphony Orchestra when Barber was only twenty-eight. After conducting the first rehearsal of the piece, Toscanini remarked: 'Semplice e bella' ('simple and beautiful'). Much later in life, Barber set the same music for voices, using the text of the *Agnus Dei*.

After several years as professional trombonist and répétiteur with the Carl Rosa opera company, Gustav **Holst** decided that teaching would form a more congenial background to his composing career. He was director of music at St Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith from 1905 until his death – almost thirty years. Holst and Bartok display certain similarities, in that both composers produced attractive music for use by young performers, and both turned to the folk traditions of their own and other countries in order to construct an alternative to the musical language of high Romanticism. In Holst's orchestral piece *Beni Mora*, a fragment of Arab melody heard during an Algerian holiday repeats itself, as a kind of accompanying figure, throughout the entire piece. Some of the musical ideas in the *St Pauls Suite* are folk-like without being actual folksongs, though the final movement combines the traditional country dance tune known as the Dargason with the melody *Greensleeves*.

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SVAM's next concert: The **Maggini Quartet**
at St. Mary's Church East Bergholt on Sunday 22 November 2009 at 4 pm
String quartets by **Haydn, Rubbra and Mendelssohn**.