

The thirty-third concert in the Enterprising series

Guildford
Philharmonic
Orchestra

Guildford Corporation Concerts 1973-74

This concert is promoted by Guildford Corporation with financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain

Civic Hall—Guildford

SATURDAY 9 MARCH 1974
at 7.45 p.m.

Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra

Leader: HUGH BEAN

Philharmonic Choir

Trevor Peacock

Vernon Handley

Conductor

Trevor Peacock

Trevor Peacock is one of the most versatile actor-writers in modern British entertainment. He has acted with the Old Vic Company, and is a leading member of the Manchester 69. He wrote and starred in his own musical, 'Erb', which ran at the Strand Theatre in London in 1970, and he also wrote the script of the film 'He who rides a tiger'.

As well as his serious work, he has written a number of 'pop' songs, several of which have had great success, 'Mrs. Brown you've got a lovely daughter' being his best known, and for his work in this field he received an Ivor Novello Award. Two outstanding stage roles which won him critical acclaim were 'Lumkin' in the Manchester 69 production 'She Stoops to Conquer', and 'Titus' in 'Titus Andronicus' at the Round House. He is at present preparing with the Royal Shakespeare Company for a production at the Aldwych.

Philharmonic Choir

The Philharmonic Choir is the larger of the two choirs under the conductorship of the Musical Director, who acknowledges with thanks the help he has received in training the choir from Mr. Kenneth Lank, and accompanists Miss Mary Rivers, Miss Patricia Finch and Miss Prudence Edden.

PETER AND THE WOLF, Opus 67 Prokofiev 1891—1953

It is strange that Prokofiev should be known to a vast public mainly through his lighter works: the 'Classical' Symphony, 'Peter and the Wolf', Lieutenant Kije, 'The Love of Three Oranges'. These clever and charming works have blinded critics and public alike to an essentially serious composer whose concertos and symphonies are among the most deeply felt of the century. This statement notwithstanding, Prokofiev is his own worst enemy, for a work like 'Peter and the Wolf' is a tour de force and contains characteristic musical devices which are found with more elaboration in his serious works.

He lived much of his life in exile from Russia, but then in 1934 he voluntarily returned; during both periods in his home land he was often out of favour with the authorities, mainly because of his refusal to write the kind of music that they thought a Soviet composer should write. It was two years after his return that he wrote 'Peter and the Wolf'—'a symphonic tale for orchestra'. It was designed in the first place to teach anyone (not just children) the instruments of the modern symphony orchestra, but it becomes a more important work than that because of the consistently high musical inspiration. The characters in the tale are represented by instruments in

the orchestra, but Prokofiev has used these instruments not only for their special characteristics, but so that in the *tutti* each character contributes to 'symphonic build-up'. The Narrator's part is very important and any one of many approaches can be adopted by him. The piece works just as well if he simply draws all his information with impeccable timing or if he adopts a comedian's approach to the procedure, or even combines the two. This latter is probably the most successful because it is easy to play the piece for laughs, and yet first and foremost both in words and music it is a narration.

SYMPHONY OF PSALMS

Stravinsky 1882—1972

Stravinsky wrote his *Symphony of Psalms* in 1930 and the score bears the message that the *Symphony* 'composed to the glory of God' is dedicated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra'. It won immediate recognition and recently a reviewer in a London magazine said that he felt it might in future come to be regarded as Stravinsky's greatest work. Other critics feel that, dramatic and individual though it is, a great deal of the so-called development is not really apparent to the listening ear and the connections between the movements are, therefore, sometimes justifiable on paper, but in fact do not lead to any aural connection. For instance, the fugal subject of the second movement is based on the sequence of thirds used as an ostinato in the first movement but as the thirds themselves are not an unusual basis for ostinato, the strength of the 'development' of them to a fugal subject does not seem to be an advance when one is listening to the work as an experience.

There can be no doubt, however, about the dramatic impact of the work. Stravinsky's employment of strange forces (flutes, oboes, bassoons—no clarinets—horns, trumpets, trombones, harp, two pianos, 'cellos and basses, but no violins and violas) is masterly and his integrity of expression remarkable. He feels rightly annoyed with the composers 'who have abused these majestical "feelings"'. He knows that the Psalms are expressions of exaltation, anger, judgment and even curses. The three movements, the first two of which are quite short, are all

positive statements of Stravinsky's eagerness to challenge the composers referred to in the above quotation.

The first Psalm is 'Hear my Prayer, O Lord' and, according to the composer, was conceived in a state of religious and musical ebullience. The second and third movements, Psalm 40 followed by Psalm 150, are more interdependent emotionally (though not musically), for Psalm 40 is a prayer that a new canticle may be put into our mouths and the beginning of Psalm 150—Alleluia—is that new canticle. The second movement is fugal; the last a number of sections. Stravinsky is not averse to using the thoroughly romantic device of the cycle in his last movement and, after the final slow and poised Hymn of Praise, the reference to the beginning of the movement seems inevitable.

The affirmative nature of this religious work is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the impact it has made. Whether it is divided from other settings of these Psalms by as great a gap as Stravinsky would have us believe is doubtful. It is hard to cast aspersions on other composers' sincerity merely because of their harmonic idiom. Its sincerity is undoubtedly the thing that will make it live.

I

Exaudi orationem meam, Domine, et deprecationem mea : auribus percipe lacrymas meas. Ne sileas : quoniam advena ego sum apud te, et peregrinus, sicut omnes patres mei.
Remitte mihi, ut refrigerer prius quam abeam, et amplius non ero.

II

Expectans expectavi Dominum, et intendit mihi.
Et exaudivit preces meas : et eduxit me de lacu miseræ, et de luto fæcis. Et statuit super petram pedes meos : et direxit gressus meos.
Et immisit in os meum canticum novum, carmen Deo nostro. Videbunt multi, et timebunt : et sperabunt in Domino.

III

Alleluia. Laudate Dominum in sanctis ejus : laudate eum in firmamento virtutis ejus.
Laudate eum in virtutibus ejus : laudate eum secundum multitudinem magnitudinis ejus.
Laudate eum in sono tubæ : laudate eum in psalterio, et cithara.

Laudate eum in tympano, et choro :

laudate eum in chordis, et organo.

Laudate eum in cymbalis bene sonantibus :

laudate eum in cymbalis jubilationis :

Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum. Alleluia.

INTERVAL

During the interval refreshments will be served in the Surrey Room by members of the Concertgoers' Society.

SYMPHONY No. 8

Shostakovich b. 1906

Adagio

Allegretto

Allegro Non Troppo

Largo

Allegretto

"Life is beautiful. All that is dark and ignominious will disappear. All that is beautiful will triumph"—Dmitri Shostakovich.

During the Second World War Shostakovich wrote a trilogy of symphonies—No. 7 The Leningrad in 1941, No. 8 in 1942, and No. 9 in 1945. The 7th indicates the determination of a Nation united in its own defence and the 9th, which is the simplest of the three, is a victorious pæan after victory. The centrepiece of the three, No. 8, is the most profound and moving and reflects the tragedy and bitterness of war. It is clear that the composer has written in this symphony, one of his most personal musical utterances. It stands beside Nos. 1, 5 and 10 as one of his finest essays in the symphonic form.

The first movement begins with a long and tragic theme on the strings of the orchestra, new material appears in a section of uneven bars although 5/4 underlies much of this section. A straight forward development of these two pieces of material leads to a shattering climax and there is a very anguished period when the poignant string sound is hammered by a relentless rhythm which, in itself, is part of the previously heard auxiliary theme. In the Allegro section of this movement, the themes so far heard undergo a complete transformation, one of Shostakovich's favourite devices for the continuity of a first movement. After the transformation, a

formal recapitulation takes place, the cor anglais having a very important role.

The arch of the first movement and the elaboration which constitutes it demands a simple form to follow. The grotesque march, which is the second movement, is thus ideally placed. The mood again is clear cut and can surely only be associated with a victorious procession of cruel conquerors.

The last three movements follow without a break. The first of them is obviously a rejoining of battle. The simplest of figures beginning on the violas establishes that this movement is to be a toccata and throughout its length the crotchets never cease. This relentlessness is unbearable and it is supposed to be. After such a brainwashing experience, it is inevitable that the fourth movement will take us back to the human emotions of the first movement. It is in fact a passacaglia on the second subject of the first movement, indeed the theme appears 12 times in the bass instruments. Passages for horn, piccolo, clarinet, flute, all give the impression of individual as well as corporate suffering, and the funereal picture is allowed to stand before us with no real ending, so that the join to the finale is a real expression of the connection between tragedy and the necessary turn to hope. For the first time, we are in a brighter world. Shostakovich becomes simple and pastoral, with strange echoes of the wasted, scarred world around.

This is all really an introduction: three themes—a bassoon solo, a short section for violins and flutes and a lengthy one for the cellos are the material of the movement. A working out begins which includes a fugue, which in turn heightens the tension again, the climax is a repeat of the opening Largo. The terror subsides, a bass clarinet gives the darker colour to the pastoral elements heard earlier and leads to what must be the most beguiling coda in all of Shostakovich's music. Solos for bass clarinet, violin and cello and a short trio of bassoons, produce a soothing characterisation of all the agitation in the musical material of the symphony. When, finally, the high register of the violins seems about to end the experience, the double basses mysteriously add three notes which are the fundamental melody of the entire work. They are heard twice, *molto vibrato*, and then, once again, in augmentation.