

Michael Ward - Piano

Michael Ward was born in 1961 and educated in Altrincham, Cheshire. He began formal piano lessons at the age of eight, first performing in public when he was eleven. While studying at Sheffield University he became a pupil of Danielle Salamon. On gaining his LRAM and honours degree in music he furthered his academic studies at Birmingham University and piano studies with Margaret Newman. He has since studied with Louis Kentner and, having won the Fritz Gottlieb Memorial Scholarship in 1984, now studies with Vera Yelverton.

While at school Michael played regularly in public, not only as a solo pianist but also as an accompanist. Living in Sheffield for three years he became involved in a wide variety of music making; he was a regular member of both a piano and a horn trio and, in the role of conductor, he formed his own chamber orchestra, giving a number of successful concerts. In fact it was in Sheffield, aged nineteen, that he made his concerto debut performing Beethoven's C major concerto with Sheffield Symphony Orchestra.

1st Violins

Paul Jarvis
James Hyslop
Connie King
Colin Elton
Christine Wilkinson
Hilary Hurd
Jules Riley
Beth Riley
Nancy Attfield
Bill Hart
Barbara Clements

Violas

Cyril Love
Phil Turley
Paul Westwood
Geoff Haines
Hilary Dewar
Janet Thomas
Andrew Biggs
Chris Gosling

Flutes

Di Manasseh
Douglas Servant

Oboes

Richard Anderson
Ann Stubley

Clarinets

Di Cotterell
Monica Walker

Bassoons

Maggi Rowland
Michael Servant

Horns

Percy Cotterell
David Dewar
Julia Burton
John Meades

Trumpets

Mike Garbutt
Clare McArdle
David Knock
Jeremy Cross

Cellos

Sheila Freeman
Richard Painter
Glyn Davies
Sheila Moore
Peter Crawshaw
Alison Pike
Peter Edwards
Andrew Bound
Lana Wood

Basses

Colin Birch
Andrew Woods
Annette Simpson
Donna Jones

Trombones

Mike Coxon
Craig Sproston
Stephen Preedy

Tuba

Stephen Price

Timpani & Percussion

Liz Askew
Sarah Wood

The Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra's next concert is on Saturday 4th May 1985 in the Central Hall, Walsall, and will include a performance of Mahler's 4th Symphony, in which the soprano soloist will be Kim Cooper, winner of the BSM's Canoldir prize, from the Birmingham School of Music. The concert will start at 7.30p.m.



(43) ✓

The POLYTECHNIC
WOLVERHAMPTON

PolyArts

DUDLEY GREAT HALL

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Conductor : MARK FINCH
with MICHAEL WARD — Piano

Saturday 2nd March 1985 at 7.45 p.m.

Overture, "Cockaigne" Op. 40

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

The idea of writing an overture entitled "Cockaigne" came to Elgar after the enormous creative effort of Gerontius. Whilst relaxing in his extensive collection of books and poetry he happened to come upon the following:

"In Cokayne is met & drink
Withvte care, bow (anxiety) and swink".

(from "Land of Cokayne", an Early English poem)

It appears that Cockaigne has two connotations: first, an imaginary country of idleness and luxury - second, the land of Cockneys: London and its suburbs.

Elgar wrote the overture in the early months of the century and conducted its first performance at a concert of the (now Royal) Philharmonic Society on June 20th, 1901. It was promptly accepted as a brilliant picturesque addition to the symphonic repertoire. In a letter to his publisher friend, Jaeger (of Novello's) he described it thus, "It's cheerful and Londony - 'stout and steaky'".

The scherzando theme, with which the work opens, shows within a few bars how aptly it can be transformed into fanfare-like flourishes for the brass, suggesting the pageantry of London. The second theme, marked nobilmente (the first appearance of this characteristic direction in an Elgar score) is a typically wide-ranging Elgar melody with a solid bass line. As Tovey points out "rude little street-boys.. are apt in later developments to whistle it away in irreverent diminutions .. but at present its dignity is undisturbed". A third theme depicts a pair of lovers strolling in Regent's Park. The formal development that follows contains the marvellous spectacle of a Brass Band which comes "blaring down B flat street", cornets and all. Elgar chooses to recapitulate his themes in a quite different order and with great freedom. Another brass band passes by and the nobilments theme in full orchestral panoply ends this evocative portrait of turn-of-the-century London.

M.A.F.

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor

S. Rakhmaninov (1873-1943)

Sergei Vasilievich Rakhmaninov had been tormented for some time by an apparent cessation of inspiration, before producing the last two movements of this concerto. This burst of activity took place in the latter part of 1900, when the composer was at Krasnenkoye. In December, 1900, these two movements were performed in Moscow. It was not, however, until the following year that the first movement was written. This movement is, perhaps, the best known of Rakhmaninov's works; embodying the melancholy of Chekhov's words, "For a lonely man everywhere is a desert."

The first movement opens with a succession of sombre chords on the piano, leading to an arpeggiated figuration over which the clarinets and upper strings introduce the haunting first subject. After a short bridge passage on violas, the piano states the second subject in the relative major. The development ensues, leading to the recapitulation "maestoso alla marcia", where the strings again have the first subject with the piano providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The reappearance of the second subject in augmentation on a solo horn heralds the conclusion, there being no cadenza.

The second movement begins with an introduction on muted strings, clarinets, bassoons and horns; the piano joining in at the fifth bar. The flute states the principal theme which is subtly developed until a quickening of the tempo leads to the cadenza. This is followed by a short coda based on the theme given earlier by the flute.

After an introduction, interrupted by a cadenza, the piano gives the first subject of the third movement. The tempo slackens to 'moderato' and the second subject is presented by the oboe. The tempo then quickens again to a fugato development of the first subject, marked 'presto'. A reappearance of the second subject leads to the cadenza, after which a maestoso section rounds off the work to a brilliant conclusion.

Symphony No. 4 in B flat major

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- i Adagio - Allegro vivace
- ii Adagio
- iii Scherzo (Allegro vivace) and Trio (Un poco meno Allegro)
- iv Allegro ma non troppo

Barely two years separated this urbane and genial fourth symphony, "a Greek maiden between two Nordic Giants" as Schumann described it, from the "Eroica" symphony which preceded it. That period saw much of the composition of his only opera, "Fidelio", as well as the three Razoumovsky quartets, the G major piano concerto and the preliminary sketches for the fifth symphony. Indeed, Beethoven had started and then abandoned what was subsequently to become his fifth symphony in C minor, and, adopting a completely new approach, began writing the present work with a great deal more ease it might be said. It was first performed at the home of Prince Lichnowsky in Vienna in March, 1807. Contemporary critics generally viewed it as having "every fault a symphony could have", and even Weber derided the solemn introduction for its sparseness: a case of "Not enough notes my dear Beethoven".

Beethoven's mastery of movement, which is fully revealed, perhaps for the first time, in this symphony, is, however, of a very subtle nature. The drive from the adagio into the allegro in the first movement, the excited three minim groupings in a two beat context, the canonic theme at first between clarinet and bassoon near the end of the second group of ideas and the syncopated cadences show amply the novelty and subtlety of Beethoven's art. The development introduces a delightful cantabile counterpoint to a series of entries of the main theme. The movement now hovers on the threshold of B major. It slips down a semitone to the safety of a prolonged timpani roll before girding itself for the burst (now with an extra 'offbeat' bar added) into the recapitulation.

The second movement is a full-sized rondo, a form which is extremely spacious when worked out in such a slow tempo. A glorious song-like melody provides the principal material of the first section. It is repeated twice with embellishments that enhance its inherent grace. A still more subtle melody from the clarinet provides the basis for the first and third episodes while the central episode, with its musing on distant keys by the violins, is one of the most imaginative passages anywhere in Beethoven. In the coda the timpani recall the rhythmic ostinato of the first bar, whose throb underpins the whole movement.

In the scherzo movement, the trio section and reprise of the scherzo are themselves repeated once again. The vivace opening pours out a continually changing pattern of two note figures in a 3/4 meter. The slower gait of the Trio is beautifully controlled in the winds and for a brief period manages to quell the impatient strings. Never have three short bars contained more meaning than those of the coda in which the two horns blow the whole movement away.

The unsurpassingly adroit and playful finale has a boldness and power that underly all the grace and humour of the movement. Formally, it is a regular sonata form movement though with an especially long coda recalling the early symphonies of Schubert. However, it is all pure Beethoven, even when at the end, by drawing out its opening theme into quavers with pauses, it borrows an old joke of Haydn's, the excellence of which lies in its badness.

M.A.F.