

DACORUM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SUNDAY 16 OCTOBER 2016

RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL KINGS LANGLEY

Schubert's *Overture to Rosamunde* is, as you would expect, one of the composer's most delightful and melodious pieces of music, flowing effortlessly, it would seem, from the pen of this great Austrian genius; but the play on which it was based was taken off after one performance at the Theatre An Der Wien at its 'premiere' in 1823; it must be admitted, however, that this was (sadly) justified because it really was a very poor play by any standards – promising plot but bad writing! The dramatist, whose name is now largely forgotten, was a German journalist by name *Helmina von Chezy*, who did better with her libretto for Weber's opera *Euryanthe*. Weber had mixed feelings; he liked Helmina's writing but spoke of her as 'a suave poetess but unbearable woman' – anyone's guess as to their relationship! Whatever the background to *Rosamunde* we are left with Schubert's heavenly music – a small part of what he had written by the time of his death at the age of 31.

To the layman who is, like your reviewer, a passionate music lover Mendelssohn's music is always both a delight and easy to listen to; however this might tempt said 'layman' to assume that it is also easy to play - but he will stand corrected on that one! And even if it is true of the music it is not necessarily true of the man who was one of the most conscientious and self-critical composers of all time. It took Mendelssohn six years from its original conception in 1838 to its premier in 1845 to bring it to the public's attention. During this time he was in constant communication with Ferdinand David (a distinguished professional violinist and close friend of Mendelssohn's), consulting him on every technical and musical aspect of the concerto he planned. The result was one of the most popular and frequently performed concertos ever written. Our soloist, Francesca Barritt, caressed the work like the thing of perfection it is – a truly sensitive reading which brought tears to the eyes of my daughter who was with me; bravo, Francesca!

To round off a 'romantic' programme, after the interval DSO gave us Symphony no. 6 'The Pastoral' by Beethoven. This was well conceived by the composer, for two reasons: firstly it is the only strictly programme work that he ever produced. This may come as something of a surprise because, classical (though innovative) composer that he was, he adored the countryside and escaped to it from Vienna whenever he could; secondly to achieve contrast in his overall symphonic output the 'Pastoral' appears gently and charmingly between two fiercely exciting pieces viz no.5 (before) and no.7 (after). With Schubert and Mendelssohn spreading their balm over the earlier part of the concert perhaps the Pastoral appealed to Tom as providing a tone consistent with the rest of his programme!