DACORUM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SUNDAY 15 0CTOBER

RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL, KINGS LANGLEY

The overture to ‘The Magic Flute’ heralded a work which appropriately proved to be the

‘Swan song’ of Mozart’s extraordinary musical career; two months after its premiere the composer was dead, but this glorious masterpiece still ranks among the first ten of the most popular and most frequently performed operas ever written; and no wonder. It has everything: dramatic intensity, unforgettable plot, interesting characters, fabulous melody, wonderful outlets for all soloists and then perhaps, less clear to the uninitiated, mention should be made of the Masonic influences and those of the Enlightenment. Perhaps the message of the scurrying overture should be that “All’s well that ends well”!

Our next composer, Giovanni Bottesini (1821 – 1889) became a celebrated Italian romantic composer in the 19th century – almost by accident! Developing his musical talent at an early age his childhood ambition was to emulate his father who was a skilled musician, but alas his family was not well off and so there were no funds available either for purchase of a musical instrument or for music lessons for the boy. However, a few local scholarships for the Milan Conservatory were advertised; there were none for the violin (which would have been Bottesini’s first choice) and one only for the double bass, which he applied for in desperation – and won easily. He immediately displayed a remarkable facility on this instrument and his performances on it, and his ensuing prolific compositions (not to mention his work as conductor) secured for him a world-wide celebrity throughout his life. The *Gran Duo Concertante* for double bass and violin showed how much these two instruments enjoyed each other’s company. The violin, of course, sparkled in the hands of Paul Barritt, while Roberto Carrillo-Garcia caressed his unwieldy instrument as though it was a piccolo! Roberto, a naturally extrovert personality, exuded the pleasure he felt in making the double bass speak in its rich tones and deep feeling. On occasion, one felt that his double bass was playing him!

A fine performance of Dvorak’s Symphony no. 6 ensured that this happy concert ended on a flowing melodic note in the composer’s unique manner. Hans Richter, then doyen of the famous Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra had earnestly requested a further symphony from the composer’s pen two years before its ultimate premiere. A full performance was delayed for various reasons, but characteristically Dvorak worked hard on this commission and when he had completed the piano score he took it to Richter and played it to him, who was so moved by it that he kissed the Czech master after each movement! I would not myself go quite as far as that, but I can sympathize. The work glides along with melodic assurance but ends with a brilliant fanfare.