

SUMMER ORCHESTRAL CONCERT

Aeolian Sinfonia of North London - Thursday 6th July 2023, 8pm

Our Lady's Hall, Our Lady Help of Christians Parish Centre, Falkland Road, Kentish Town, London NW5 2XT

Anonymous, arranged by Keith Bramich: *Clarinet Polka*

The polka is a dance form in 2/4 time originating in Bohemia. This infectious and catchy late nineteenth century example is based on an extended arpeggio and usually played (as here) in B flat major. It is probably anonymous, possibly from Bavaria and known as the *Klarinetten Muckl*. It was likely later corrupted (via Bayerisch) into the name *A Humpfata*. Polish composer Karol Namysłowski later tried to claim authorship, calling it *Polka Dziadek* or *Dziadunio Polka* (Grandfather Polka). The piece is certainly popular in Poland since being used as the theme for the well-known radio programme *Lato z Radiem* (Summer with Radio).

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893): *Orchestral Suite No 3 in G, Op 55*

Élégie. Andantino molto cantabile; Valse mélancolique. Allegro moderato; Scherzo. Presto; Tema con variazioni. Andante con moto

Tchaikovsky's third orchestral suite, the longest of four, was written in April and May 1884, while holidaying at his brother-in-law's estate in Kamenka, southern Ukraine, the orchestration being completed in June and July at his brother's house in Grankino, Russia. Tchaikovsky originally planned to compose a symphony and a piano concerto but neither turned out as intended. After a prolonged struggle, he produced a suite, preferring the freedom it afforded, remarking that the title didn't matter. It contains several dance movements and a contrapuntal finale typical of a baroque suite. From detailed letters that he wrote to his patron, Nadezhda von Meck, a rich widow whom he never met, we know that he wrote the Scherzo first, then the Waltz, next the first movement and finally the Finale, starting with the Polonaise. The Suite was premiered in St Petersburg in January the following year and shortly afterwards in Moscow, conducted by Max Erdmannsdorfer, to whom it was dedicated to make amends for Tchaikovsky's absence from the premiere of his first two suites which Erdmannsdorfer had also conducted. It was an instant success, gaining universal popularity and recognition of his creative genius for its melodic inspiration and orchestral colour. It became his musical calling-card, Tchaikovsky conducting it in many European and North American cities, including the fourth movement in London in 1888 at the second Philharmonic Society concert in St James's Hall.

The Suite has four movements, the last of which is almost as long as the other three together. The Elegy in G major contains gently flowing cantabile themes. Great melodic facility is combined with orchestral colouration (e.g. the contrast between strings and woodwinds).

The Waltz in E minor, a buoyant dance tinged with hint of sadness, is full of character. It opens with a sombre sighing theme. The syncopated second subject typifies its rhythmic complexity. There is an intense middle section before a return to the initial mood.

The Scherzo, also in E minor, features the tonic triad with the addition of a sixth, cleverly merging G major and E minor. It's a fiery tarantella with incisive staccato rhythms and frenetic interplay between woodwinds and strings. Timbral combinations and tempi (alternating between 2/4 and 6/8) are constantly shifting. Again there is a contrasting central section but the frenetic activity and constant timbral shifts remain.

Theme and variations. The characteristically Russian lyrical theme played on the strings returns to G major and the tonic plus sixth chord. The first six variations, generally light in mood, alternate between contrapuntal intricacy in numbers 1, 3 and 5, and more direct lyrical expression in 2, 4 and 6. The first three are in 4/8. In No 1, *Andante con moto*, the melody is played by plucked strings with a countersubject played by flutes and clarinets. No 2, *Molto più mosso*, is feverish. In No 3 the melody is shared between the flute and the second clarinet with a woodwind accompaniment. No 4, with a central section marked *Poco più animato*, is in B minor with more colourful orchestration. Some may detect the *Dies irae* plainchant from the Requiem Mass. No 5, *Allegro risoluto*, returns to G major with a fugal version in 3/4. No 6, *Allegro vivace*, is a brief energetic dance in 6/8. No 7 contrasts with a beautifully serene piece in 2/4 for woodwind alone. No 8, *Largo*, is a melancholy piece in A minor scored for cor anglais (played tonight by the oboe) with a string accompaniment. No 9, *Allegro molto vivace*, a cheerful energetic piece, ends with a cadenza for solo violin. No 10 in B minor is largely for solo violin with some string accompaniment and woodwind interjections. No 11, *Moderato mosso* in B major, is for the whole orchestra. A drum roll and fanfares usher in No 12, the final extended *Polacca maestoso e brillante* -- festive and elaborate, and of symphonic proportions.

Nick Charles has worked as a professional saxophonist doubling clarinet and flute in the big band and dance band field. On the side, he studied classical clarinet privately, taking some lessons from Leslie Craven, Jack Brymer and Andrew Marriner. He conducts the Paddington Station Wind Band, which appears on Friday evenings. He also plays first clarinet at Blackfriars Sinfonia.

Elizabeth Ann Binks studied at the Guildhall School of Music and was awarded the AGSM and the Salzman Scholarship. She has worked with the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic, Scottish Opera, BBC Concert Orchestra and D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, and has led the Virtuosi of London.

Keith Bramich studied conducting with Mary Mogil, Paul Sarcich, Lawrence Leonard, George Hurst, Rodolfo Saglimbeni and Simon Johnson. He joined what's now the Aeolian Sinfonia of North London in 2008. He is also editor of the long-running international online magazine *classicalmusicdaily.com*

Aeolian Sinfonia of North London, active for many years, was conducted for most of these by the late Roy Budden, who founded the orchestra at least thirty-five years ago as the Kensington Sinfonia. Known as one of North London's friendliest orchestras, we rehearse on Thursday evenings during school term time. If you know of anyone who would like to join us, we always need string players, and often extra woodwind and brass. Future concerts will be listed at *aeoliansinfonia.com* - send us a message via the site and ask to be added to our mailing list.

Violin 1

Elizabeth Ann Binks (leader)
Bel Grainger
Fumiko Mihara
Mariko Yamamoto

Violin 2

Donna Chapman
Gita Croft
Sophie Croft
Piyarat Martin

Viola

Richard Clarembaux
Vanessa Hristova
Bronwen Taylor
Segun Victor

Cello

Jessica Bowie
Alisa Franklin
Jude Olabanji

Bass

Brendan Goldberg

Flute

Liz Valentine
Helen Barrett

Oboe

David Williamson
Léone van den Schrieck

Clarinet

Nick Charles
Nigel Brockmann

Bassoon

Bryan Ogilvie
Sam Christie

Horn

Henryk Sienkiewicz

Trumpet

Ben Wong
Nick Smith

Timpani and percussion

Ankie Postma

Conductor

Keith Bramich

The music should finish well before 9.30pm. At the end of the concert, please stay for refreshments.

Please, before you leave, donate generously to the **SanKTus Welfare Project**, which provides help to homeless and vulnerable people, the elderly and those with support needs in the local community. The cost of providing these valuable services is currently rising sharply. You can make a cash donation in the hall before you leave, or send a donation using the instructions found on the website *sanktus.org*

We are grateful to Father John Deehan, Liliانا and Our Lady Help of Christians Church, to Richard and Rose from SanKTus for publicity and refreshments, to Liz Valentine for writing programme notes and to various members of other local orchestras and the wider music community for their help in putting on this concert.