

exactly what sounds ought to emanate from it (and clearly they weren't...) I had abandoned my previous teacher and this new would-be piano Teacher registered like some kind of vibrant musical demigoddess with my young senses. I was hooked.

I did my best to satisfy her quest for aural perfection. Only decades later, with the benefit of my own grand piano, would I come to realise I had been doing wrong back then. But the guidance this Teacher gave me during that single lesson on Brahms was my ground-zero for serious music-making. Thus, my university time was spent not poring over scientific textbooks, but on teaching myself the violin and bashing through the Brahms D minor concerto inside the chapel of Wills Hall, Bristol. I only lasted there one year.

ORCHESTRA

Conductor	Ashley Hopkins
Violins I	Helen Crook, Emily Allen, Mary O'Brien, Sonya Bennett, Helen Lewis, Ashley Ayton, Brecon Carter, John Choi
Violins II	Alison Sorley, David Choi, Tsui-Wen Chen, Averil Griffiin, Fiona Murray, David Kayrouz, Roger Booth
Violas	Sharyn Palmer, Judith Gust, Pat Roderick, Neil Shepherd, Lawrence Yang, Alison Talmage, Celina Reyes
Celli	Janet Robinson, Maxine Cunliffe, Graham Falla, Hannah Jemmett, Luke Choi, Mary Greig-Clayton, Ella Cornfield
Basses	Andrew Kincaid, Edward Malan
Flutes	Pene Brawn-Douglas, Abigail Sperling
Oboes	Eugénie Middleton, Jemma Price
Clarinets	Julia Cornfield, Claire Turner
Bassoons	Jacqui Hopkins, David Nation
Horns	Janette Horrocks, Miriam Robinson, Michael Grimwood, Jill Ferrabee
Trumpets	Dominic Cornfield, Mollie Cornfield
Timpani	Jenny Raven

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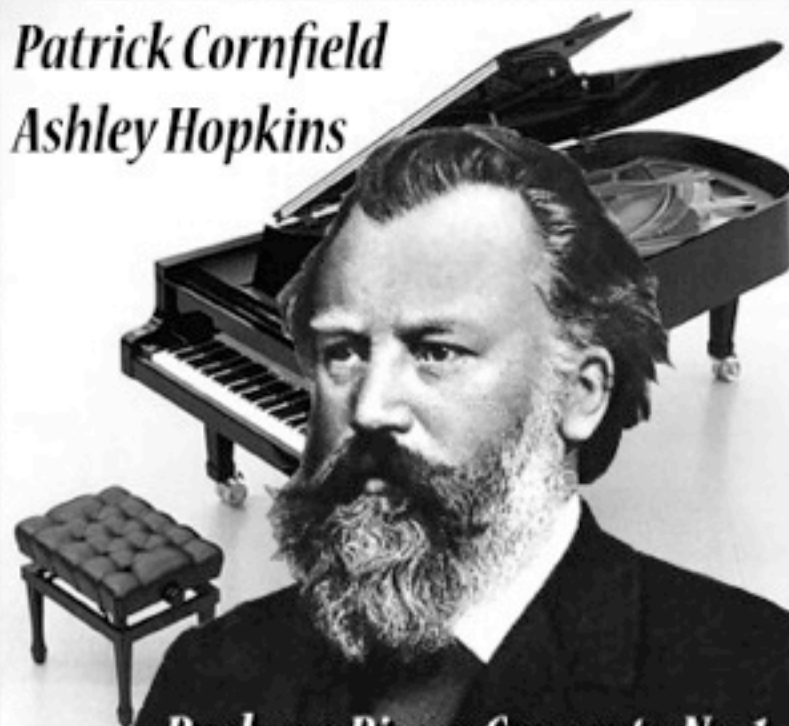


Next Concert: 2pm Sunday, 7th July, Harmony Hall, 4 Wynyard St. For further information or to be on our mailing list, visit our website: <http://dco.net.nz/>

Devonport Chamber Orchestra

Patrick Cornfield

Ashley Hopkins



Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1

Ravel: Pavane for a Dead Princess

Sunday 26th May, 2pm

Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport

Admission \$20, Children under 12 free

Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937): Pavane pour une Infante Défunte

Although Ravel and Debussy were considered the two most successful French Impressionist composers, Ravel considered himself to be classical. He was born in the Pyrenees, only a few miles from the Spanish border and that, along with his mother being Basque, gave him a fascination with Spain and Spanish musical forms. Like many of his contemporaries, Ravel studied at the Paris Conservatoire and although he did not write a large number of works, many of his compositions are considered masterpieces and are still regularly performed.

At the turn of the 19th century, the Pavane for a Dead Princess was commissioned as a salon piece for piano. Ravel, still in his early 20s, was surprised by the success of the work and when he orchestrated it several years later, it became even more popular. A pavane is a slow processional dance from Padua (Pava is a dialect name for Padua). According to an old Spanish tradition however, it was performed in church as a stylish gesture of farewell to the dead. Despite its name, Ravel's Pavane was not meant to be a funeral lament for a child. Rather, he chose the title because he liked the sonority of the French words "*infante défunte*." He also hoped to evoke the scene of a young Spanish princess, as painted by Velázquez, delighting in this stately dance in quiet reverie. The music therefore, is not elegiac, but more in the realm of fantasy and nostalgia. Richard Freed suggests that a more apt English title might be: "*Pavane for a Princess from a Faraway Time*".

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897): Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor (Op 15) (Maestoso, Adagio, Rondo allegro non troppo)

As a shy 20-year old, Johannes Brahms summoned the courage to present himself at the home of the famous Robert and Clara Schumann. To his relief, the Schumanns were the perfect hosts, and Robert was so deeply moved when Brahms sat down at their piano to play his own music that he introduced Brahms to the music world, pronouncing him to be a genius for a new generation. Clara also was impressed by the music, and also by the appearance of this short, delicate man with flowing blond hair and attractive eyes. She and Brahms soon began playing duets at that same keyboard, launching a relationship that developed into something more than friendship.

At that time, Brahms had written nothing but chamber music and piano pieces, but he had a strong urge to express himself also through symphonic music. In March 1854, Brahms traveled to Cologne to hear Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for the first time. This was pivotal in his development as a composer as it left him convinced that no-one could better such a symphony and it took him another 22 years before he produced a symphony of his own. Nevertheless, with Schumann's encouragement, Brahms gradually began to explore symphonic composition. Later, when he received news that Schumann had tried to commit suicide and was in an asylum, Brahms dropped everything and went to help Clara and her seven children. By that time, Brahms had developed strong feelings for the older Clara but wisely kept his passions to himself, and through his selfless support, demonstrated the depth of his love and respect for the entire family. Schumann died two years later and the extraordinary turbulence of the intervening period, including the conflicting feelings around his emotional attachment to Clara, left an indelible mark on Brahms.

One of the pieces that Brahms and Clara played together during this time of uncertainty was a big sonata for two pianos that he had begun early in 1854, shortly after Robert was institutionalised. This music would take nearly four years to find its ideal form. With the encouragement of his friend, the celebrated violinist and conductor Joseph Joachim, Brahms reworked the material from the sonata into his first major orchestral work - the first piano

concerto. Its first performance in Hanover, with Brahms at the piano and Joachim conducting, was well received, but in Leipzig a few days later with a different conductor, it was a disaster. After this, Brahms wrote to Joachim: "three pairs of hands attempted to applaud but were quickly stopped by unmistakable hissing all around. It forces you to gather your thoughts and increases your courage." He then made some revisions to the score.

The first movement is over 20 minutes long and of titanic proportions. It is epitomised by extremes, from the dramatic power evident in the opening menacing timpani roll and fierce unison orchestra theme, to the tenderly reflective lyricism of the theme the piano introduces before the orchestra takes it over. It is a monumental score that bears the imprint of Brahms' grief over Robert Schumann's breakdown and death, as well as the conflict and passion of his growing relationship with Clara.

Brahms often addressed Schumann as '*Meinherr Domine*' and matched the opening phrase of the theme in the concerto's second movement to the words '*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*' ('*Blessed are those who come in the name of the Lord*'). The poignant, reverential tone of this movement, conceived as a tribute to Schumann after his death, indicates the depth of Brahms' feelings towards his mentor and friend.

The finale is a joyful and rollicking rondo in which two themes are continually varied in surprisingly seductive ways. It ends with some surprises - after the cadenza, the themes appear again, 'winding-down' to accentuate the subsequent dash for the finish line, but this is then interrupted by a further, brief cadential display from the piano before the jubilant ending.

- Programme notes compiled by Roger Booth from several sources including Richard Freed, Barbara Heninger, Max Derrickson, Thomas May, Paul Serotsky and Phillip Huscher

Patrick 'Paddy' Cornfield writes...

I suppose doing anything ten times annually is worth commenting on. In my case, this includes camping in a remote field and playing piano concertos. But as I approach my 10th annual DCO concert, the mathematical paradox responsible for the 21st Century starting with a twenty makes me resist the temptation to reflect on my journey prematurely. Lest I tempt fate ahead of the true 10th anniversary concert next year.

The feedback I received regarding last year's programme notes - bucolic tales of amorous teenage failures - were well received by many Devonport folk, the notable exception being members of my immediate family. Yes, it was all true, and this is the next episode. Settling on Brahms as this year's composer to tackle reminded me of how pivotal he was in my being blown off course from the prosperous Harbour of Sciences, and towards the perilous Sea of Arts. It all started during my last year at High School, when I chanced upon a promising violinist in a practice room. We were both escapees from the games fields and hit it off. Mercifully, I considered her too young for the vacant position of 'girlfriend', which was a very good thing. Otherwise I would not be playing the piano today, teenage relationships being what they generally are (deep of emotion and of short duration).

My Friend had an inspirational violin Teacher, herself an aspiring virtuoso. This Teacher spent her lessons screaming, swearing, and using the word 'Darling' as a pronoun. I was deemed an acceptable accompanist for my Friend's inaugural recital. Unexpectedly, the Teacher decided to give me a lesson alone. She had been disturbed by my crude efforts to convey the opening lyricism of the Brahms A major Violin sonata (the part for piano being easily as difficult as that for violin). What struck me at the time was although she could hardly play the piano, she knew