

Southwell u3a Music Lovers Group – 06 May 2020 – Mariss Jansons - A Celebration

(YouTube playlist for the complete programme is at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kedlqNDpfdg&list=PLQHiO9b3Dnls3vGhyeCjB6eNWnPKbzuoo>

Or Search YouTube for the John Tebbs Channel and find under the Playlists tab as Southwell u3a Music 200506 – other u3a Music Lovers programmes from January 2020 can also be found there)

Mariss Ivars Georgs Jansons (14 January 1943 – 30 November/1 December 2019)

In any league table of great conductors, the name of the Latvian-born maestro Mariss Jansons, who has died aged 76 after suffering from a long-term heart condition, would feature very near the top. Indeed, in the first decades of this century he was frequently awarded the accolade of greatest living conductor. His tours in those years, to London and other cities, with his two primary orchestras, the Bavarian Radio Symphony, and the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, were eagerly awaited events and rarely did they disappoint.

Lacerating anguish in Mahler symphonies, blistering climaxes in Strauss tone poems, intense, finely wrought detail in almost any repertoire: these were the characteristics that defined his music-making, which consistently pushed expressive possibilities to their extremes. Even the heart attack he suffered on the podium conducting *La Bohème* in Oslo in 1996, from which he nearly died, did little to lower the emotional temperature of his interpretations, in which every nerve and sinew seemed to be strained.

There was subtlety aplenty too. With the Concertgebouw he cultivated the orchestra's trademark timbral qualities: brass that sounded creamy in pianissimo and refulgent in louder passages, fruity woodwind, and miraculously full-textured strings. Sometimes it was difficult to believe there were not twice as many cellos on the stage.

Jansons showed exceptional talent at an early age. (He studied in St Petersburg). Having won a prize at the International Herbert von Karajan Competition in Berlin in 1971, he was invited by Karajan, then at the peak of his worldwide influence, to be his assistant. Jansons' native Latvia was then under Soviet control, however, and the authorities ensured that he never heard about the offer. And so, it was that he secured his first post in the west, as music director of the Oslo Philharmonic, only in 1979.

But it was not until, in the early 1990s, he began to guest conduct other orchestras (including the London Philharmonic as principal guest conductor from 1992, and the Vienna Philharmonic at the Salzburg festival in 1994). His first major post came as music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (1997), followed by the appointments with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (2003) and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (2004).

Richard Wagner (1813 – 1833) Rienzi Overture

13:02

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Conductor Mariss Jansons

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kedlqNDpfdg>

Berlin Philharmonic's tribute to Mariss Jansons "Precise and Profound Rienzi"

There is much in *Rienzi* that points to Wagner's greatness. The overture captures both the showy orchestral brilliance and melodic splendour of grand opera, and it became a favourite of orchestras long before the opera disappeared from the stage (Wagner himself used to conduct it in concert). The overture begins with a call to arms and ends with a dazzling military march. The slow main theme drawn from *Rienzi*'s fifth act prayer is one of Wagner's most majestic and eloquent melodies.

Antonin Dvořák (1841 – 1904) Symphony No 9 in E Minor Op 95 (From the New World)

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mariss Jansons. 44:50

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_BlhOJp8RY&t=834s

1. Adagio - Allegro molto 2. Largo 3. Scherzo. Molto vivace 4. Allegro con fuoco

Sometimes it takes an outsider to point out what is great about a culture. That is exactly what Czech composer Antonin Dvorak was when he came to the U.S. at the end of the 19th century, an immigrant thrown into a new world and new sounds.

Out of that experience, he wrote a symphony for America: Dvorak's Symphony No. 9, subtitled "From the New World," has become one of the world's most beloved orchestral works. It also produced a melody that is a hymn and an anthem to what American music can be.

When Dvorak came to America in 1892, the Pledge of Allegiance was new. So were Carnegie Hall, the game of basketball and Edison's wax cylinders. Classical music in America was not new — but it needed a reboot. Already a celebrated composer in Europe, Dvorak was hired to run the National Conservatory of Music in New York to help American composers find their own voices and shake off the European sound.

At the time, American concert music sounded a lot like Brahms and Beethoven. Dvorak heard something different, in an unexpected place, as he told the New York Herald just before he conducted his "New World" symphony. "The future of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies," he declared. "This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States." Essentially, this was Dvorak telling white Americans that the future of their music resided in the people they had subjugated.

"It was radical, and I think that he got harshly criticized and really rejected," says JoAnn Falletta, music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, who has conducted the "New World" Symphony many times.

The music he found here included African American spirituals, introduced to him by a young black man named Harry Burleigh, who had applied to be a student at Dvorak's National Conservatory. "Dvorak chose a black person to be his assistant. How likely is that?" says Joe Horowitz, author of the book Classical Music in America.

Gyorgy Ligeti (1923 – 2006) "Concert Romanesc" Fourth Movement 6:57

Mariss Jansons conducts the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra Proms 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EblqOfBz3yc>

Johannes Brahms (1833 -1897) Double Concerto in A Minor Op 102 38:00

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mariss Jansons.

Anne Sophie Mutter – Violin Maximilian Hornung - Violoncello

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lyfvgBj210>

I. Allegro 16:50 II. Andante 7:10 III. Vivace non troppo 13:10

Brahms's sole concerto for more than one instrument is unique not only among his works, but also among those of the nineteenth century. While he was certainly acquainted with Beethoven's "Triple" Concerto, Op.56 (1803-04) for piano, violin and cello, his models for the so-called Double Concerto lie in the eighteenth century: in the Sinfonie concertante of Mozart and his contemporaries, and even earlier, among the Baroque concerti grossi so popular in the first half of that century.

The concerto was Brahms's swan song for orchestra. Brahms scored the Double Concerto for woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, solo violin and cello, and strings. After this work he turned his attention exclusively to the more intimate domain of chamber music, solo piano pieces, and songs, eschewing larger ensembles.

Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann: I have had the amusing idea of composing a concerto for violin and cello. If it is at all successful it might give us some fun. You can well imagine the sort of pranks one can play in such a case. But do not imagine too much. I ought to have handed on the idea to someone who knows the violin better than I do (Joachim has unfortunately given up composing).

He also had an ulterior motive in involving the violinist Joseph Joachim. They had been estranged for some seven years, and Brahms was hoping for a reconciliation. Joachim had been one of Brahms's closest friends and important professional collaborators since the 1850s. Unfortunately, his personality was often irrational, and he was prone to jealousy. In 1880, he had accused his wife Amalie of adultery with the publisher Fritz Simrock and, convinced of her guilt, filed divorce proceedings.

Appalled at Joachim's behaviour, Brahms took Amalie's part, writing a letter of support for her that was eventually introduced as character evidence when the matter came before the court. Because Brahms was both famous and known to be Joachim's good friend, his letter proved decisive in a ruling against the violinist. Joachim was publicly embarrassed and promptly severed personal relations with the composer. He and Amalie remained married in name only, and the couple separated permanently. It is a measure of Joachim's artistic integrity that he continued to champion Brahms's music despite their personal rift.

Some seven years later, the Double Concerto did patch the quarrel, and Brahms conducted Joachim and Hausmann in the premiere in Cologne on 15 October 1887. The work was coolly received, and while it must be considered standard repertoire, it has never caught the public imagination to quite the extent of the other Brahms concerti. The mostly likely reason for this oversight is practical. The concerto requires two superb virtuosi who can work together and make the whole greater than the sum of the parts. Similarly, the conductor has the added challenge of following two soloists.

The music is vintage Brahms, full of passion, rich with melody and superbly crafted. After a resolute orchestral flourish to open, Brahms placed his cadenzas at the beginning, a ploy borrowed from Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto. As in the Beethovenian model, the movement proceeds in more conventional sonata form.

The slow movement is the Double Concerto's happiest inspiration, with a luxuriant and warm theme delivered in unison by the two soloists and developed with Brahmsian richness by the supporting orchestra. The woodwinds have a particularly rewarding role in the movement's middle section. Brahms closes the concerto with a vigorous rondo that shows considerably more humour than we generally expect from Brahms, along with a dash of Hungarian spice.

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra Conductor Mariss Jansons

Johann Strauss (Son) (1825 – 1899) Schatz Waltzer Op 418

7:57

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4P54EycMh-Q>

Schatz-Walzer op. 418 is a Viennese Waltz by Johann Strauss II composed in 1885. The melodies from this waltz were drawn from Strauss' operetta Der Zigeunerbaron.

Johann Strauss (Son) (1825 – 1899) Tik Tak Polka Op 365

2:28

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vDfofQUk0E>

Bonus Track <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2O8Z6luKS4&t=755s>

Mariss Jansons and Daniel Barenboi Beethoven Piano Concerto No5

43:48