

Southwell u3a Music Lovers Group – 2 December 2020

The YouTube Channel (John Tebbs) can be found at

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHmgNAguuyQzuq4yHxm8_Eg

The playlist for this programme is under the Playlists tab as Southwell u3a Music 201118 along with other u3a Music Lovers programmes from January 2020. The link is at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAsnGr7sVdQ&list=PLQHiO9b3Dnls2QelmjnElyqWa8cX3AasE>

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) Havanaise, Op. 83 **11:36**

Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra, Liviu Prunaru violin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAsnGr7sVdQ>

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) Symphony No 3 in C minor Op 78 (Organ Symphony)

Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Conductor Riccardo Minasi, organ Iveta Apkalna

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GrO47WJKTI>

43:29

"I gave everything to it I was able to give. What I have here accomplished, I will never achieve again." Thus spoke Camille Saint-Saëns about his C minor Symphony, "avec orgue" (with organ), the third and last of his symphonies, and one of the crowning glories of his prodigious life in music. It is all too easy to think of the Organ Symphony as a perennial symphonic pot-boiler. It doesn't help that the Big Tune of the last movement is one of the most used and abused motifs of classical music history. Its over-familiarity means it is hard to recognise the real achievement of this symphony which fused what were genuinely cutting-edge innovations with Saint-Saëns's inherently classical, conventional (with a small "c") instincts.

First off, what we are dealing with here is something almost without precedent in 19th century symphonic practice: a piece cast in two movements. Saint-Saëns further reconfigured the basic outlines of the 19th century's symphonic masterplan with his use of keyboards as part of the orchestral panoply. And he didn't just use an organ - which makes its quietly dramatic entrance at the start of the slow movement - but a piano as well, which needs two players to get to grips with the virtuosic figuration Saint-Saëns composed for it: listen to the glittering carillon of sound these four pianistic hands conjure around the main theme of the finale, one of the most satisfying moments in the whole symphony.

The piece employs the progressive ideas of thematic transformation that Liszt had pioneered earlier in the century (the piece was subsequently dedicated to Liszt, who died a couple of months after the premiere). The strings' tremulous and ominous figuration at the start of the allegro, after the symphony's short, mysterious introduction (itself full of symphonic premonitions, only realised much later in the piece), becomes a teasing ear-worm the first time you hear it.

There is more symbiosis between the scherzo's main melody and the crowning chorale. The scherzo section is a kind of gigantic upbeat to the finale - fragments of its melody are disguised, transformed, and finally revealed. The slow movement's Poco adagio does, crucially, introduce the gentle, lowering presence of the organ as a key character in the work's drama, and it also acts as a moment of visionary repose in the middle of the sounds and furies around it.

There is something else, too. In the finale's coda, after a showily effective fugue - Saint-Saëns manages to do something in the symphony that it would take Sibelius to top. He warps time and space - the Theme of Themes is sped up so much that time seems to slow down. Capped

by the organ's thunderous bass-line - playing notes that the human ear can only just "hear", but which you should feel in the hall as more like primordial vibrations - the effect is both a masterstroke of time-melting symphonism, and an irresistibly joyous coda to the technical glories of this piece. (This effect may only be fully appreciated in the concert hall.

Saint-Saëns: Prière (Prayer) Op 158 **7:41**
Iveta Apkalna Organ and Valentino Worlitzsch Cello
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHxaihoFACE>

Not from the same concert, but as an encore to this programme, a chance to hear more clearly the touch of Iveta Apkalna in a quieter piece by Saint-Saëns with cellist Valentino Worlitzsch. This is from one of Frankfurt Radio's Stage@Seven lockdown sessions. (There are many more on YouTube worth exploring)

Stage@Seven: Mozart: Horn Concerto E-flat major K. 495 **19:30**
Marc Gruber Horn, Conductor Elias Grandy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtOkOYTM_5E

Allegro moderato
Romance (Andante cantabile)
Rondo (Allegro vivace)

The manuscript, written in red, green, blue, and black ink, was formerly considered as a jocular attempt to rattle the intended performer, Mozart's friend Joseph Leutgeb. However, recently it was suggested that the multi-coloured score may also be a kind of "colour code".

The last movement is a "quite obvious" example of the hunt topic, "in which the intervallic construction, featuring prominent tonic and dominant triads in the main melody, was to some degree dictated by the capability of the horn, and so was more closely allied with the original 'pure' characteristics of the 'chasse' as an open-air hunting call."

This concerto is one of Mozart's two horn concerti to have ripieno horns (horns included in the orchestra besides the soloist), though, in contrast to K. 417, the solo horn in this one duplicates the first ripieno horn's part in the tutti passages.

Berlin Philharmonic and conductors put through their paces

Camille Saint Saens Bacchanale from Samson and Delilah **6:58**
Conductor Gustav Dudamel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbkCfxnoY4A>

Paul Lincke: Berliner Luft Recorded at the Waldbühne, Berlin, 26 June 2005 **3:08**
Conductor Sir Simon Rattle
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liVW5r8J5Dk>

Georges Bizet: Farandole from L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2 **3:00**
Conductor Herbert von Karajan
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0nbcTDdJWc>

- Leonard Bernstein: Mambo from West Side Story** 2.:34
Conductor Ingo Metzmacher
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp33WX9xIGs>
- Modest Mussorgsky: "The Great Gate of Kiev" from Pictures at an Exhibition** 2:52
(orchestrated by Maurice Ravel), Conductor Valery Gergiev
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzIVO0DQHc4>
- Zequinha de Abreu: Tico Tico** 2:06
Conductor Daniel Barenboim
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_ZnJCMQqwo
- Frédéric Chopin Scherzo No.2, Op.31 Lang Lang** 10:10
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ImETzD5g9Y