

King John Orchestra Concert

Sunday, 1st December 2019, 7.00 pm

PROGRAMME

Conductor – Chris Jessop

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104

1. *Allegro* 2. *Adagio, ma non troppo* 3. *Finale: Allegro moderato – Andante – Allegro vivo*



Although Dvořák started a cello concerto in 1865, he never finished it, and was for many years unmoved by requests for one from his fellow musicians, most prominently his cellist friend Hanuš Wihan. However, in 1894, inspired by a performance of Victor Herbert's cello concerto (or perhaps finally worn down by Wihan's persistence!) he embarked on the concerto that was to prove to be his last major symphonic work.

The first movement is woven around two ideas that we hear in the opening passage before the soloist enters. The first is a sombre, brooding theme on the clarinet and bassoon, accompanied by the lower strings; the second is a soaring and lyrical melody that has been described as 'one of the most beautiful passages ever written for the horn'. The solo cello gives its own version of both themes, transforming the slightly gloomy first subject into something more dancelike, while the second subject is transformed into a grandiose orchestral fanfare. The soloist cleverly reworks the first theme in the lyrical style of the second theme, and of the second theme in the bold style of the first. After a reprise of earlier material, the movement comes to a joyful and excited conclusion.

While Dvořák was working on the second movement, he received news that his sister-in-law and first love, Josefina Kaunitzova, was seriously ill. He incorporated music from her favourite song of his, *Kéž duch můj sám (Leave Me Alone)*, as a tribute to her. The movement, by turns tranquil and passionate, features beautiful intertwining lines between the soloist and the woodwind, and comes to a peaceful, long-drawn-out, and elegiac ending.

The last movement begins in march tempo, with the main theme played quietly on the horns. A crescendo leads to a dramatic passage for woodwind and strings, with the orchestra and soloist taking it in turns to present the main theme, and eventually introducing another lyrical second theme.

The vigorous, dancelike feel of the music then gives way to the quiet, slow coda that Dvorak added when news reached him that Josefina was dead. Wihan, perhaps unaware of the deeply personal motivation behind Dvořák's writing at this point, tried to persuade him to include a cadenza at the end of the third movement, in keeping with typical romantic concerto tradition; the composer refused. However, despite the yearning and intensity of the solo part in the coda, the concerto does end in upbeat mood, with the full orchestra hurtling towards a triumphant end.

The premiere in London in 1896 was a huge success, and the piece has remained enormously popular ever since. The solo part requires a lot of technical ability, and it is this combination of solo virtuosity, beautiful melodies, and skilled thematic variation and development that has made it one of the best-loved pieces in the solo cello repertoire.

Soloist - Oliver Simpson

Ollie holds a Music scholarship at Abingdon School, and also attends the Royal College of Music. As well as being Principal Cellist and Leverhulme Scholar with The National Children's Orchestra, he also won Reading Symphony Orchestra Young Musician of the Year 2019, the Rohan de Saram Cup, the John Callan Trophy, and the Durant Cup, amongst others. He recently made his solo debut with orchestra, playing Frescobaldi/Cassado's Toccata. Other recent notable performances include as the soloist in *Kol Nidrei* by Max Bruch at the Aboyne Cello Festival, engagements with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Hallé Orchestra, and many other solo and chamber music concerts. As well as the cello, he also has interest in drama, composition, and conducting.

--Interval--

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), Symphony no. 5 in D major, Op. 107, "Reformation"

1. *Andante* — *Allegro con fuoco* 2. *Allegro vivace* 3. *Andante* 4. *Andante con moto* — *Allegro vivace* — *Allegro maestoso*



Mendelssohn originally planned this symphony for the 300th anniversary in 1830 of the Augsburg Confession, a key document in Lutheranism and the Protestant Reformation. However, political tensions and an unfavourable reception by musicians and critics meant it did not receive its first performance until 1832, under the title *Symphony to Celebrate the Church Revolution*. It was then not published until 1868.

The symphony contains echoes of many earlier works and composers. Most notably, Mendelssohn made use of two overtly Protestant themes, the hymn *Ein feste Burg* by Martin Luther, which has been called 'the battle hymn of the Reformation', and the Dresden Amen.

The brooding and dignified opening of the first movement features a four-note theme based on a motif from Mozart's *Jupiter* symphony, but also reminiscent of Gregorian chant and Catholic ritual. A series of insistent brass and woodwind calls give way to the rising six-note figure of the Dresden Amen, played quietly in the strings. Some commentators have viewed this section as representing the Catholic church being challenged by the new Protestant movement; it is certainly hard not to view the subsequent fiery allegro section as evocative of religious struggle. The determined opening, with tempestuous writing for strings, gives way once more to the Dresden Amen, after which the main theme is presented again in a more reflective, hushed manner before the music builds again to an assertive ending.

In contrast to the severity of the first movement, the second movement is a playful, lighthearted minuet based on a single rhythmic theme, with a waltzlike middle section. The third movement is more introspective and intense, with an impassioned theme presented by the first violins, and a simple accompaniment in the supporting strings, oboes, and bassoons.

The third movement dies away to a low G in the cellos and basses; this leads straight on to the final movement. A solo flute plays Luther's hymn, unaccompanied at first and then with more and more instruments joining in. The rest of the movement is essentially a series of variations on Luther's theme, with fugal sections for strings alternating with more lyrical passages. The symphony comes to a jubilant conclusion with the theme majestically proclaimed by the full orchestra, in a unifying and affirmatory statement of faith.

THE KING JOHN ORCHESTRA – KJO

www.kingjohnorchestra.org.uk

Conductor - Chris Jessop

Chris Jessop has been Musical Director of the King John Orchestra since 2010. He has previously conducted the Orlando Singers of Cambridge, Swavesey Community Choir, St Ives Choral Society and the Addenbrooke's Musical Society, and has also been the Choral Director of the Huntingdonshire Philharmonic Society. Repertoire conducted includes Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, Handel's *Samson*, *Messiah* and *Dixit Dominus*, and Elgar's *Spirit of England* and *The Music Makers*. He has been a GP partner at Cromwell Place Surgery, St Ives, since 1996.

Our Players

The KJO was founded in 2006 by parents of King's College School and quickly expanded to include parents from St John's and anyone else who would like the opportunity to play in an orchestra. There are no auditions and anyone is welcome to join until a section is full, but to enjoy it you will need to be (or have been at some point!) at least Grade 6 standard. We rehearse fortnightly on Monday evenings during term time. We have some vacancies in the strings and brass sections at the moment. If you are interested in playing, please use the contact form on the website at <http://www.kingjohnorchestra.org.uk/aboutjoining.html>, and we will get in touch.

Violin 1

Laurence Drake (Leader)

Frances Baxter

John Bungay

David Cope

Rebecca de Rafael

Julian Edge-Partington

Fiona Gabrielczyk

Alexandra Hayes

Elizabeth Taylor

Rosamund Williams

Violin 2

Heather Sutcliffe

Joanna Cargill

Esther Ford

Sheila Hunter

Sally Jones

Anthea Millar

Kit Stoner

Ann Winterborn

Viola

Sarah Steed

Catriona Ball

Josh Healy

Mary Kasanicki

Mary Reid

Ali Stone

Cello

David Carruthers

Giles Barton-Owen

Jane Carmichael

Jonathan Chapter

John Cheney

Helen Clayton

Anna Jackson

Charlotte Sale

Double Bass

Carol Patton

Alan Grayer

Flute

Robert Gardiner

Lucinda Czernin

Julia Smith

Oboe

Philippa Elloway

Mary Jane O'Sullivan

Clarinet

Penny Barton

Wendy Fray

James Loudon

Bassoon

Jonathan Gadsby

Alistair Brown

Horn

Chris Rogers

Sachiko Rocca

Holly Baker

Susan Fairley

Trumpet

Joanna Baxter

Leah Ward

Trombone

Peter Gough

Jim Rowley

Bass Trombone

Liz White

Tuba

Robert Sansom

Timpani

Ben Willets

OUR CHARITY TONIGHT

This year the orchestra is supporting the Addenbrooke's Charitable Trust. ACT's aim is to support cutting-edge technology, additional specialist services, vital research and extra comforts for patients over and above NHS funding. Their current campaigns include raising money for a dedicated ambulance service for critically-ill children, a new cancer counselling service, a family therapist, major trauma services and more. For more details, see <https://www.act4addenbrookes.org.uk>.

The orchestra chose ACT with former member Bill Turnell in mind, who received treatment at the new Oncology Outpatient Centre, funded by ACT, before his death in October. Bill led the second violins for many years with great warmth, encouragement, and skill, and faced his ill-health with bravery and good cheer. He will be hugely missed by us all, and we would like to dedicate tonight's performance to his memory.



Please support generously!

And finally, special thanks to:

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