

Celebrity Concert

Sunday 21st April 2024

The Tung Auditorium, Liverpool

Scheherazade

Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov wrote the symphonic suite *Scheherazade* in 1888. Based on the tales from the *Thousand and One Nights*, this is a work of symphonic proportions, having four movements. Originally, the composer intended to give the individual movements academic titles, Prelude, Ballade, Adagio and Finale, but after suggestions from colleagues, Rimsky-Korsakov decided to give them thematic titles based on the original stories.

The Sea and Sinbad's Ship starts with a bold and rather grim theme depicting the Sultan. The first hearing of the sultry violin solo takes its place, this is the theme for Scheherazade herself. She beguiles the Sultan and starts to weave tales from the 1001 Nights. This movement is dominated by a wonderful picture of surging seas and pounding waves.

The Story of the Kalendar Prince is a musical theme and variations, with many different treatments of a few simple ideas.

The Young Prince and Princess is a ravishing picture of the two young lovers, with sinuous themes always intertwining.

Festival, The Sea, The Ship breaks against a cliff is a vivid picture of jolly festivities followed by the return of the *Sea* motif. However, this takes on a sterner mood and there is the inevitable cataclysmic climax and final disaster.

The *Scheherazade* theme underpins it all, though, reminding us that it is only an enchanting story.

Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor. Op. 30

Sergei Rachmaninov finished his third piano concerto in 1909 with the premiere the same year in New York. Rachmaninov, himself, was the soloist. This work is famous among soloists for its ferociously difficult piano writing. Rachmaninov had huge hands and this has made things challenging for soloists that don't share in this great advantage.

There have always been the inevitable comparisons made with the second of Rachmaninov's concertos, perhaps a perfect partnership of piano and orchestra. In the third concerto, the piano always remains the most important figure. The orchestra often have complex and intricate music to play, but the solo part always dominates.

The concerto has the usual three movements.

The first movement starts almost where the second concerto finishes, with a simple phrase in single octaves. However, this doesn't last and soon the soloist plunges into myriad flashes of colour. The cadenza appears towards the end of the movement and is a tour de force of bravura writing.

The Intermezzo follows, based on a theme and variations pattern. Towards the end, the mood suddenly becomes urgent and forceful, leading directly to the Finale.

The final movement is fast and furious, with themes from the first movement re-appearing in varied forms. Rachmaninov never disappoints, though, and treats us to one of his most endearing sweeping tunes towards the end of the movement. The tempo now moves forward again, and the notes rush ever onwards to the very satisfying conclusion.

Peter Donohoe CBE

"I cannot imagine a living pianist capable of improving upon Donohoe's outstanding artistry" Musical Opinion



Peter Donohoe was born in Manchester in 1953. He studied at Chetham's School of Music for seven years, graduated in music at Leeds University, and went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham and then in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod. He is acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time, for his musicianship, stylistic versatility and commanding technique.

In recent seasons Donohoe has appeared with Orchestras in Dresden, London, Cape Town, Ireland, St Petersburg, Belarus and Birmingham. He has toured with the Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra and given concerts in many South American and European countries, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Russia, and USA. Other engagements include performances of all three MacMillian piano concertos with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, a 'marathon' recital of Scriabin's complete piano sonatas, an all-Mozart series at Perth Concert Hall, many international Concerto Concerts and a residency at the Buxton International Festival.

Donohoe is also in high demand as a jury member for international competitions. He has served on the juries at the International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow (2011 and 2015) and travelled from Alaska to Bucharest and Hong Kong as well as to many UK competitions.

The current season began with Peter Donohoe performing as a soloist with the LSO and Simon Rattle for four performances of Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie* in London, Edinburgh, and Bucharest. In January 2024, Peter returned to Philadelphia for performance with the *Ama Deus Ensemble* and then travelled to Dubai to adjudicate the 3rd Classic Piano Competition. He has a large recording portfolio as soloist and accompanist and has made over 22 appearances at the BBC Proms.