



DOVER MUSIC SOCIETY



Inaugural Concert

CONNAUGHT HALL, 9 OCTOBER, 2004

reported by Jack Woolford

DOVER HAS MANY PROBLEMS but public performance of classical music is not one of them. Thanks to Robert and Natalie Poole, the hosts of Yuri Tykonenko and the parents of Oliver Poole, we have had three superb instrumental recitals at Astor College, admission free, thanks to sponsorship from Dover Town Council in collaboration with the Dover Society. Now, with the additional sponsorship of Dover District Council, it was possible to fill the Connaught Hall with an eagerly enthusiastic audience for yet another free concert of world class standard.

Oliver Poole may be only thirteen years old but he has the strength and maturity of a veteran. Technically he is so remarkably brilliant as to be able to concentrate solely on interpretation. He played the Mozart Adagio in B Minor and the Sonata in F as though Beethoven had composed them. The five Chopin Etudes he chose (from a possible 24), playable (as presenter Nicholas Harby said) only by virtuosos, sensitively progressed from two in minor keys through one in the major and back to two more in the minor. No one I have ever heard better expressed the composer's overwhelming powers of joy and pathos. Never, either, have I heard more enthusiastic and prolonged applause.

After the refreshing interval, Nicholas Harby introduced Alexander Sitkovetsky, a Russian violinist of international repute, invited to his School by Yehudi Menuhin himself. He was to have been accompanied by his mother Olga, also of international status and fame, but at two days notice her place was taken by Australian-Japanese Kumito Ito.

Consequently their time for rehearsal must have been drastically limited: but it did not show. Ms Ito's pianistic brilliance - she was sight-reading - matched the mastery of the violinist (playing from memory) and the rapport between them was palpable. They began with Grieg's Sonata in C Minor and so passionately played was the first movement that they were interrupted by spontaneous applause. The sad slow movement and the tempestuous finale equally spontaneously followed.

Before they played Schnittke's (only recently dead) Suite in the Baroque Style, a fantastically convincing pastiche from somewhere between Vivaldi and Handel, mercifully without any fireworks, there was a remarkable addition to the published programme. Oliver Poole accompanied Alexander Sitkovetsky in performing "Granada Walkway", composed by Oliver himself in Granada. Of course it was phenomenally difficult (with glissandi for both of them, the violin in double-stopped harmonics). Of course it was saturated with Spanish rhythms and harmonies ... But it was a masterpiece in its own right: and it brought the house down yet again. I wonder if Oliver the composer will eventually outshine Oliver the pianist.

The concert ended with Sarasate's Gypsy Airs. Sarasate himself was a violin virtuoso. I doubt he could play them with more panache than Alexander and Kumito. The concluding Goblins' Dance lifted the roof.

I shall certainly sign up for the Dover Music Society (at 26, Park Avenue, CT16 1HD) for more concerts, free or not. I hope you will, too!