



# More Musical Magic

by Jack Woolford

The fourth free concert given by the Dover Music Society in the Connaught Hall on Saturday 1st October more than matched its predecessors in scope and execution. It was also even better attended. Robert Poole's policy of coupling young players with mature and established performers was again splendidly vindicated. Pianist Catherine Wright and cellist Katie Cattell are, unbelievably, still school girls. Boris Petrushanky, on the other hand, is one of the world's leading concert pianists, notably teaching master classes alongside Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Catherine Wright began, very unusually, with a late (and therefore demanding) Beethoven sonata movement and astonishingly followed it with an even more technically demanding Chopin Scherzo. Both were played with power and precision. Debussy's *Reflections in the Water*, however, could not have been more delicately and quietly contrasted, whilst Liszt's (prodigiously virtuosic) *Etude on the Paganini theme* made so well known by Rachmaninov's *Variations*, was breathtakingly dispatched. Not only is Catherine note-perfect. She is maturing into a sensitive interpreter.

Elgar's Cello Concerto inevitably recalls the acrobatic head-tossing performance of Jacqueline du Pre; Katie Cattell could not have been more different. Her performance (of the first movement) was physically undemonstrative, head still and eyes looking steadfastly forward, surprisingly almost never on the fingerboard, as little demonstrative as is possible to imagine. Yet the sound she produced, from the mighty opening chords across the strings, through the saddest lyrical pathos, to the flashing semi quavers of the climax were worthy of

Jacqueline. The Mendelssohn *Song Without Words* with which she began and the Hindemith *Meditation* (both requiring extremes of technical virtuosity) with which she concluded made a fitting framework for the Elgar.

I shall not be surprised, though delighted, to see both girls competing in the BBC's *Young Musician of the Year*.

The Boris Petrushansky pictured in the (excellent) programme is young and beardless. The Boris Petrushansky who appeared on the platform is a bearded giant of a man and a giant of a performer, a very Russian giant virtuoso. He began with Chopin's Polonaise *Fantasia*, as challenging a test as it is mighty in Polish national fervour, and followed it with three works by Scriabin who was taught by the same teacher as Rachmaninov as it well showed. These, however, were mere preludes to the three movements from Stravinsky's gigantic ballet *Petrushka*, which stretches the capabilities of full symphony orchestras. Some genius (Stravinsky himself? ... Petrushansky?) has incredibly arranged it for solo piano, with all its tempestuous changes of volume, key, tempo, rhythm - and colour - and it was assaulted and conquered by a superhuman virtuoso. Even this was not the whole of it. Insistent and persistent applause twice brought him back to play two equally prodigiously difficult encores, the first (I think) referring to Paganini and the second (I know) a fantastically unbelievable sequence of variations - on Rossini's *Largo Al Factotum* from the Barber of Seville. I never saw such prodigious finger work or heard anything to match it in seventy years of piano recitals. I pity Robert Poole. What can he find to match this in next year's three (FREE) recitals?