

Get
involved!
MORE DETAILS INSIDE!



RACH'S ITALIAN
POLKA



MR COX SHARES HIS
TOP TRACKS

Curated by Holly Mia
Garside

Edited by Charlie
Moore

THE SEMIBREVE



Opening the season with the CBSO: Saint-Saëns organ symphony and Fauré's Messe Basse.

Last week, I was lucky enough to perform Fauré's Messe Basse alongside the CBSO youth chorus and witness Saint-Saëns Symphony no.3 played by the CBSO and organist Anna Lapwood (who you can find on Tik Tok!). I was lucky enough to see the CBSO's new Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor (from 2023), Kazuki Yamada, in action conducting the Saint-Saëns. We were fortunate enough to be there to perform for the opening of the season. The last time CBSO youth chorus members (including myself) performed in Symphony hall was during Mahler 8 in early 2020, just before the lockdown!

Musical fact

Finland has the most metal bands per capita, coming in at 53.5 per 100,000 people!

Fauré's Messe Basse

Fauré's Messe Basse was a joy to perform. Fauré's Messe Basse was undertaken in 1881 by Fauré and Andre Messanger. Initially, the mass consisted of five movements ('Kyrie,' 'Gloria,' 'Sanctus,' 'O Salutaris', and 'Angus Dei'). The movements were composed originally for a three-part female choir and a soloist, which were to be accompanied by a harmonium and violin. Shortly after the first performance of the Messe Basse, it was orchestrated with the majority of the work done by Messanger; however, Fauré did score the 'Angus Dei'. The final version of the Messe Basse excluded Messanger's works and replaced the 'Kyrie' with Fauré's own 'Kyrie Eleison' and adding the 'Benedictus', which was based on the abandoned 'Gloria'. Fauré's version of the Messe Basse was completed in 1906, and the four movements were 'Kyrie Eleison,' 'Sanctus', 'Benedictus' and finally the 'Angus Dei'. These movements are written in Latin and are religious as "Messe Basse" literally translates to "Low Mass".



We opened the second half with the "Kyrie Eleison", meaning "Lord, have mercy." The piece begins with a solo part, performed by the soprano one's followed by the echoes of the rest of the chorus. The Kyrie, along with the rest of the Messe Basse, is soft and intimate. The second movement was the 'Sanctus' which translates to English as sacred. The movement starts again with the sopranos echoed by the altos. The movement begins quietly only to build up. The sopranos and altos join in unison to sing 'Dominus Deus Sabaoth' meaning 'Lord God of Hosts', and then towards the movement's finale, both altos and sopranos exclaim "Hosanna in Excelsis" that translates to 'joy in the highest'. The Sanctus is by far my favourite movement of the Messe Basse. I enjoy that both sopranos and altos sing together quite a lot in harmony (unlike other movements where it is mostly just soprano one's! Justice for soprano two's and altos!). The third movement was "Benedictus," meaning 'blessed'. The solo soprano ones once again open the movement. The rest of the chorus join later singing "Qui Venit in nomine domine", meaning "he who comes in the name of the lord." The "Benedictus" is sweet and has a warm tone to it. The fourth and final movement was "Angus Dei", which means "lamb of God." The fourth movement is a cry for forgiveness from God, "Miserere Nobis," meaning "God have mercy". The movement was closed quietly with the phrase "Dona Parcem", meaning "I will spare gifts."

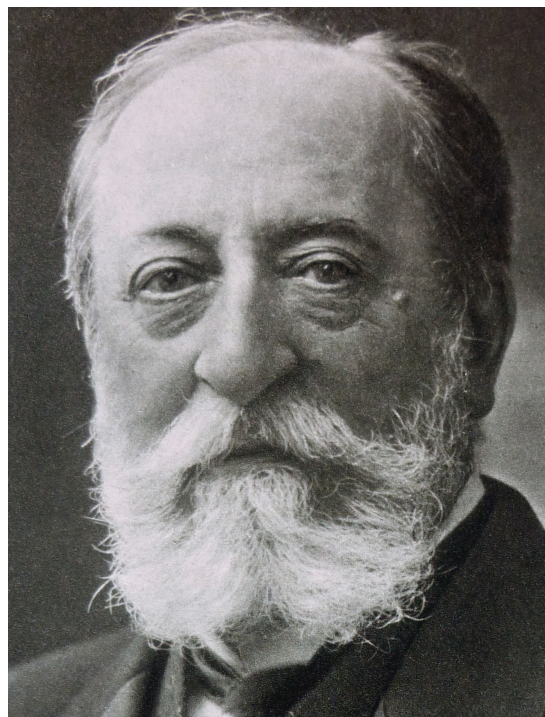
We were conducted by CBSO youth chorus director Julian Wilkins and were accompanied by the phenomenal organist Anna Lapwood, who are amazing and talented. I asked some fellow youth chorus members what they thought about the Messe Basse. Bahar Kayani 10S said, "I was absolutely exhausted by the end, but the performance was an incredible experience, and everyone deserved the passionate

applause that they received. Thank you so much to Anna Lapwood. She helped us to make it an exceptional performance that really reminded me how important music is if you want to thrive". Overall, I believe every youth chorus member had a great time singing the Messe Basse. We were all so happy and proud that we were able to perform to an audience and deliver considering the fact we only had six rehearsals before the concerts, two of which were on the concert days!



Saint-Saëns Symphony no.3

The night's finale was the Saint-Saëns Symphony no.3, often nicknamed Organ symphony due to the organ's predominant role. It was performed by the CBSO itself as well as Anna Lapwood on the organ. Kazuki Yamada conducted the symphony passionately and expressively.



The Organ Symphony was premiered in London in 1886 and has become one of Saint-Saëns most famous works. Symphonies were losing interest with the French public; most wanted to see comedic or grand opera's. This was due to the post-Napoleonic era France was in. The public wanted to lighten their spirits and be surrounded by a joyous or grand atmosphere. Most Symphonies by French composers like Berlioz's "Symphony fantasque" were much more appreciated in Germany than its homeland. Much of the French public was sceptical by symphonies composed by French composers believing that symphonies were "un-French", and most preferred to hear symphonies composed by German

composers such as Beethoven, but in general, symphonies were not popular. Camille Saint-Saëns wanted this to change. He was a child prodigy, but his early symphonies failed to impact; hence, he had not composed one in ages. Saint-Saëns wanted to write a great symphony, a symphony that would interest the French public and the rest of the world. Saint-Saëns' chance to create the symphony that would attract the French came when the Royal Philharmonic Society in London commissioned him to compose a new piece. The organ symphony was born.

The youth chorus was seated in the choir stools to watch the symphony, and we had a perfect view of Yamada-san and saw the passion and expressive nature he conducts with. He introduced himself to the audience and spoke about how he felt grateful to lead the CBSO and about the future, how he felt grateful to lead the CBSO from 2023. Still, he stated he would not be the future of the orchestra as the future is within the musicians themselves.

The forty-minute symphony was delivered with exuberance and delicacy. The first movement has a slow and gentle introduction delivered by the violins and woodwind instruments. The ominous pizzicato of the lower strings flows into the quick central theme of the movement. The themes are first played in major, and the quick semiquavers played by the strings and flutes enhance the tension only to build up to the theme played in minor slowly. The melody is sweet and has characteristics of the romantic period of music, and the triumphant notes from the brass section add to the grandness of the movement. The organ is first heard around 10 minutes into the symphony, with its sound resonating with the delicate melody played by the orchestra. There is no other way to describe it other than magical; there was no way you would have left the symphony hall without goosebumps. The first movement ends with a quiet *Niente*. The second movement opens with an energetic and dramatic string melody followed by percussion. It gives way to the main theme played rapidly and fastly. The movement is dramatic and fast and builds tension. In the first few minutes of the movement, the crescendo is massive and ends with quick, energetic flute melodies and a triangle playing (yes, a triangle, they are essential!). For me, the magic starts just before the thirty-minute mark. The organ plays a C-major chord followed by quick piano arpeggio's. The finale is grand and majestic, with

the cymbals thundering and the brass fanfares. The movement takes a dainty turn and builds up to a dramatic ending. The symphony reintroduces the main theme, and the finale is marvellous, with the organ playing powerful chords and the strings lively and cymbals crashing. The brass fanfares return alongside the timpani—a grand finish to a great symphony.

Once the symphony was over, the audience erupted into applause, and some even standing up. Yamada-san conducts with such expressiveness through the symphony, soft throughout the delicate parts and energetic during the majestic parts, it was impossible to keep your eyes off him. I thoroughly enjoyed the symphony, and I believe most did, with many youth chorus members stating that the organ symphony was going onto their playlist. Nikitha Pillai 10P shared her thoughts on the symphony with me: "Listening to Saint-Saëns Symphony No.3 live is an experience that I will never forget. Saint-Saëns said 'I gave everything to it I was able to give. What I have here accomplished, I will never achieve again'. He really did outdo himself. The opening of the first movement is divine and heaven-like with beautiful harmonies and an opening melody. However, the allegro has to be my favourite movement. The energetic and exciting nature of it literally had me on the edge of my seat. I would definitely recommend this to everyone". The orchestra was terrific, and so was Anna and Yamada-san, and they deserved every second of applause they got. Some may remember how when Yamada came back for applause, he jumped up to signal the orchestra to stand up, causing some sopranos to laugh a bit! Overall, the symphony was fantastically delivered by the CBSO with energy and enthusiasm! I believe that the Organ Symphony deserves a listen from everyone, and I highly recommend it. Nothing beats live music, and to hear the symphony live was terrific. After many months of lockdowns and musicians not being able to perform live, sitting in the symphony hall and watching the orchestra perform was incredible. I cannot wait to hear the orchestra perform once again, and I recommend you listen to the organ symphony, it has everything a symphony can offer, and I hope that you enjoy it as much as I did!

Trisa Sivavijayakumar 10S

Desert Island Discs

~Mr Cox~



Steve Reich - Music for 18 Musicians

Where Steve Reich sits in relation to classical music generally, I don't really know, but 'Music for 18 Musicians' is one of the most astonishing things I've ever heard. It's nearly an hour long, but it plays as one long track, with different 'phases', so I suppose it's technically one 'disc'? I learnt about Steve Reich from my older brother who played me this really weird looped-voice track. A bit later, I went to HMV on Oxford Street to buy him a birthday present and saw '18 Musicians' on a listening post. I popped the headphone on and ended up listening to the entire thing. I went to the counter, bought the CD for myself and had to buy my brother something else entirely.

Life Without Buildings - New Town

I still remember exactly where I was when I heard this band for the first time (the kitchen in my parents' house fwiw). Life Without Buildings only released one album but it's one of my favourite ever records, especially for the way the vocals - with their urgent repetition of certain words and phrases - have a sort of hypnotic, poetic feel. I once won tickets to a gig at Brixton Academy, and Life Without Buildings were the

support. Except I didn't know that they were on the bill and so I literally walked into the venue a bit late to hear, 'Thank you, goodnight!' as the band left the stage. They broke up soon afterwards, so I never got to see them play live - gutted!

Mogwai - Mogwai Fear Satan (Kevin Shields Remix)

Music shouldn't always be an easy listen. And so, one of my choices is this, 'Mogwai Fear Satan'. Most of Mogwai's output, over many albums, is instrumental, sometimes with excerpts of found audio thrown in. I chose this specific disc because it is right on the edge of where music meets noise. This remix is by Kevin Shields, whose band My Bloody Valentine are also ground breakingly-excellent, and also very, very loud. On my desert island I could pop this disc on the turntable, enjoy all 16 ear-mangling minutes, and then go for a little lie down.

Portishead - Glory Box

This is the best pop record ever recorded. I am willing to argue that case against anything and everything else from any decade, genre or artist. What makes it so good? A combination of Beth Gibbon's soaring, plaintive vocals, the meticulous and obsessively constructed instrumentation and the track's iconic slow fade in and fade out. Perfection. This track reminds me especially of listening to C90 tapes on the way home from school and especially my beloved Panasonic walkman, which absolutely ate AA batteries, but which could *automatically skip to the next track* which, at the time, was almost impossibly futuristic.

Belle & Sebastian - Lazy Line Painter Jane

Songs can sometimes tell a story, and conjure up a completely different world, for a few minutes at a time. Belle and Sebastian, and band leader Stuart Murdoch, tell these stories as well as anyone. This tale of an outsider, of lonely bus journeys and thoughts of getting away is set against a swelling music backdrop, that - like Jane - breaks free in the song's final moments. A lot of music - much it very poor indeed - get's labelled as 'indie' nowadays, but this is the real deal. Belle and Sebastian were the first signing to the tiny company Jeepster Records, who were (and still are) one of many independent labels which gives the genre its name.

David Holmes - Don't Die Just Yet (The Holiday Girl) - Arab Strap Remix

The unlikely pairing of pioneering Northern Irish house DJ David Holmes and Scottish indie-poet Aidan Moffat somehow works perfectly. There's words, but no singing, as Moffat tells us this story, capturing a particularly bitter-sweet vignette. And, like Belle & Sebastian's 'Lazy Line...', it draws to a close with an overwhelming wall of sound / wall of emotion. I remember that I heard this played on the radio - probably John Kennedy's show on Xfm - and then spent several days trying to hunt down. (I probably didn't have much else to do.) Eventually I got hold of the 7" at the tiny - and slightly intimidating - Rough Trade shop just off the Portabello Road in Notting Hill.

Dry Cleaning - Strong Feelings

It's a song about Brexit, but don't let that put you off! (Or Dry Cleaning's terrible band name.) It's also packed full of humour thanks to vocalist Florence Shaw's witty, slightly random approach to lyric writing. 'Strong Feelings' is also the only song you'll ever hear which contains both a description of Hans Holbein's 1553 painting 'The Ambassadors', and the lyric: "I've been thinking about eating that hotdog for *hours*."

The Velvet Underground & Nico - The Black Angel's Death Song

This song, and the album it's taken from, evoke so much of a time, place and attitude (1960s New York and the counter-culture). On this track Lou Reed's vocals and (Welsh classical musician) John Cale's electric violin combine to make something both incomprehensible and wonderful. The story goes that the band played it in a live show, whereupon their manager ordered them never to play it again. They immediately played it again, and were fired on the spot.

Thanks to Miss Woodward for nominating me to choose my desert island discs. Having listened to them all, I have decided to put them to an alternative use and lash them together into a makeshift raft like a middle-aged Midlands Moana. As I will soon be sailing off over the horizon I need to find someone to fill the vacancy on this desert island, and so I would like to nominate Ms Morris [psychology] to be your next castaway. Ahoy there!

GET IN TOUCH!



Do you have:

- A musical story to tell?
- A performance to share?
- A song, piece or album you love?

We want to hear from you!

A great opportunity to share and demonstrate your communication and organisation skills! Contact

Charlie at

15moore502@camphillboys.bham.sch.uk

or Holly at 17garsideh557@kechg.org.uk

Sergei Vasilyevich Rachmaninoff was a Russian composer, piano maestro and conductor of the late Romantic period. His compositions had a style notable for containing lots of expressiveness and rich, vivid colour. The piece "Polka Italienne", also known as "Italian Polka" is a piano work for two pianos and was composed in 1906.

The polka is a popular Czech dance and genre of dance music originating throughout Europe. The term 'polka' comes from the Czech word 'půlka' meaning 'half'. This refers to the short half-steps featured in the dance. The piece begins playing very softly (pianissimo) and delicately in the key of E-flat minor, and then modulates to E-flat major during the middle section.

I find this to have such a wonderful effect, as you can hear slightly sombre and solemn undertones in the notes during the sections in the key of E-flat minor, which then contrast beautifully with the more "jumpy", joyous sound produced when developing into the sections in the key of E-flat major. The sound of the piece feels so connected and flowing, as though the pianist is barely moving their hands from the keys. Like many of Rachmaninoff's compositions, this piece is very technically difficult, as the left hand is often, especially in the middle section, having to quickly move back and forth from one area of the piano to the other.

I would recommend that you listen to [this](#) performance by the wonderful pianist Kassia.

If you like this piece, you may also like...

- Deux Arabesques: I. Andantino con moto - Claude Debussy
- Little Red Riding Hood (Etude Tableau Op.39 No.6) - Rachmaninoff
- Waltz No.19 in A Minor, Op.posth. - Frédéric Chopin