

Epsom celebrates romance and revolution!

10 April 2025



Another great concert from Epsom Symphony Orchestra, directed and conducted by Darrell Davison with Christos Fountos the piano soloist. The theme was *Romance & Revolution*.

The concert began with Tchaikovsky's **Romeo & Juliet Overture (Fantasy)** - inspired by Shakespeare. The dramatic and forbidding opening, depicting doom and gloom, moved to a mood of lightness - a faster pace with dancing notes from the flutes - before reverting to solemn chords. The music captured the feud between the Montagues and Capulets. The love theme was special - lyrical notes first heard on the Cor Anglais, then the flautists' melody rang through, and finally the distinctive notes of the harp. Flowing and haunting chords of the ending metamorphosized from hints of happiness to one of pessimism and death, demonstrated so convincingly by the timpani.

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini by Rachmaninov was amazing. Christos Fountos played the piano with aplomb, his fingers racing up and down the keyboard. There were contrasting moments of lightness and solemn intensity. The lyrical melody on the piano was joined by flowing chords from the strings and then the wind, finally ending at a diminished pace on the piano.

Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 was a wonderfully deep symphony. A menacing theme from the cellos and double basses contrasted with the haunting notes of the violins. Spiky and unsettling chords added intensity, creating an ominous atmosphere. The serene notes of the flautists changed the mood - reinforced by the calming notes of the lower strings. Other sections were fast, with an atmosphere of expectancy and individual solo parts. The Largo movement was introduced by strings with moments of pathos. As the intensity built up, the mood changed. Was it anger? Or determination to overcome adversity? It resolved serenely. The final movement had a strident atmosphere which moved on to more tranquil waters. Unsettling chords and a melody with almost full orchestration concluded with triumphant notes, the timpani resounding through the hall at the finale.

Sue Haines