

Sydenham Festival Opening Concert

The opening concert of this year's Sydenham Festival at St Bartholomew's, Crystal Palace on May 22 brought two young soloists who have made a considerable name for themselves across Europe and who are now regulars of this memorable festival, which, like some of this year's Proms, sold out within a very short while.

The soloists in Brahms' Double Concerto were stunning young Russian violinist Sergey Dogadin, winner of no fewer than nine major international music competitions and cellist Maja Bogdanovic from Belgrade. Both of these young players have appeared at the Sydenham Festival before but this was their first joint appearance. With the Festival Orchestra (drawn from the best players in London orchestras) under Robert Trory, their performance of the Double Concerto was astonishingly impressive and mature - fully deserving the remarkably effective encore: a set of variations by Handel, arranged for violin and cello by Johann Halvorsen.

The programme began with a finely impressive account of Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, in which Trory's judgement of the superb acoustics of this church was admirable, and the programme ended with an equally powerful yet sensitive reading of Mendelssohn's *Scottish* Symphony. This unique and highly original work is still not fully appreciated either by conductors or by audiences, the perennial *Italian* Symphony overshadowing all of Mendelssohn's other symphonies, but the *Scottish* poses some serious problems for the superficial conductor - amongst whom Robert Trory is not to be numbered. The difficulties are encapsulated in the tempos and structures of the work, especially the highly original finale: suffice it say that Trory not only solved them with apparent ease, but also made the music flow effortlessly, so that this was a performance of rare quality, most admirably played. Absolutely excellent start to the Festival.

Musical Opinion