

Paul Edmund-Davies: Joint Principal Flute

Welcome to the depths of Leicester's De Montfort Hall. In today's deliciously continental episode we are going to behind the scenes on tour with the orchestra and also have the opportunity of talking with conductor Charles Dutoit.

Touring with an orchestra can be a hugely enjoyable experience and not simply from the concerts point of view. There is an opportunity to absorb some very diverse cultures, the chance of meeting people from very different nationalities, and of course not least of all, the opportunity to sample some of the most exotic foods in the world. But moving 100 musicians and all of their instruments to seven venues in five countries across eight days is no mean feat!

Roy Davies: Transport & Stage Manager for the Philharmonia Orchestra

Normally we allow a two hour 'get-in' at any venue; that's getting the lorry here, getting on the dock, unloading it, setting all the larger instrument's up percussion-wise timpani, and at certain venues actually laying the platform out with chairs and music stands. So I should leave tonight... between round about eleven and midnight.

We have been to: France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Luxemburg, Belgium and Eindhoven.

Frank Veenstra: Artistic Manager

To present the most famous orchestras in Europe is very important to us. The Gewandhaus Orchestra is always coming to us, the Concertgebouw orchestra of course, and the Philharmonia fits in that perspective very well. This was one of the orchestra's that was in my mind for years to invite to Eindhoven.

Tim Jackson: Third Horn

We're in the middle of a tour at the moment. We have just had two days in Italy followed by a day in Zurich, less than one day in London, and now we are on our way to Eindhoven, and we are going to be going to Amsterdam the following day and then Berlin.

In September, we are away for more than half of the month and I think in November and December we are actually in London for the whole of those two months. We spend a quarter of the year abroad, a quarter of the year in London and the remainder of the time, touring around the UK. I don't think there are any orchestras in London who can survive from only playing in London, so from that point of view the touring is very important. Obviously it is a big source of income for the orchestra and therefore for the individual members personally as well. The really important thing about touring is the chance to get to play in all these amazing concert halls around the world. This week for instance to be playing in the Philharmonia in Berlin, going to Amsterdam to the Concertgebouw, but the chance to play in these fantastic halls around Europe is one of the major things about touring for an Orchestra.

Gordon Laing: Principal Contra Bassoon

We've been to Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Guadaloupe, and the States quite a few times, a lot around Europe obviously... haven't been to Finland.

I think it's vital to be establishing contacts with audiences. To meet people who will hopefully buy the CD's you make, it is good exposure and you get to play in some incredible concert halls which is wonderful because a lot of these things you just read about. You read about the fantastic acoustics about the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam or the Musikverein in Vienna, and then you actually get a chance to play in a lot of these halls that have so much history.

With this particular tour, because we need second instruments, (as our instruments travel ahead of us), the van could not go straight from London to Milan overnight, so we had to have spare instruments which is why we went off two days early. Mansel just books us, and chases after us to make sure we arrive, so we don't usually see too much of Mansel.

Mansel Bebb: Personnel Manager

My title is 'Personnel Manager' and it is my responsibility to book them and to make sure they turn up and do the dates. Nowadays because of this speed that everything happens in the world, the tours are harder. The stress for the players, for everyone (me included of course) feel very fatigued, but I don't have to play in the concert at night and they do. It is amazing, the high quality and standard that this orchestra keeps up.

Paul Edmund-Davies:

If all things French interest you, The Philharmonia has some wonderful concerts coming up in October. With incredible textures, vibrant colours, and a positive pyrotechnic display of technique, these concerts truly represent a *menu gourmande* of music. Just think, Marco Pierre White, Jamie Oliver or Raymond Blanc and you won't be far away from the music equivalent. Conductor Charles Dutoit has put together some hugely flavoursome programmes, featuring the very contrasting styles of the impressionist composers Debussy and Ravel.

Charles Dutoit: Conductor

At the end of the 19th Century the whole thing started with the Painters; a new way of painting with less precision and more impressions. There were so many great painters at this time that obviously influenced enormously the style of all the country, including of course, the musicians.

Ravel was born in the Basque country and not born in Spain. But obviously he wrote a lot of music influenced by the Spanish rhythms. So did Debussy in Iberia that we are going to play which is a central part of the three images. It was important for these composers to find their own way as a reaction against the huge volume of the music in the late 19th Century orchestra.

If you play in a hall with 2,000 people it doesn't have to be fortissimo all the way because the sound can float and shimmer which goes very well.

I studied with Ernest Ansermet in Genève. He met of course, all these composers; Ravel, Debussy, and of course Stravinsky and de Falla and so on. When I was in the Academy in Genève, I went to his rehearsals for three years and heard all of this

repertoire and the way it was rehearsed and understood. I must say that all my experiences that I have with the Philharmonia have been wonderful in this kind of music. A lot of this music is played in the entire world, but not necessarily very well. It requires a lot of work. Debussy even more so as Debussy is very fragile whereas Ravel is so well orchestrated. When it is played, more or less well it is still enjoyable for everyone, but when it is played really well, all the musicians get deeply involved with the spirit of the piece and this is when the genius of Debussy comes out. I think this is very rewarding for everyone.

It is actually a great programme as you have two of the most important pieces by Debussy but of course I know that if I finish a concert the public will probably not be satisfied. So if you play *La Valse* by Ravel after that of course, everyone is happy. I think it is also a good way to think about how the public will react, not necessarily to have a big success, but I want everyone to be happy.

Paul Edmund-Davies:

You can see and hear us perform concerts of Ravel and Debussy here in Leicester on the 10th of October, in the Festival hall on the 11th and 18th of October, as well as in Southend on the 13th and finally Basingstoke on the 17th.

October is also an incredibly busy month for the Orchestra, as we have concerts with Vladimir Ashkenazy in Plymouth, Warwick and in London at the end of the month, and then after that we have concerts in Bedford, Croydon and London again with Leif Segerstam, starting in late October and finishing in the first two and a half weeks on November.

For more information on these concerts, and to book tickets for London call free phone 0800 652 6717 or visit www.philharmonia.co.uk. On the 15th October advanced booking will open for our season of concerts for spring and summer at the Royal Festival Hall. Here now are some of our player's highlights...

David Cohen: Joint Principal Cello

The one concert that probably will stand out, for me at least, is the Dudamel concert which is happening in June. We are doing Shostakovich symphony 5 and Tchaikovsky symphony number 5 which are actually one of the first works that I actually did in the orchestra when I joined. They are not just amazing works, but to me they remind me of my very first experience with the orchestra and I am very much looking forward to it. Dudamel is a fantastic conductor with a great programme; I mean it is just going to be fantastic.

Clare Thompson: No. 3 First Violin

I am looking forward to many things, but particularly the Maazel patch at the end of June which is a Brahms cycle. We are playing all four symphonies by Brahms, and a German requiem which is absolutely beautiful and he is just a terrific conductor, I mean he is one of the best in the world! We are just so lucky to be working with him and the Brahms symphonies are just wonderful to play. I actually can't wait until the end of June!

Christian Jones: Principal Bass Trombone

In May and June we have got a lot of Vaughan Williams repertoire coming up with Richard Hickox. What I like about Vaughan Williams is that he seems to write very idiomatically for the instruments. He has a real understanding, certainly in the brass of what is going on. It is just an absolute pleasure to listen to, and it seems to work very well with big orchestras so I will certainly be looking forward to the Vaughan Williams symphonies.

Sam Burstin: Viola

Well there is a great array of concerts coming up, one's with Ricardo Muti and Esa-Pekka Salonen but something I am really looking forward to is the series of concerts with sir Charles Mackerras who I think is just an absolutely brilliant conductor! We are doing some fantastic pieces with Mackerras. There is loads of Strauss who is one of my favourite composers and a couple of concertos; I think Beethoven and Mozart Piano concertos with some wonderful soloist's. To top it all off, we are doing Beethoven's third symphony, the Eroica which is one of *the* great pieces of music I think.

Paul Edmund-Davies:

We very much hope you have enjoyed this podcast, our second in a series of six. You can actually see longer versions of some of the features of the podcast via www.philharmonia.co.uk where you can also book tickets and discover more about the orchestra. Our next Podcast will be released at the end of October and you can subscribe to this either via the Philharmonia website or through iTunes. We very much look forward to seeing you again.