



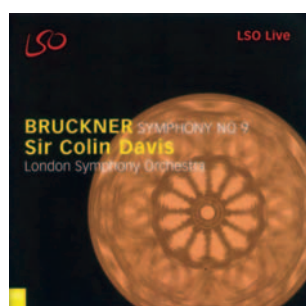
Live from LONDON!

Get choice seats at the Barbican and enjoy the legendary London Symphony Orchestra in concert — no air tickets required

Orchestras are doing it for themselves, making records that critics sit up and listen to, even when record labels refuse to. While big-time record companies were putting money into glitzy Billboard bombshell acts like Bond and Vanessa Mae, world-famous London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), which turns 100 in 2004, was taking matters into its own hands when it decided to produce CDs under the LSO Live label.

Two years and two Grammy's later, LSO Live is making waves. Its ongoing Berlioz series (which includes *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Beatrice & Benedict* and *Damnation of Faust*) has paid off handsomely, with the four-CD epic *Les Troyens* garnering two Grammys (Best Classical and Best Opera Recording). LSO Live received Gramophone's Record of the Month & Editors Choice Awards for Rostropovich's *Shostakovich Symphony Nr 11* and two Classical Brit awards. Its recordings of Dvorak's symphonies and Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* also demand hearing.

LSO Live has a steadily growing discography, which you can browse through and purchase direct from www.lso.co.uk. Each disc is priced mid-range at £4.99 (roughly RM30).



Bruckner, Symphony Nr 9
Sir Colin Davis, London Symphony Orchestra
LSO Live 0023

Bruckner's final symphony, unfinished at the time of his death, is a towering reflection of his spiritual faith and his impending rendezvous with God. Whatever the Finale might

have been, the completed first three movements, in a symmetrical slow-fast-slow form, make powerful listening and

as the last bars of the magnificent Adagio die away, there is no sense that there is any unfinished business. Colin Davis builds a magnificent edifice of emotion from this great score, a cathedral in sound not unlike the greatness and mystery of Gaudi's unfinished one in Barcelona, awe-inspiring, jagged, entrancing.

Davis leads the LSO through a recording that is breathtaking, capturing the full grandeur of this great orchestra in the powerful climaxes that dot the soundscape, and reverent in the meditative sections that hold it all together. Davis delivers with his usual poise and dignity that makes his *Elgar* and *Sibelius* distinct.

The Scherzo is fearsome in its brutality, the Finale shimmering in its pinnacles of blazing brass fanfares amidst pools of calm and nostalgia. In Bruckner's case, it is a final statement packed with complex emotions and unanswered questions, and Davis in this gripping performance digs deep for answers in this great traversal of human experience.



Shostakovich, Symphony Nr 11
Mstislav Rostropovich, London Symphony Orchestra
LSO Live 0030

This is perhaps Shostakovich's most cinematic of all scores, a 72-minute, long documentary film without pictures. A tale told in pure sound. Long considered a piece of Communist poster art praising the Revolution, the crumbling of the Iron Curtain around Shostakovich's art has now reinstated this work as a Mussorgskian epic that brims with the trials and sorrows of the Russian soul.

And it is perhaps for its vivid story-telling that Rostropovich succeeds in delivering a Shostakovich symphony of immense

POCOAPOCO (bit by bit)

Andante, Andante!

As the CD market possibly approaches its winter years, all eyes have been on the Internet to provide an alternative channel for musicians to reach out to their audience. Internet music was given a big boost when Napster hit the scene, but its fall has been equally spectacular as the heavy hand of capitalism seized the judicial hammer.

Suffocated by the limitations of high-gloss CD production and the equally bottom line-driven radio industry, classical music has sought new

escape routes. Internet radio and audio streaming is the promised land which has caught everyone's ear, big or small.

The London Symphony Orchestra's search for new avenues has led them to a partnership with classical music website www.andante.com to provide audio streaming of up to 200 hours of archived LSO recordings as well as the latest concert performances.

How successful such a delivery model is for classical music has yet to be proven, but mouths are watering on both sides of the cash register. For us listening folks, until broadband becomes truly affordable, internet radio may be far from staple listening yet. Just think of those astronomical phone bills you will have to deal with at the end of the month...



power. Forget the subtitles to each movement, Rostropovich reveals the dark secrets of each scene, the London Symphony, by now an intimate partner of the veteran cellist, adding the right touches of colour and drama.

The work opens with a most evocative first movement, a chilly, motionless landscape where distant trumpet tattoos sound in the deathly silence and prison songs echo. A rustle of strings builds into a stormy development but the restlessness, finally spent, succumbs to the oppressive eerie silence of the opening. The second movement is taken with blistering ferocity, its thundering military percussion and trumpets trampling all over the orchestra until, as if in slow motion, the clash of powers reaches a frightening climax.

A mournful, desolate, slow movement built on prison songs follows like a funeral procession, rudely interrupted by a fearsome Finale with its brash declamations and stabs of percussion, rushing strings and woodwinds tumbling towards a clamorous finish, with alarm bells ringing to warn future generations to stand firm against the evils of tyranny.

The live atmosphere of this performance is thrilling, every moment captured intimately as if you were in the best seat in the house!

CH Loh is not struggling with unfinished business

ROOTS

Three years ago, Penang-born Chew Hee Chiat caused a minor scene when he was placed third at the International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition. Of the seven judges commissioned by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, four, who were composers, found Chew's Orchestral Suite No 2 severely lacking in technique and uniformity. "I am trained as a conductor and not a composer after all," admits Chew.

The other three judges — conductors — were fascinated by the composition's unique voice and the fact that it had a little of everything. "The non-uniformity is our very own Malaysian style!" exclaims Chew. "A lot of people abroad are actually envious of [our] mix of races and voices."

At the performance of this work at the Dewan Filharmonik Petronas last Monday, it had a famil-

Despite its name, the PCCO is home-brewed

iar kampung lyricism to it. Chew's use of Chinese instruments to capture vocal accents certainly recalled vivid and raucous Malaysians. The rousing end with its layers of sounds, sang like a chorus from Petaling Street.

Chew was appointed musical director of the Professional Culture Chinese Orchestra (PCCO) in 1996. The PCCO, under Chew, is intent on exploring a more Malaysian sound. "Our roots may be in China," says Chew, "but our real roots are in Malaysia."

The PCCO started in 1988 when 10 members of a clan-based Chinese orchestra left to form their own orchestra. The 10 then decided to start their own shop selling Chinese instruments with the aim of forming a self-supporting professional orchestra. The shop, Zhuang Yi, literally meaning "professional culture", can still be found at Pudu.

A 19-year-old Chew came upon that shop of

instruments. While he was in secondary school in Penang, Chew had picked up the dizi (bamboo flute), and had been looking to get into a Kuala Lumpur orchestra. Seeing the musicians in the midst of preparing for their first major concert, Chew joined them for a rehearsal and he's been with them since, except for the period when he left for the US to pursue a course in computer science to please his father. This didn't stop him from taking a minor in cello. After his degree, Chew



Chew: A lot of people abroad are actually envious of [our] mix of races and voices

went on to do his Master's in Conducting at the University of South Carolina.

During a summer break in 1993, he was invited by the PCCO to be a guest conductor. This led to his subsequent appointment as musical director three years later. In June last year, he received his greatest honour yet: assistant conductor of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (HKCO).

The PCCO, unlike the HKCO, consists largely of amateurs. They are essentially an ethnic classical outfit trying to be relevant to the geography and the times. That night at the Petronas concert hall, they were aided by 12 musicians from the Xian Music Conservatory in China. The music was by turns, as lively and boisterous as a Chinese New Year celebration and as heartbreaking with songs about lovers in exile. The PCCO has in effect become the first local orchestra to play in the Petronas concert hall. The first orchestra with mainly Malaysian musicians, mind you.

Pang Khee Teik is a semi-professional listener