

# Maidstone Symphony Orchestra

Mote Hall, Maidstone, Saturday 30 November 2019

Review by Dr Brian Hick / [www.larkreviews.co.uk](http://www.larkreviews.co.uk)

It was obviously disappointing that John Lill, the Society's President, was unable to perform Brahms' *Second Piano Concerto* but there could surely be no complaints about the barn-storming reading of Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto* which Alexander Ullman gave us. With the orchestra on fine form, they seemed to galvanise each other in a way which was highly exhilarating as well as musically impressive. In the opening movement, Alexander Ullman had an aggressive edge to his playing, with snapped phrases and real attack. If there was a greater sense of lightness in the slow movement, the centre section came across as skittishly improvisatory - a real skill in itself. The easy flowing melodic lines of the finale built with fire and resolution to a magnificent climax which was, understandably, received with an outpouring of applause and cheering.



Not that the first half of the evening had been unimpressive. It opened with a fiery, hard-driven, reading of Beethoven's Overture to *Fidelio*. Brian Wright seems to like driving his players hard and this was a good example of the quality it can arouse.

The other main work was Schumann's *Fourth Symphony*. If this seems very Brahmsian, which it does, it is more likely that Brahms is learning from the older composer, and a close friend to boot, than the other way round. Brian Wright ensured that the work ran through as a continuous whole, moving seamlessly across the many shifts in tone and texture, to say nothing of the melodic developments. That the final movement is little more, technically, than a shift into the major is a sign of Schumann's mastery of orchestration by the time he came to revise the work. It blazed with authority, the trumpets giving us a real thrill as the climax approached, and the horns - now well focussed - warmed the final pages.

We have to wait until the new-year for the next concert on 1 February which brings us works by Britten, Weber, Malcolm Arnold and Elgar.