



## Norman Hay (aka *Rathcol*) concert review

### Concert – Saturday, 21 April 1934

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#### **GREAT VIOLINIST.**

#### **MISS D'ARANYI IN BELFAST.**

#### **FINE ORCHESTRAL PLAYING.**

It was a Tchaikovsky evening at the Ulster Hall on Saturday. To arrive at a just appraisal of this music we must take into account that Tchaikovsky was a Slav of the Slavs, who went to Germany to learn the classic tradition, and who, in the process, imbibed also the sweet oil which is at the root of all Teutonic sentiment. How that oil, inborn in men like Beethoven or Schubert, and yet more controlled by their higher fortitude of soul, reacted upon the temper of the Slav is one of the sorry chances of musical history; and one is prone to speculate as to what better the Slav might have been had he never gone west of the Baltic for study.

I have little heart for this music. Nor can it be truthfully said that either Mr. Godfrey Brown, conducting the [BBC] Wireless Orchestra in the Tchaikovsky violin concerto, or Miss Jelly d'Aranyi, playing the solo part, got to the heart of things on Saturday. All the more remarkable is the fact that I none the less enjoyed the performance as such.

#### **ELGAR "TOUR DE FORCE"**

No living player can surpass Miss d'Aranyi for vivid, fervent temperament, expressed through a superb technique that never fails her; but her fire and verve are not exactly of the Tchaikovsky order. That Mr. Brown can also hold aloft a flaming torch of living art, we well know. Never did his torch burn more vividly than in the splendid, brilliant performance of Elgar's "Cockaigne" which was, for conductor and players alike, a triumphant tour de force. (Brown's Elgar is, indeed, amongst the best Elgar we have.) But in the concerto neither conductor nor soloist could get entirely free of classic tradition — both approached the music, as it were, from Vienna rather than St. Petersburg, stressing the classical rather than the morbidly emotional. Yet, as I have inferred, the performance, as such, was so extremely good that I could, in spite of my distaste for the music and my doubts as to the veracity of interpretation, enjoy it very much.

Huberman and Kreisler may surpass d'Aranyi in some respects; but, all in all, the lady is my favourite of all fiddlers of our day. Never, in the world to come, do I hope to know a higher perfection of tonal beauty and phrase-delineation. She is one of the world's elect, and never more compelling than on Saturday. To the orchestra I again pay warm tribute; it goes from

strength to strength, and in the brass tutti especially there is a very notable advance in tone and chording.

In the Romance and Valse of Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony the playing was of a very distinguished order, and again I have to mention the lovely horn playing. Here again, in the Romance, Mr. Brown gave us a too classical outline and denied those morbid phrases (of a morbidity which is well-nigh pathological) their full degree of slimy sinuousness. I really feel that he is too pure a musician to do Tchaikovsky at that composer's worst best: witness his lovely reading of Schubert's "Rosamunde" Overture at the close of the concert.

#### INTERESTING PERFORMANCE.

A very interesting first performance was the "Nocturne" by "Ianthe Dalway" — pen-name of Mrs. Cecil Kidd, the wife of our gifted 1st trumpet and herself a favourite pupil of Vaughan Williams at the R.C.M. There is a very arresting harmonic sense here — faintly recalling Debussy and Ravel, but always personal and individual. The scoring is quite masterly, and I especially loved that chiaroscuro of harp and wood-wind. Architecturally the piece is a trifle inchoate, and its pensiveness is overlong: albeit more could have been made of two charming themes, for violins and oboe respectively. Mr. Kidd's striking solo passage at the close was excellently played, but one questioned whether this was so much in place as a coda of the music as it was a personal tribute to a fine artist. All in all, however, this was an outstanding piece of much promise.

Miss d'Aranyi played some solos enchantingly, accompanied by Mr. [Clifton] Helliwell in his finest manner (I commend Somerville's "What you will" to fiddlers), and Mr. Ivor John, who has a fine, natural tenor, sang. His Wagner and Handel (with orchestra) and Ireland's "Sea Fever" had excellent purpose but lacked characterisation; as to his "popular" songs, I submit that they were incongruous in such a concert.

#### RATHCOL.

Editorial comment: Please note that Hay's preference for the spelling 'Tschaikowsky' has been amended throughout to 'Tchaikovsky'.