

Overture: "L'italiana in Algeri".....Gioacchino Rossini
(1792-1868)

Rossini began his career at eighteen and retired in disgust before his fortieth birthday, by which time he had completed the astonishing total of 38 operas. Although he produced both serious and comic works with equal success it is the latter which have contributed most to his enduring popularity. "The Italian Girl in Algiers" was written within a month and was already the tenth opera produced by the twenty-one year old prodigy. It is probably the finest comic opera he produced, with the exception of "The Barber of Seville".

Its delightfully crazy plot tumbled in on the current fashion for things exotic and turned a well-tried formula on its head. Instead of a heroic knight rescuing a damsel from the clutches of an evil Sultan (as in Mozart's "Seraglio" for instance), here it is a woman who comes to the aid of her destiny-wisely-wisely held captive by a Mustapha whose brain cells seem on loan from a camel, and who is easily bewitched by the just-was-heroine. This scenario gives rise to an array of hilarious situations for which the artist elaborated overture, with its combination of catchy melodies and bounding rhythms, provides a teasingly tasty hors d'oeuvre.

Concerto for Clarinet in A major (K622).....Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro
Adagio
Rondo

"Immediately after your departure I played two games of billiards, then I told Joseph... to fetch me some black coffee with which I smoked a splendid pipe of tobacco, and then I orchestrated almost the whole of Stadler's Rondo". Who would believe that within ten months of writing this joyful letter to his wife Mozart would be dead, struck down by a violent fever for which the doctors had no answer. The Rondo referred to in the letter became the final movement of the clarinet concerto which, as fate dictated, was the last orchestral work to come from the composer's pen.

It was written for Anton Stadler, one of the foremost players of his day, possibly out of gratitude for Stadler's important contribution as obbligato player in the opera "La Clemenza di Tito". The two had long been close friends and Stadler's immense talent and enthusiasm fired Mozart's interest in a comparatively novel instrument, little used in orchestras of the time. He was one of the first composers to see the immense possibilities it offered of enriching the woodwind sound in both concert hall and theatre. Its superbly lower register, striking middle, and bright top, allied with the wide range of dynamics it could produce made the clarinet one of the most flexible members of any ensemble, and the works of Mozart's final years show an increasing interest in this exciting new orchestral sound. The Clarinet Quintet (K. 581) and this concerto, his three movements explore all corners of the clarinet's compass, particularly the deeper "chalumeau" register which fascinated Stadler - but the work's outcraunches more technical experiments and gave him the freedom here to mould concert had made him an innovative master of this form and gave him the freedom here to mould some of the most beautiful music one can imagine, as Adagio or in the energy of the Rondo while the clarinet and oboe (wisely excluding further clarinets and the brighter oboe and trumpet sounds) wrap us in an entrancing sound world which contains all the mellow fullness associated with Mozart's last period but no hint of the terrible tragedy awaiting the musical world soon after its completion.

Ballet Music from "Il Mondo della Luna".....Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Prato
Adagio
Menuet

To open the second half of this concert we return to the opera house. The reputation Haydn has earned as a composer of symphonic, chamber and choral music is richly deserved but as a writer of operas he has been almost totally ignored by musical history. Like his other contemporaries his work in this field has been overshadowed by Gluck and Mozart which is a pity since the dozen or so operas he produced for his patron, Prince Esterházy, contain some of his finest music.

"Il Mondo della Luna" (or "The World on the Moon") had its premiere in 1777 and is based on a play by the famous Italian writer Carlo Goldoni. Its plot is about as zany as Rossini's "Italian Girl". Exploiting the current vogue for telescopes and astronomy the opera employs an imaginary lunar setting around which the usual "buff" love relationships, family tussles, and general conniving and duelling are played out to amusing effect. In Act II one of the more terminally stupid characters is tricked into believing that he is on the moon and, in a series of failed sequences, is completely humiliated by the composers and exotic scenery. Tonight we play three short movements from this scene of which the "Prato Adagio", with its dreamy woodwind solos, is particularly seductive in its portrayal of the moon's gentle and serene environment.

Symphony no. 4 in B flat major Op. 60.....Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Adagio - Allegro vivace
Adagio
Allegro vivace
Allegro ma non troppo

Count Franz von Oppersdorff was a keen amateur musician who is chiefly remembered for three reasons. First, he lived in a castle which rejoiced in the name of Oberglöckau, second, his requirement for any prospective employee (whether it be a floor-sweeper or personal secretary) was that he should be able to play a musical instrument, third, and most important, that he was swindled by Beethoven. The poor man commissioned from the composer a symphony on the understanding that it should include parts for trombones. Beethoven agreed and set to work. Some time later von Oppersdorff received a letter which said that there was some doubt whether the symphony could be delivered in the immediate future. In view of the continual chaos which ruled over Beethoven's affairs this statement would have surprised nobody, but the Count's mood may have altered somewhat when, in his next letter, Beethoven calmly informed him that the Symphony had been completed and would be ready for performance in a few days. He had to sell that as well (which eventually became no. 9) but, as in B flat (no. 4) which was fully completed and would suit his wishes admirably. One might have to doubt the truth of this last statement as the symphony contains no one note the one he had ordered, and he could be forgiven for feeling completely different sympathy on one note the one he had ordered, and he could be forgiven for feeling just a little aggrieved at the former difficulties and the Count's anger quickly melted away on hearing his "new composition" and the composer - not for the first time - was forgiven.

Continued overleaf.

The reasons for von Oppersdorff's delight are not hard to find. The symphony, written in the summer of 1806, is one in which the sun shines almost continually from the first note to the last. Every bar seems to proclaim a joy and a zest for living incredible in a man who was so often near the poverty line and was already half dead. The count must have been both proud and delighted at the enthusiastic reception given by the audience to his new treasure. The critics, however, were less kind and generally condemned it as too avant-garde. One such review is worth quoting, not only for its conical nature, but because it highlights the difficulties critics face when judging a new work, and serves as a reminder of the kind of notice we might read any day of the week following a premiere at the Royal Festival Hall. "First there is a slow section, full of short, disjointed ideas, none of which has anything to do with any other. Every quarter of an hour we hear three or four notes. It's exciting! Finally the audience has given up all hope of ever surviving the tension everything bursts forth in a break-neck tempo, but care is taken that no principle theme emerges, and it is up to the listener to try and make one out. Modulations from one key to another abound but they need not give you any trouble - all you have to do is make a chromatic run and stop on any note you like, and there is your modulation. Above all, every rule must be disregarded, for rules only fetter genius."

Programme notes by Julian Williamson

Over the last twenty years, **Julian Williamson** has been associated with a large number of orchestras and choirs. He has performed regularly on the South Bank, at St John's Smith Square, and the Barbican Hall where, apart from his many concerts with the Camden Choir, he has appeared with the London Bach Orchestra and the English Festival Choir. His work has taken him not only to many parts of Great Britain, but also Germany, Holland, Zimbabwe and the United States.

Sarah Thurlow studied as an Exhibitioner at the Royal College of Music and graduated with a First Class Honours Degree in 1996, a Master of Music Degree in 1997 and an Advanced Postgraduate Diploma in 1998. She has won numerous prizes and scholarships, and now studies with Andrew Marriner as well as with Hans Deinzer in Italy and Sabine Meyer and Reiner Wehle in Germany. She has performed concertos both in the UK and abroad, most notably with the BBC Concert Orchestra and the Philharmonia, whilst her recital engagements have included performances at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, and at the South Bank Centre. Future engagements include a performance at the Brighton Festival as part of Contemporary Concert, a new music ensemble that she founded and directs, as well as a solo appearance at the Purcell Room on 10th January 2000, as part of the Park Lane Group New Year series.

Violin I
Paula Tyrell
Adrian Thompson
Alan Cravitz
Eric Coston
Dennis Reynolds
Keith Allen
Dorothea Stoffels

Violin II
Nigel Stephens
George Fuller
Tom Brockbank
Elizabeth Cleary
Jane Howard
Naomi Sills
Harry Tydesley
Frank D'Alquen

Double Bass
Christine Bond
John Wilton

Bassoon
Hilary Dadd
Jill Blakely

Oboe
Graham Ruffell
Louise Simon

Clarinet
Sue Best
Duncan McFines

Trumpet
Tim Collett
Eric Millner

Timpani
Mike Grant

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