

Programme Notes

Mozart – Magic Flute Overture

Mozart, The Magic Flute Overture, K. 620 (1791)
Instrumentation: pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and full strings.

Falling out of favor of the new Austrian Emperor and in rapidly failing health, Mozart completed his last opera The Magic Flute merely three months before his death, at the age of 35. The opera was written in the German tradition of Singspiel (“song-play”), with spoken dialogue—instead of Italian-style recitatives—continuing the plots between musical numbers.

The libretto was written by Mozart’s old friend, the acclaimed Shakespearean actor Emmanuel Schikaneder (1751-1812), who himself played the role of Papageno at the opera’s first performance held in his humble wooden theatre on the outskirts of Vienna.

As was Mozart’s habit, the Overture of the Magic Flute was composed last, only days before the premiere on September 30, 1791. Bypassing its customary function as an emotional preparation for the dramatic plot to come, the Magic Flute Overture conveys a profound sense of vitality and stability.

Three majestic chords from the tutti orchestra begin the slow introduction, signalling fanfares that are to be associated with the theme of Mason-like brotherhood in the opera. The following Allegro adopts the most orderly form in music, the fugue. A brief return of the chordal fanfares interrupts its momentum, and the resumption of the fugal Allegro brings the overture to an exuberant ending.

Bach – Brandenburg Concerto No. 1

The Brandenburg Concerti, dedicated to the Margrave of Brandenburg on 24 March 1721, came from Bach’s Köthen period. The set of six concerti grossi apparently lay unplayed in the Margrave’s library until well after his death. At that time they were not valued enough to be listed in the inventory by the composer’s name but rather were among the “concertos by various masters” valued at mere pennies. They were probably never intended for the Margrave’s orchestra to perform as they were presented to him as scores with no accompanying individual parts. Although the originals have never been located, the manuscripts appear to be only copies requested by the Margrave, who made Bach’s acquaintance in Berlin during the winter of 1718-19. Understandably, these concerti show influences from Vivaldi’s works. Except for the first, each is cast in a three-movement form; all feature a concertato dialogue between orchestra and soloists in the outer movements; and the outer movements are in ritornello form, in which a repeating theme opens and closes each movement as well as sets off the soloists’ episodes. Since the solo themes are not thematically related, the ritornello theme serves as a unifying

element. While the virtuosic skills of the soloists are always aptly displayed in the first and third movements, the middle movements often contain expressive cantabile melodies.

The first movement of the first concerto was composed as an introductory movement to the Hunting Cantata, BWV 208, written in Bach’s Weimar years for the birthday of Duke Christian of Saxe-Weissenfels. The solo instruments, three oboes and a violin, are joined by a pair of horns, which would have been appropriate for the hunting theme of the secular cantata. This work is unusual in that it is the only one of the Brandenburgs that has four movements. The opening movement is suitably bold in its theme and solo episodes.

Dvorak – Largo Mvt From the New World

Dvorak’s “New World Symphony” is one of the best known and best loved pieces of serious music ever written. Its origin is also one of the most controversial. By this stage of his career (it was his last symphony and one of his last major orchestral works of any kind) he was respected as one of the musical world’s true giants. As such, he was enticed to spend several years in America as the director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, to enhance its image. While there he did all he could to experience the land and its culture.

Dvorak was a staunch believer in nationalism and the musical identity of any land. His own earlier works had been based on musical elements drawn from the Czech folk music (the Slavonic Dances for example) and even his mature works still reflected the influence of his musical roots. While teaching at the Conservatory he tried to promote the same consciousness of musical values among his students, -campaigned for “an American music based on American roots” instead of European. He looked to the dance rhythms of the American Indian and the melodic inspiration of the Negro spiritual as two sources of musical material for American composers to develop.

While here, he wrote a symphony and gave it the subtitle “From the New World.” It was widely assumed that he had done in the symphony, exactly what he counselled in his teaching; used American Indian and Negro songs and rhythms as the source of his musical materials. He denied this and said the subtitle referred to himself, as if writing “from the New World” back to his public in Europe. Furthermore, musicologists point out that he had already used all the harmonic and rhythmic devices of the ninth symphony in his earlier works, long before he became familiar with new world folk music.

Nevertheless, it is hard to deny the influence of the American musical heritage on this essentially European work. The famous largo (played by English horn in the second movement) could easily

have been sung in the cotton fields of the pre-Civil War South.

Beethoven – 8th Symphony

As happens so often in his work, Beethoven composed his Seventh and Eighth symphonies together. The premiere of the Seventh in December 1813 had been one of the most successful concerts of Beethoven’s life, establishing him without question as the greatest living composer though the work that truly ignited the audience’s enthusiasm on that occasion was the pot-boiler Wellington’s Victory, also being heard for the first time. When Beethoven premiered the Eighth two months later, he sandwiched it between repeats of the Seventh and Wellington’s Victory. The size and visceral energy of the Seventh simply overwhelmed the audience at the premiere. But Beethoven was fully aware of the smaller work’s value. When his pupil Carl Czerny remarked that the Eighth was much less popular than the Seventh, Beethoven replied gruffly, “That’s because it’s so much better.”

The opening movement of the Eighth is brief but eventful. The opening phrases form a complete melody (how rare that is for Beethoven!), but the moment they seem to close in a cadence, they open out and grow in the most astonishing way. False leads cheerfully undermine the tonal solidity that Beethoven had been at such pains to establish in the opening bars, seemingly to settle in to the highly unorthodox key of D major (instead of the dominant, C) for the secondary theme. Scarcely has the new theme started before it falters, suddenly aware of its faux pas, and swings around to its expected dominant. The development is one of Beethoven’s most masterful demonstrations of musical timing. Its basic melodic idea is the very measure first measure of the symphony, unheard since its single earlier appearance. Now it dominates the discussion in a long crescendo over its entire length. As the volume increases, phrase lengths become progressively shorter, so that events arrive faster and faster, until the movement culminates in a blazing return to the home key, under which the bass instruments proclaim the principle theme. The coda leads into a new harmonic world, another crescendo, and a new version of the main theme in the wrong key. After the eventual return to the tonic, the orchestra fades out delightfully, leaving one final salute to the first measure in the bass at the very last instant.

The second movement is a humorous homage to Beethoven’s friend Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, the inventor of the metronome, a device that Beethoven found invaluable in giving composers, for the first time, a way to specify precise tempos for their music. The movement is filled with humorous touches (including a suggestion at the end that the mechanical marvel has broken down). Its scherzando marking

makes it rather faster than a slow movement was expected to be.

Beethoven compensates by making his next movement Tempo di Menuetto, a marking he had long since ceased using in his symphonies. This movement particularly is responsible for the Eighth symphony’s reputation as a Haydn-esque “throwback.”

Having held his horses back, so to speak, for three movements, Beethoven lets them have their head in the merry rush of the rondo-like tune in the finale; it seems about to come to a close on a normal dominant C when it is suddenly jerked up to a C-sharp, only to have the unexpected note drop away as quickly as it had arrived, apparently without consequence. The same thing happens at the recapitulation. The sheer obtrusiveness of that unexpected C-sharp lingers in the ear, demanding an explanation.

Finally, in the immense coda, the same bothersome C-sharp returns with harmonic consequences, generating a great new tonal detour before returning safely home. At this pace, which gives us hardly a chance to consider all that is going on, Beethoven’s wit leaves us invigorated but breathless.

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About The Maruki Community

The Maruki Community is a special musical group made up of three unique groups, - the Twinkle Starlets – our beginner string ensemble, the Maruki Junior Strings – our intermediate string ensemble and the Maruki Community Orchestra – our Community symphony orchestra! The community flows from one ensemble to the next developing as it goes, like rough rocks gradually becoming smooth pebbles as they are washed down the musical stream...

The Maruki Community Orchestra (MCO) is an innovative community symphony orchestra devoted to all musicians in Canberra region - regardless of age, experience and skill level, who have strong interests in playing classical musical instruments in an orchestra environment and who wish to express their musicality, develop their skills and express their musicality.

MCO enables its players to achieve successes not otherwise possible in a positive, encouraging environment. We also develop these talents by playing in ensembles and smaller chamber orchestras - which extends well into the community's requirements for smaller orchestras able to play in smaller community performance spaces - at festivals, in special places such as homes for the aged, and at events at our national institutions.

MCO is a very special community music project – a developmental symphony orchestra.

Members of the Maruki Community Orchestra:

Conductor and Music Director: John Gould

Violins 1

Hannah de Feyter
Janet Fabbri
Catherine Menon
Heather Roche
Katie Taylor
Katy Amos
Margaret Horneman
Davinia McConnell
Rozse Nuttall
Terry Sing Lee

Violins 2

Tobias Aan
Kate Martin
George Chan
Merril Brown
Xin-Lin Goh
Peggy Khaw

Violas

Lucy Macken
Anne Stevens
Cameron Gill

Chris Nicholls
Robin Tait
Laura Bourne

Cellos

Bonnieanna Mitchell
Myles Bunning
Peter Stevens
Geoff Alexander

Bass

Catherine Keely

Bassoon

Meredith Hatherly
Airlie Andrew

Clarinets

Sharon Bainbridge
Kate King
Koula Diamand

Flutes

Tram Dinh

Arko Chakrabarty
Anne Stevens

French Horn

Marietta Weber
Jillian Carson-Jackson
Brian Stone

Oboe

Andrew Baker
Ben Stewart
David Hatherly

Percussion/Timpani

Dimitri Diamand
Cary Finlay

Trombone

Fred Arugay
Mike Bird

Trumpet

Brian Stone
Laura Bourne

The Classics at Belconnen...



Concert at the Theatre Series, 2007

PROGRAMME

John Gould's Twinkle Starlets:

Music from Suzuki Book 1

Maruki Junior Strings

Telemann – 1st Movement

Mozart – Minuet and Trio (Symphony Nr 40)

Stamitz – Zilich Dance

Fiocco – Allegro

Interval – Coffee / Tea / Cakes / Conversation!

Maruki Community Orchestra

Mozart – Magic Flute Overture

Bach – 1st Mvt Brandenburg Nr 1

Dvorak – Largo Mvt From the New World

Beethoven – 8th Symphony

Sunday, 17th June 2007 – 3pm Belconnen Community Centre, Swanson Street, Belconnen