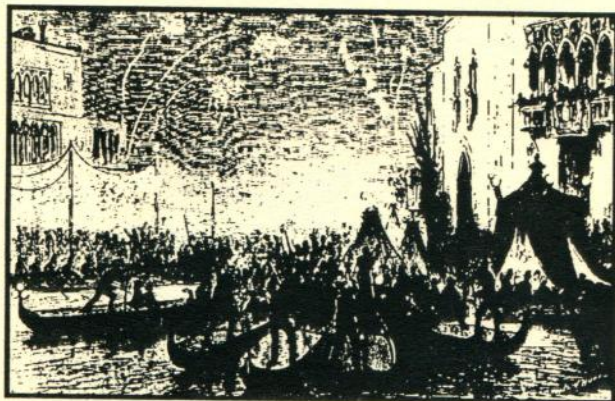




# SERENISSIMA



WALTER HALL

Sunday, January 15, 1995

2:30 p.m.

# SERENISSIMA

a portrait of Venice

SIPHIWE MCKENZIE, soprano

GABRIELLE PRATA, mezzo

DAN CHAMANDY, tenor

STEPHEN RALLS and BRUCE UBUKATA, piano



In the dead of winter, it seemed to us that it would be therapeutic to visit, in our imaginations, that place that serves as a symbol of Mediterranean light and colour. The evocative power of the very word 'Venice' is surpassed only by that of the Venetians' own name for it: 'Serenissima', the most serene Republic. It conjures up the image of ancient, noble palaces reflected in lapping water which is never quite still, so that its surface is broken into the impressionistic spectrum of a painting by Monet — a city whose ageless beauty persuades us one moment that it has never looked better, and the next that it might slip beneath the waves without more ado and be lost for all time.

Venice has always been a city of tourists — and many of them are gathered together in today's programme. Having planned it, we realized that there was not a single piece by a Venetian writer or composer (except for Monteverdi, who spent the last thirty years of his life in the city). Perhaps those born there are too inured to beauty to feel the need of attempting to express it. At any rate, Venice has captivated the spirits of almost all those who have visited it, willingly or unwillingly — even the unromantic Edward Lear, who declared: 'This city of palaces, pigeons, poodles and pumpkins (I am sorry to say also of pimps — to keep up the alliteration) is a wonder and a pleasure.' It is our pleasure this afternoon to ask you to relax in your gondola, and listen!





## PROLOGUE

Kennst du das Land? (Goethe) D321

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

The mysterious Mignon sings this song in the novel *Wilhelm Meister*. She was born and brought up in Italy but is in exile in Germany. As John Reed says, the poem 'transcends its context in the novel, and becomes an expression of Romantic longing for the south and the sun.' Goethe himself had not yet visited Italy when he wrote it.

*Do you know the land, where the lemons blossom, in the dark leaves the golden oranges glow, a gentle wind blows from the blue sky, the myrtle stands silent, the laurel tall, do you know it? There, there, would I go with you, my love!*

*Do you know the house, its roof rests on pillars, its hall gleams, its apartment shimmers, and marble statues stand and gaze at me: What have they done to you, poor child? Do you know it? There would I go with you, my protector!*

*Do you know the mountain and its cloudy path? The mule seeks its way in the mist, in caves the ancient brood of dragons dwells, the rock falls sheer, and over it, the flood! Do you know it? There, there, lies our way! O father let us go!*

## THE PIAZZA

La regata veneziana (Carlo Pepoli)

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

There are two works by Rossini with the same title. The earlier one is this duet, dating from the 1830s and forming part of his *Soirées musicales*.

*The Venetian regatta: Row up, dear Tonio, push, push, pull, pull! Beppe mops his brow, the poor fellow is exhausted. Tonio, row up now!*

*Beppe, old fellow, don't tire yourself, we're almost there. Merciful heaven, when a girl has a sweetheart in the race, grant her consolation!*

Gondelfahrer (Johann Mayrhofer) D808

Schubert

*The gondolier: Moon and stars dance in fleeting ghostly patterns: who would be weighed down by the cares of the world! Now rock gently in the moonlight, my boat, and the limitless womb of the sea will cradle you; from St Mark's tower midnight has sounded: everyone's sleeping peacefully, and only the boatman is awake.*

## THE BYWAYS

Venetianisches Gondellied (Thomas Moore) Op.57/5

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47)

Thomas Moore shared with his close friend, Byron, a great love of Venice — 'the greenest island of my imagination' as Byron wrote to Moore, 'my head, or rather my heart-quarters'. The translation, as in Schumann's pair of settings in our second half, is by Ferdinand Freiligrath.

*When through the piazzetta the night air wafts, then dearest Ninetta,  
you know I'll be waiting. You know, despite your veil and mask I'll  
recognize you, as love knows its evening star in the night sky.*

*I'll come dressed as a gondolier, and trembling, I'll whisper: "The boat is  
ready". Oh come where the moon is covered by clouds, let us flee, my love  
across the lagoons.*

Mysterious gondola (from *Death in Venice*)

(Myfanwy Piper, after Thomas Mann)

Benjamin Britten (1913-76)

## THE GRAND CANAL

La regata veneziana (anon.)

Rossini

In about 1858, Rossini wrote this cycle of three songs, describing vividly a girl's excitement before, during and after the Regatta — still one of the most impressive events in the city's calendar. The songs form part of the *Album italiano* in his *Péchés de vieillesse*.

Anzoleta avanti la regata

*Anzoleta before the regatta: See the flag flying on high; look, you can see  
it, now go for it. Bring it back to me this evening, or run away and hide.*

*Once in the boat, Momolo, don't start gawping! Row the gondola with  
heart and soul, then you cannot help being first. Go on, think of your  
Anzoleta watching you anxiously from this harbour.*

Anzoleta co passa la regatta

*Anzoleta during the regatta: They're coming, they're coming, look at them,  
the poor things, they're nearly exhausted: ah, the wind's against them, but  
the tide's running their way.*

*My Momolo, where is he? Ah, I see him, in second place. Ah! the  
excitement is too much for me, my heart's racing like mad.*

*Come on, keep it up, row, row, you must be first to finish, if you keep on  
rowing, I'll bet you leave all the others behind.*

*Dear boy, he's almost flying, he's way ahead of all the others, he's gone  
half a length ahead. Ah, now I understand: he's seen me.*



### Anzoleta dopo la regatta

Anzoleta after the regatta: Here's a kiss for you, and another, darling Momolo, from my heart; now relax, while I dry the sweat from your body.

Ah I saw you, as you passed, throwing me a glance, and I said, breathing again: he's going to win a good prize.

Indeed the prize of this flag, the red one; all Venice is talking about you, they have declared you the victor.

Here's a kiss, God bless you, no one rows better than you, of all the breed of watermen, you are the best gondolier.

### THE LAGOON

Sur les lagunes (Théophile Gautier) from *Nuits d'été* Op. 7/3

Hector Berlioz (1803-69)

Gautier was an early example of the French literary fascination with Venice throughout the nineteenth century: the distinguished list also included Alfred de Musset and Marcel Proust.

*My sweetheart is dead, I shall weep forever! To her grave she carries my soul and my love. She went back to heaven without waiting for me; the angel that took her didn't want me. How bitter is my fate! Oh! to go out to sea without love!*

*The pale creature sleeps in her coffin; everything around me seems to be in mourning. The forgotten dove weeps and thinks of the one who is no more; my heart weeps and feels it has lost a part of itself.*

*The vast night spreads over me like a shroud; I sing my story that only the sky can hear. Oh! how beautiful she was and how much I loved her. Never will I love a woman as much as her!*

Sérénade italienne (Paul Bourget) Op. 2/5

Ernest Chausson (1855-99)

*Italian serenade: Let us set out to sea in a boat and spend the night beneath the stars. Look, there is just enough breeze to swell the sails.*

*The old Italian fisherman and his two sons, who steer us, listen but understand nothing of the words which we speak.*

*On the sea, calm and dark, see our souls may commune, and none will understand our voices but the night, the sky and the waves.*

### INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the Torel Room



## THE DRAWING ROOM OF EUROPE

O come sei gentile (Guarini) from *Madrigals*, Book VII

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

*O how gentle you are, dear little bird, how like yours is my amorous state: I a prisoner, you a prisoner, you sing of her who has bound you and I sing of her. But this is the difference: what leaves me sad still brings you alive singing, and I singing die.*

Zwei Venetianische Lieder (Moore) Op. 25/17,18

Robert Schumann (1810-56)

### 1. Leis' rudern hier, mein Gondolier

*Row quietly now my gondolier — quietly, quietly! Ply the water quietly, so that she alone will hear us. If the heavens could speak of what they saw, they'd say a lot about what happens under the stars!*

*Now stay here, my gondolier, gently, gently! Into the boat with your oar — gently! I'll climb up to the balcony, but you keep watch down here. If we gave ourselves to Heaven half as eagerly as we seek the favours of beautiful women, we'd probably be angels!*

### 2. Wenn durch die Piazzetta

*When through the piazzetta the night air wafts, then dearest Ninetta, you know I'll be waiting. You know, despite your veil and mask I'll recognize you, as love knows its evening star in the night sky.*

*I'll come dressed as a gondolier, and trembling, I'll whisper: "The boat is ready". Oh come where the moon is covered by clouds, let us flee, my love across the lagoons.*

Epithalame, from *Shylock* Op. 57/4

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) arr. Louis Boëllmann

This music accompanied the nuptials of Portia and Bassanio in a French version (1889) of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

Mandoline (Verlaine) from *Cinq mélodies de Venise* Op. 58/1

Fauré

*Serenaders and their beautiful listeners exchange flirtations beneath the singing branches.*

*There they are: Tircis, Amyntas, the eternal Clitander and Damis, who composed tender verses for many a cruel mistress.*

*Their silken jackets, their long trailing cloaks, their elegance, their joy and their soft blue shadows whirl in the ecstasy of a pink and grey moon, and the mandoline twangs in the shivering breeze.*



Final, from *Shylock*

Fauré

The last section of Fauré's incidental music accompanied the entire final scene of dénouement.

Venezia — Chansons en dialecte vénitien (excerpts)

Reynaldo Hahn (1875-1947)

1. Sopra l'acqua indormenzada (*Pietro Pagello*)

Dedicated to the soprano, Emma Calvé.

*Asleep on the water: Let not melancholy thoughts distress you: come with me, let us climb into our gondola and make for the open sea. We will go past harbours and islands which surround the city, and the sun will sink in a cloudless sky and the moon will rise.*

*Oh what fun, oh what a sight is the lagoon when all is silent and the moon climbs in the sky; and spreading its soft hair over the tranquil waters it admires its own reflection like a woman in love.*

*Draw your veil about you and hide, for I see the moon appearing and if it catches a glimpse of you it will grow jealous! This light breeze, playing gently with your ruffled tresses, bears no trace of the dust raised by cartwheels and horses.*

*If in other days Venus seemed to the Greeks to have risen from a shell, perhaps it was because they had seen a beauty like you in a gondola. You are lovely, young and fresh as a flower. Tears will come soon enough, so now is the time for laughter and for love.*

2. La barcheta (*Pietro Buratti*)

*The little boat: The night is beautiful. Make haste, Ninetta, let us take to our boat and enjoy the evening breeze. I have asked Toni to remove the canopy so that we can feel the zephyr blowing in from the sea. Ah!*

*What bliss it is to exchange sweet nothings alone on the lagoon and by moonlight, to be borne along in our boat; you can lay aside your fan, my dear, for the breezes will vie with each other to refresh you. Ah!*

*If among them there should be one so indiscreet as to try to lift the veil shielding your breast, pay no heed to its nonsense, for we are all alone and Toni is much too intent on plying his oar. Ah!*

The Tale of the Oyster

Cole Porter (1891-1964)

EPILOGUE

Potpourri from Act I of *Eine Nacht in Venedig*

Johann Strauss (1825-99)

Aria: Sei mir gegrüsst, du holdes Venetia

A song in praise of the city.

Ensemble: Sei mir willkommen, holde Nacht

The Duke rehearses a serenade.

Aria and Finale: Komm in die Gondel

The Duke, in disguise, sings a gondolier's song.

# THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION CONCERT SOCIETY

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On February 5, 1995, we are presenting our programme *Upstairs, Downstairs!* as part of the Hart House music series. Soloists will be **Jennifer Robinson**, **Jacqui Lynn Fidler** and **James Westman**. The concert starts at 3:00 p.m.; tickets are free of charge, and may be obtained from the Hall Porter at Hart House on the day of the concert.

There are two concerts remaining in this Sunday Series: March 5: *Flight of the Eagle* with **Monica Whicher**, **Elizabeth Turnbull**, **Dennis Giesbrecht** and **Russell Braun** — songs of Johannes Brahms; April 30: *A Country House Weekend* with **Kathryn Domoney**, **Catherine Robbin** and **Daniel Neff** — the glitter, romance and nostalgia of a long weekend at a grand English country house.

Tickets (\$20/\$15) may be purchased in advance from:

The Aldeburgh Connection, 56 Fulton Avenue  
Toronto, M4K 1X5 (telephone 423-9318)

We would also like to remind you of our last Recital of the season in the CBC Broadcasting Centre's Glenn Gould Studio on Tuesday May 9, at 8:00 p.m. Soprano **Joanne Kolomyjec** and baritone **Mark Pedrotti** will appear together in a Russian song programme. Tickets (\$19/\$14 students and seniors) may be purchased from the Glenn Gould Studio (telephone 205-5555).

Box office revenues cover only a portion of our operating budget; the rest must be raised through donations, grants and corporate funding. You may become a **Patron** by donating \$100 or more; \$35 or more (\$50 or more for dual membership) will qualify you to become a **Friend**. You will receive information on our activities, and all donations will be acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes. Other donations and suggestions for corporate sponsorship will also be gratefully received. Your support is vital in helping to ensure the continuation of these concerts.



We gratefully acknowledge assistance from:

- The Ontario Arts Council, The City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council and The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto - Cultural Affairs Division
- The Charles H. Ivey Foundation
- Dean and Rosemary Dover
- Bruce Philpott: Statements in Flowers
- and our many Patrons, Friends and donors

**Aldeburgh** is the small town on the east coast of England where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. Artistic directors **Stephen Ralls** and **Bruce Ubukata** have visited and worked there for many summers, as have a large number of the singers appearing with The Aldeburgh Connection.

**Siphiwe McKenzie** is currently a scholarship student at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, where she recently sang Rosalinda in a critically acclaimed production of *Die Fledermaus*. Last season she received equally high praise for her performance as Thérèse in the U. of T. Opera Division's production of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. In addition to her operatic roles, she has appeared with the Vancouver Bach Choir, the Vancouver Symphony, the Montreal Symphony Chorus, and in the Brahms *Requiem* with the Vancouver Chamber Players. She also appeared as soloist in the 1992 International Du Maurier Jazz Festival in Vancouver.

**Gabrielle Prata's** operatic credits include Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, Nancy in *Albert Herring* and Ottone in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with the COC, Carmen, in her début role at Opera North in New Hampshire, as well as roles with the the leading opera companies across Canada. Recently she appeared as Anita in *West Side Story* with the Sherbrook Symphony, and as Maddalena in Opera Lyra's production of *Rigoletto*. She will return to Ottawa in April as Musetta in Opera Lyra's *La Bohème*, and will also perform her first Adelgisa at Gold Coast Opera's production of *Norma*.

She also makes regular concert appearances with major symphony orchestras; engagements this season include *Messiah* with the Baltimore Handel Choir, and the *Bach Mass in F* and *Mozart Vespers* with the Pennsylvania Sinfonia.

**Dan Chamandy** is a recent graduate of the University of Toronto's Opera Division, where he received accolades for his performance of the Husband in Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. He is a recipient of the 1993 Ruby Mercer Opera Fellowship and the 1994 Constance Eberhart Memorial Award. He is currently a member of the COC's Ensemble, and has appeared in the roles of Satarino and Mercurio in a production of Cavalli's *La Calisto*. In February he will perform in concert with Toronto Operetta Theatre in a programme entitled *Stoltz, Friml and Romberg: the Last of the Waltz Kings*.

THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION is represented by Hart/Murdock Artist's Management.



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