

LE HANNETON

ILLUSTRÉ, SATIRIQUE ET LITTÉRAIRE

ROSSINI



Monsieur V. Agnew
Danton fit jadis la Corneture d'un bon professeur de musique
aujourd'hui devenu Pianiste de la quatrième Classe il ne
s'oppose plus à ce qu'elle soit publiée dans votre Journal

G. Hoffmeyer

Bressy 25 Juin 1867

Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall
Saturday 13 June 1992

SOIRÉE MUSICALE

KATHLEEN BRETT, soprano

LINDA MAGUIRE, mezzo

BENOIT BOUTET, tenor

ERIK OLAND, baritone

STEPHEN RALLS & BRUCE UBUKATA, piano



We celebrate the bicentenary of Rossini (which fell on February 29 this year) with a programme devoted to his domestic music-making.

In 1855, at the age of 63, Rossini was persuaded by his French-born second wife, Olympe, to leave Italy and settle in Paris. Increasingly racked by illness, he was regarded as a spent force musically, having written very little since his last opera, *Guillaume Tell*, in 1829. Olympe had faith in the skill of French doctors and herself yearned for the delights of Parisian society.

Whether medical science helped him or the Gallic spirit invigorated him or, the most likely, his wife's devoted care won him round, Rossini took a new lease on life, physically and mentally. His days as a composer for the stage were indeed over — the world had already seen Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Verdi's *La Traviata* and Rossini felt his own operatic style, for better or for worse, outmoded. But, by virtue of the popularity of his existing output, he was now one of the most famous composers living in Paris, along with Meyerbeer and Offenbach.

Olympe, desiring to improve her social status, encouraged her husband to entertain lavishly. In their apartment on the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, or in their grander villa in suburban Passy, the Rossinis held their famous *samedi soirs*. Beginning on 18 December, 1858, over a period of nearly ten years, artists, politicians, diplomats and the well-to-do mingled to hear a galaxy of musical talent. Invitations were much prized, since the lucky recipient stood a fair chance of meeting at least one of the following: Auber, Boito, Gounod, Liszt, Meyerbeer, Saint-Saëns, Thomas, Verdi, as well as leading singers and instrumentalists of the day and other artistic figures, such as Delacroix, Doré, Dumas père, Hanslick and Ricordi.

Rossini assembled the programmes for the soirées with special care. As well as Haydn and Mozart, the music of contemporary composers was often heard, especially Verdi, Gounod and Liszt. But the chief excitement was aroused by Rossini's own new music: for, from 1857 onwards, he was composing a great number of small salon pieces, some 150 in all, songs and piano pieces, which he collected in a series of volumes entitled *Péchés*

de vieillesse (Sins of old age). Olympe, with an eye to the future, jealously kept the manuscripts under lock and key, and the majority of the pieces have only been published within the last thirty years. In today's concert, most of the Rossini pieces are taken from *Péchés de vieillesse*; the rest are from an earlier collection, *Les soirées musicales*, published in 1835.



ROSSINI AT HOME

La passeggiata (*Péchés de vieillesse*) Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

The promenade: Since the sky is clear, limpid and quiet the wave, let us sail from the shore; love will guide us.

To the waves, the air, the flowers we will speak of love, and the beating heart will answer for them.

But heaven! the wind whistles, the lagoon foams — quick, hurry away!

Ah, no! The moon appears; fear was vain. Let us sing in this happy land.

Une caresse à ma femme (A caress for my wife) (*Péchés de vieillesse*)

Rossini

Rossini's piano pieces are, at one and the same time, precursors of Chabrier and Satie and also echoes of Rameau and Couperin.

La chanson du bébé (*Péchés de vieillesse*) Rossini

The music parodies Offenbach and the text refers to his operetta *Barbe-bleue* and two of his singers, Schneider and Térésa.

The baby's song: Mama, the big baby calls you. I want some jam, some ripe currants. Atchi!

Papa, pipi, Maman, caca! Baby wants a song from Bluebeard; your voice would beat Schneider and Térésa. Nurse calls me a jewel, but when I'm bad, they whip me.

THE VISITORS

Soirée en mer (Hugo) Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Evening at sea: When, at sunset, we two float aimlessly in our boat under the stars, when we both think we read what nature writes, answer, why does my soul sigh while your face smiles?

Say, why do thoughts fill my soul? It is because I see the dark waves and you the magic stars.

You do well: look at the gleaming heavens. You see God smile, while I see man weep.

Oh! quand je dors (Hugo)

Franz Liszt (1811-86)

*Oh! when I sleep, come close to my bed, as Laura appeared to Petrarch.
On my sad brow the dark dream will become radiant. Then on my
lips place a kiss and from angel become woman. Suddenly my soul
will awaken.*

O ma belle rebelle (*de Baïf*) Charles Gounod (1818-93)

*O my fair rebel, how cruel you are, when with a look or a gesture you
plunge my heart into amorous fire!*

*How cruel you are, when the flames compel me to beg for just one
kiss, with which you will not appease me.*

*If only Cupid could make you fall in love with me, then by my revenge
you would know what it means to refuse a kiss to a lover.*

A TASTE FOR THE EXOTIC

La regata veneziana (*Pepoli*) (Les soirées musicales) Rossini

*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!*

Li marinari (*Pepoli*) (Les soirées musicales) Rossini

*Wagner scored this piece for orchestra, just before starting work on
The Flying Dutchman.*

*The sailors: Keep watch there — On watch I stand. The night
grows darker, be careful. Where are we going? Who knows?*

*The thunder rolls, the wind whistles, the lightning flashes, we're
letting in water. Take heart, I know my angel on shore has prayed
for me.*

*See, the sky is clearing, the sun shines through. When we reach the
shore, I shall kiss my beloved a thousand times.*

Anzoleta avanti la regata (*La regata veneziana: Péchés de vieillesse*)

Rossini

*Anzoleta before the regatta: See the colours flying on high; I am
here in good time to see you win.*

*Don't falter, Momolo, row your gondola well, remember that your
sweetheart watches anxiously.*

I gondolieri (Péchés de vieillesse) Rossini

The gondoliers: Row on under the clear sky on a calm sea.

Row upon the expanse of ocean; to the gondolier is given the best of good things.

Whether the sun is bright or the moon is sad, on the lagoon the gondolier is always king.

Danse sibérienne (Siberian dance) (Péchés de vieillesse) Rossini

ANOTHER VISITOR

Quartet: Un dì, se ben rammentomi (Rigoletto) Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)

The Duke begins his seduction of Maddalena while, outside the door, the spurned Gilda and her father Rigoletto comment on his faithlessness.

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INTERMISSION

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THE MOST BRILLIANT SALON

Grandes variations sur une Marche favorite de l'Opéra *Guillaume Tell*
de Rossini (Variations on a theme from *William Tell*) Henri Herz
(1803-88)

Born in Vienna, Herz moved to Paris in 1816 and eventually became one of the most fashionable pianists there. He toured the New World in the 1840's, making a fortune with which to build a piano factory and a concert hall.

After an introduction and Rossini's theme, there are four variations followed by an extended finale.

Toast pour le nouvel an (?Pacini) (Péchés de vieillesse) Rossini

Toast for New Year's Day: On this day so sweet, let the New Year be fêted with pleasures, songs, gifts, candy. Hurry, girls and boys!

O virgin mother, make us prosper, guard on earth our blessed sons!

Tra la la, let champagne bubble forth. True happiness is there, O virgin!

Friends, let us draw the corks, drink to the New Year!

- La pastorella dell'Alpi (Pepoli) (Les soirées musicales) Rossini
The Alpine shepherdess: Each morning you see me, bearing my basket of fresh fruit and flowers, so come to my garden. Ahu, ahu! Should you lose your way at night, you will find the path to my cabin; but my dearest thoughts are for one alone. Ahu, Ahu!
- La serenata (Pepoli) (Les soirées musicales) Rossini
Serenade: See the veiled moon; come to the dark wood, fortune smiles. Don't make a sound, none shall know but love.

FAREWELL

- L'ultimo ricordo (Redaelli) (Péchés de vieillesse) Rossini
In his setting, subtitled Elegia, Rossini deletes the poet's 'Elvira' and substitutes his own wife's name 'Olimpia'. The last memory: Hear the last words of a dying man: this withered flower I leave you, Olympe. You scarcely realised how precious it was; once it spoke of love, now of sadness — return, adorn your breast with this flower.

Marche et réminiscences pour mon dernier voyage...

(March and recollections for my final journey...) (Péchés de vieillesse)
 Rossini

A grim funeral march is first of all interrupted by heavy knocking (at the gate of heaven?) — marked 'frappons'. Then come quotations from eight of Rossini's most famous operas (named) and finally a section marked 'Mon portrait', a graceful and light-hearted theme. But the march resumes ('allons'), then some gentle knocking ('on ouvre'), the march ceases ('j'y suis') and is followed by one single word, 'Requiem'.

AN OPERATIC ENVOI

We cannot leave Rossini without this most ebullient of operatic farewells...



This concert by The Aldeburgh Connection is presented with the assistance of:

The Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Culture and Communications, The City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council, the Government of Canada/Gouvernement du Canada, and Canada House Cultural Centre.



Kathleen Brett is well-known in operatic and concert productions across Canada. Her recent appearances have included productions by The Canadian Opera Company of *The Makropoulos Case*, *Don Carlos*, *Carmen*, *Falstaff* in Calgary, *Don Giovanni* in Winnipeg, and *Nozze di Figaro* and *Roméo et Juliette* with Pacific Opera. She has recently won important prizes, at Toronto's Glory of Mozart Festival, and from the William Mattheus Sullivan Foundation of New York. Newly released is the Cincinnati Pops CD of Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, in which she sang the role of Marian the Librarian.

Linda Maguire leads a very busy musical career, including recent performances in works as varied as Britten's *Phaedra* and Handel's *Lucrezia* with Ottawa's Thirteen Strings, Berio folk-songs on tour with the National Ballet of Canada. Her operatic performances have included *Così fan tutte*, *Vanessa* with Toronto's Opera-in-Concert, and with Canada's baroque opera company, Opera Atelier, in *The Magic Flute*. This past spring found her in Manila singing works by Handel and Mozart to rave reviews; she also represented Canada at the BBC Singer of the World Competition in Wales. Later this year she will appear in Elora, Ontario in the title role in Timothy Sullivan's new opera *Florence Nightingale*.

As one of Canada's leading young tenors, **Benoît Boutet** is in great demand on both the opera and concert stage. Recent roles have included Nadir in *The Pearl Fishers* in Minnesota, Camille in *The Merry Widow* in Montreal, Narraboth in *Salome* with the Vancouver Opera, with a recent debut in San Francisco in Verdi's *Falstaff*. He has performed in many featured roles with the Canadian Opera Company and is a frequent soloist with pops conductor Erich Kunzel. Recent and upcoming concert performances include Honneger's *Le Roi David*, Haydn's *The Creation*, Mozart's *Requiem* and Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*.

Erik Oland, winner of the 1987 's-Hertogenbosch Music Competition, has established a solid reputation in opera, concert and oratorio. His performances in Mahler's *Songs of A Wayfarer* have won him wide critical acclaim in Canada and the United States. He has recently appeared in Vaughan Williams' *Five Tudor Portraits*, in the Durufle *Requiem*, the *Coronation Mass* and *The Great Mass in C minor*. He has appeared as David Wilson in Canadian composer Harry Somers' opera *Serinettes* at the historic Sharon Temple in Ontario, in *Carmen* with the Canadian Opera Company and as Papageno in Ottawa.

Stephen Ralls began his musical career in England, following a Master's degree at Merton College, Oxford. He was soon involved in frequent recitals throughout England and in regular broadcasts for the BBC. His work with English Opera Group led to numerous recital appearances with Sir Peter Pears and to Mr Ralls' appointment to the staff of the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh. He came to Canada in 1978, is on the staff of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, and pursues a busy career coaching and accompanying many of Canada's leading singers.

Bruce Ubukata has established a reputation as one of Canada's leading accompanists, and is well-known for his work with soprano Mary Lou Fallis in her successful one-woman shows, *Primadonna*, *Mrs Bach*, and *Fräulein Mozart*., appearing with her at the Edinburgh Festival and the Covent Garden Festival. He is also accompanist for the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus, and Assistant Organist at the Church of St Simon the Apostle in Toronto.

Stephen Ralls and **Bruce Ubukata** are the co-founders and artistic directors of the Toronto-based group, The Aldeburgh Connection. Both of them have visited and worked in Aldeburgh for many summers at the Britten-Pears School, together with many of the singers appearing in their concerts.



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