

THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION

Soirée Musicale

ROSSINI



AT THE ENGLISH SPEAKING UNION
DARTMOUTH HOUSE

THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 1992
7:30 p.m.

SOIRÉE MUSICALE

KATHLEEN BRETT, soprano

LINDA MAGUIRE, mezzo

BENOIT BOUTET, tenor

ERIK OLAND, baritone

STEPHEN RALLS & BRUCE UBUKATA, piano

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We celebrate the bicentennary 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.











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

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

Rossini

Rossini

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.

THE MOST BRILLIANT SALON

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.

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, ahul!

Should you lose your way at night, you will find the path to my cabin; but my dearest thoughts are for one alone. Ahu, Ahul!

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...

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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, and the Government of Canada/Gouvernement du Canada.

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Kathleen Brett appears regularly throughout Canada in opera and concert. 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. During this past year she has 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 sings the role of Marian the Librarian.

Linda Maguire enjoys a very busy musical career which includes performances in works as varied as Britten's *Phaedra*, Handel's *Lucrezia* with Ottawa's Thirteen Strings, and 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 *The Magic Flute* with Canada's baroque opera company, Opera Atelier. Last spring found her in Manila singing works by Handel and Mozart to rave reviews; she has 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*.

Benoît Boutet is one of Canada's leading young tenors, and is in great demand on both opera and concert stages. Recent roles have included Nadir in *The Pearl Fishers* in Minnesota, Camille in *The Merry Widow* in Montreal, Narraboth in Vancouver Opera's *Salome*, 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 also 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, is establishing a solid reputation in opera, concert and oratorio. His performances in Mahler's *Songs of A Wayfarer* have won him wide critical acclaim in both 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*. Other recent engagements have included the leading role of David Wilson in Canadian composer Harry Somers' opera *Serinettes* at the historic Sharon Temple in Ontario, *Carmen* with the Canadian Opera Company, and *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 Peters 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 at the University of Toronto, and pursues a busy career coaching and accompanying many of Canada's best singers.

Bruce Ubukata has established a reputation as one of Canada's leading accompanists. He is well-known for his work with soprano Mary Lou Fallis in her successful one-woman shows, *Primadonna*, *Mrs Bach*, and *Fräulein Mozart*, and has appeared with her at the Edinburgh and the Covent Garden Festivals. 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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The Aldeburgh Connection and today's performers are represented by:
HART/MURDOCK ARTIST'S MANAGEMENT, Toronto, Canada



THE ESU CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Over the last twenty-one years the ESU Cultural Affairs Council has raised sufficient funds for sponsoring 38 Music Scholarships at Tanglewood, Aspen and Yale (USA) and 12 Music Scholarships at Banff (Canada) for British students. 44 Scholarships for US and Commonwealth students have been sponsored at the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Musical Studies at Aldeburgh. In 1990, 2 new Music Scholarships were initiated: The ESU Piano Scholarship to the Academie Internationale de Musique Maurice Ravel, France and the ESU Scholarship to the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove, Cornwall.

Recitals are held at Dartmouth House during the winter months at which young musicians give great pleasure while gaining experience.

WHAT IS THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION ?

The ESU is an independent, non-political body, which exists to promote international friendship and understanding. It believes that this cannot be left to governments alone but must be done at a personal level. It believes that this can most effectively be achieved through the medium of the English language.

As an educational charity the ESU works through people-to people exchanges, scholarships, speaking competitions and programmes dealing with cultural and current affairs.

Its international headquarters is at Dartmouth House, London and it has 47 branches in Britain and 80 branches in the United States of America. There are also branches around the world in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. The worldwide membership is 35,000 and growing.