

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

1994



First Violins

Martyn Blythe
Helen Beke
Katalin Beke
Susan Bellingham
Colin Elton
Margaret Friar
Jo Jordan
Jennifer Lewis
David Smith

Violoncellos

Margaret Bell
Glyn Davies
Louise Lawrie
Sheila Moore
Richard Painter
Sylvia Ulrich
Maggie Wenham

Bassoons

Michael Darke
Doug Servant

Horns

Percy Cotterell
Stuart McCourt

Basses

Chris Lewis
John Mason
Jennifer Moore

Trumpets

Jeremy Cross
Kevin Wedrychowski

Second Violins

Barbara Bostock
Michael Clement
Ken Hawkins
Margaret Myatt
Ros Rayner
Jenny Walton
Philip Ward

Flutes

Diana Manasseh
Krista Bromley
Heather Lancaster

Timpani

Peter Morley

Violas

Sharon Bayley
David Cope
Sheila Freeman
Philip Turley

Oboes

Richard Anderson
Gareth Craddock

Clarinets

Diana Cotterell
Lynn Sargeant

WOLVERHAMPTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONCERT AT THE MASONIC HALL, WOLVERHAMPTON

THURSDAY, JULY 14th 1994

AND IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH, ALBRIGHTON

SATURDAY, 16TH JULY 1994

PROGRAMME

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Overture to Cosi fan' Tutte Mozart
Petite Symphonie Gounod

Interval

Serenade for Strings Elgar
Symphony no. 4 (Italian) Mendelssohn

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Conductor - Christopher Eldridge
Leader - Martyn Blythe

Overture to Così fan' Tutte - Mozart (1756-1791)

This sparkling lightweight overture was written for the comic opera of the same name in 1790. The libretto, by Da Ponte, was allegedly so bad that several attempts were made to rewrite it to match Mozart's wonderful music. Two English versions known as "Tit for Tat" (1828) and "The Retaliation" (1841) were also produced. A slow opening with a touch of melancholy initiated by the oboe gives us a false impression of the mood to follow. After several striking chords on full orchestra we are launched into a bubbling string background upon which the woodwind weave their joyful patterns, tossing them from one instrument to another. These episodes are punctuated by tutti interjections until chords of the opening solemnly reappear, concluding the overture.

"Petite Symphonie" - Gounod (1818-1893)

Charles Gounod was by far the most successful opera composer of mid-nineteenth century Paris, although he wrote extensively in other media, notably sacred music. The strength of his music comes from his ability to write good melodies. This is evident in the Petite Symphonie for Wind that he wrote at the age of 69. The first movement begins with a slow introduction on a four-note motif which forms the basis of the following allegretto. The second movement is built on suavely melodious cantilenas. In the scherzo the composer has turned his attention on the horn section with horn calls at the beginning and obstinate reiterated dissonant seconds in the middle of the movement. The work ends with a very happy and lively finale with material from the first movement, making the work cyclic in style.

XXXXXINTERVALXXXXX

Serenade for Strings Op. 20 - Elgar (1857-1934)

The Serenade for Strings claims attention not merely because of its length but also by reason of its beauty of conception. It is in three movements. The first movement (Allegro piacevole) sets a mood of restlessness; an agitated figure in the violas heralds the first subject. The second movement is less breezy but certainly has no note of resignation about it.

The second movement is a Larghetto in 2/4 time and is sheer lyricism. The finale (Allegretto) is reminiscent of the material of the first movement, thus acting as a unifying influence. Although simple in its structure, this work is no less satisfying in design than in beauty of thought.

Symphony no. 4 (The Italian) - Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

In 1832 the Philharmonic Society of London commissioned Mendelssohn to compose a symphony, an overture and a vocal piece. The overture was "The Hebrides" and the symphony was "The Italian" which was written during his long tour of Italy.

The symphony has the lightness and clarity of Mozart, the orchestration reflecting this. The first movement opens with the theme in the upper strings over an accompaniment of reiterated wind chords. The theme is tossed about between strings and woodwind before the second theme appears in the clarinets and bassoons and then flutes and oboes. A new string melody appears heralding the thematic development in the style of a fugue. A fine crescendo leads to the customary restatement of the opening section of the movement. A coda using the earlier fugal theme brings the movement to an exhilarating close.

The second movement (Andante con moto) is at a processional pace which may have been associated with the "Carrying of the Host", a common sight in Italian cities. The principal melody is played on the oboes, bassoons and violas, accompanied by a pizzicato bass line.

The third movement is a minuet but without the artificial formality of the old court dance. In the trio the horns and bassoons have a particularly beautiful role, introducing a note of solemnity. The minuet is then repeated with interjections.

The Salterello which forms the finale is fairly clean cut. There are three melodies. The first appears on coupled flutes, the second in the violins. These are actual salterello tunes. As they develop, a writhing third melody insinuates itself; it drops no stitches as do the others and it is this melodic line that is more styled on the tarantella. The rest of the movement develops from this material.

C.E.

Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra is grateful to Birmingham Public Library for the loan of the music.