

BRISTOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Tim Harrison
Leader: Lisa Orton
Soloist: Nicholas Shipman

CONCERT PROGRAMME

Saturday 23rd November 2019 7:30pm
Trinity Henleaze
United Reformed Church

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Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)**Overture: *Peter Schmoll***

Carl Maria von Weber was the son of a travelling theatre director whose musical family also included the successful soprano Aloysia, Mozart's first real love, and her sister Constanze, who became Mozart's wife. His most famous work is the romantic opera *Der Freischütz*, justly a perennial favourite especially with German audiences, who love the frisson of excitement aroused by its darkly supernatural elements.

Peter Schmoll was Weber's third opera, written when he was eighteen. Although reasonably accomplished, it was a complete flop; premiered in 1803, it vanished without trace apart from an isolated revival in 1968 somewhere in Suffolk. Its tuneful and accomplished overture does, however, receive periodic airings.

Soon after composing *Peter Schmoll* he accidentally drank engraving acid, perhaps mistaking it for one of those fiery German spirits or *Schnaps*, and was very ill for two months. We are fortunate that he survived to endow the musical world with one operatic masterpiece, famous overtures to several other operas, and other fine music.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**Clarinet Concerto in A major K622**

Allegro – Adagio – Rondo: Allegro

1791 was exceptionally busy even by Mozart's standards, starting with the January premiere (by himself) of his superlative Piano Concerto no. 27. He wrote his *opera seria*, *La clemenza di Tito*, performed in Prague in September, and the semi-comic *Die Zauberflöte* was premiered in that same month in Vienna. September was also when he received a mysterious commission for a Requiem mass. In July his wife, Constanze, had given birth to a son - a worrying time, since only one of their previous five infants had survived babyhood. How Mozart also found the time and inspiration to compose the Clarinet Concerto in October of the same year is beyond imagining. But his frenetic activity took a severe toll on his health; he soon knew instinctively that his days were numbered, indeed he became convinced that the Requiem, unfinished at the time of his death, was for himself.

This exquisite concerto was composed for Anton Stadler, a close friend, fellow-Mason, and outstanding clarinettist. The first movement combines flowing melodies with excitingly acrobatic leaps, with contrast provided by a brief episode in the minor. The slow movement, in the calmer key of D major, chiefly features a motif of descending scales, apparently utterly simple, yet almost unbearably poignant. The key of A major returns for the mischievous Rondo, bubbling over with good humour though with unexpectedly touching moments: in Mozart the sense of the fragility of life is never quite absent. At the time of the work's composition he had only two months left to live. Two sons grew to adulthood, but neither married, and thus the Mozart line died out.

I n t e r v a l

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Opening to Act II *Die Zauberflöte*: March of the Priests and Sarastro's aria "O Isis und Osiris"

The Magic Flute was Mozart's last opera, composed in the summer of 1791. It is more correctly called a *Singspiel* ("song-play") because it has spoken dialogue (often childishly amusing) in place of operatic recitatives. With colourful characters and elements of fairytale and pantomime, it is often considered the best choice to introduce receptive children to the world of opera; they enjoy its exotic Egyptian setting, the fantastical yet very human bird-catcher Papageno, the evil Queen of the Night, the sheer charm and wit of much of the music, and the storyline of trials to be successfully undergone by the hero, Tamino (protected by his magic flute), to win the sweet Pamina. Yet there is also a strong Masonic content (Mozart was much involved with Freemasonry at the time), centering on the wise Temple priest Sarastro, guardian of Pamina, and including esoteric allusions to Masonic symbolism. This adds a layer of significance to those "in the know", but is far from essential to the audience's enjoyment. *Die Zauberflöte* received 197 performances in the two years following Mozart's death and has remained deservedly popular ever since.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Symphony no. 8 in F major *Allegro vivace et con brio – Allegretto scherzando – Tempo di Menuetto – Allegro vivace*

Composed in 1813, Beethoven's eighth symphony was first performed in February 1814 at a concert that also included his seventh. It was a time of turmoil both politically, with the Napoleonic Wars still raging, and privately for Beethoven's volatile personal relationships, yet this is a happy, witty composition, with unusual key changes and unexpected turns of phrase. None of its four movements is either slow or in a minor key, and so the work lacks any darker or introspective element, let alone the drama of the Fifth or the overwhelming grandeur of the Ninth.

His deafness, the first signs of which he had started to notice when still in his teens, was by now in a fairly advanced state. The composer and brilliant violinist Louis Spohr, playing in the orchestra, described his conducting style: "At a *diminuendo* marking he crouched down lower and lower to indicate the degree of softness. At a *crescendo*, he gradually rose up again, and when it came to *forte* he jumped into the air, sometimes shouting to strengthen the effect.... It was obvious the poor man could no longer hear the quieter passages." At these moments the orchestra in fact found it safer to disregard him and follow its leader.

Certain features of this symphony may be a tribute to Haydn, whom Beethoven deeply admired. Haydn's life overlapped with Beethoven's, who was born when Haydn was nearly 40 and who was nearly 40 himself at the time of Haydn's death. The most obvious of these are the tick-tock rhythm of the second movement, perhaps parodying Haydn's "Clock" symphony, and an unexpectedly loud and jokily dissonant chord a little way into the final movement, recalling the "Surprise" symphony. Haydn and Mozart (another idol) wrote beautifully for the horn and clarinet, and Beethoven gives these two instruments some lovely solos in the trio of the Minuet. Altogether it is easy to see why Beethoven considered this symphony one of his best.

Nicholas Shipman began to play the clarinet aged 14. Initially self-taught, he made rapid progress and at age 15 was spotted by a clarinettist in the Hallé Orchestra who advised him to join an intensive specialist training course for gifted young musicians at Leicestershire School of Music, where he received inspirational lessons from eminent clarinettists including Jack Brymer OBE.

At 17 he won a place at the Guildhall School of Music, where his teachers included Dame Thea King, and where in due course he gained his BMus (Hons).

He then spent two years at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague (Netherlands). Back in London in 1999, he began to build his career as a professional soloist and chamber musician. Winning the Croydon Symphony Orchestra Soloist Award (1999) resulted in numerous performances with that orchestra and thence to concerts and recitals in London (Wigmore Hall debut in 2005) and throughout the UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

He continues to appear with many orchestras and chamber groups, performing music by a wide range of composers both classical and contemporary. Local venues where he has played include the Guildhall, Bath, and St George's Bristol.

Tim Harrison, originally from Neath, South Wales, came to Bristol University to study music, specialising in composition and orchestration. He achieved a master's degree in performance on the viola at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, and while there formed his own orchestra, Cardiff Camerata, which prided itself on performing neglected music alongside more popular works. He later gained a PGDip with Distinction for his performances with Sinfonia Newydd and the RWCMD Symphony Orchestra. Now living in Bristol and teaching music in a secondary school, he is in demand as a conductor throughout the wider Bristol area.

Lisa Orton began playing the violin at the age of eight, going on to study with Ralph Holmes at the Royal Academy of Music. After working with both the Welsh National Opera and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestras, she joined the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House where she played for 30 years until her retirement. Since then she has enjoyed working with pianist Marianne Szurma as the Lima Duo and, since moving to Bristol, with the Bristol Chamber Orchestra. She is also currently leader of the Portishead Sinfonia.

The **Bristol Chamber Orchestra**, founded in 1963, has several professionally qualified players amongst its members and gives five or six public concerts a year.

Violins Lisa Orton, Sarah Beetham, Susan Burdock, Wendy Gillman, Jenny Heathcote, Bob Pinniger, Vanessa Pinniger, Morven Ringrose, Celia Skrine, Julia Smyth, Erica Wright

Violas Sara Rigby, Edna Cause, Catharine Deam, Dee James, David Jewell, Joan Sidgreaves.

Cellos Anne Tyler, Alison Bell, Carolyn Little, Peter Soothill, Catherine Tayler, David Trott

Double bass Martin Sanders, Bethan Foister

The orchestra wishes to thank the following players for joining it in this concert:

Flutes: Gareth Williams, Fiona Thompson

Clarinets: Robert Watson, Matt Tanner.

Horns: Andrew Putin, Mike Lea-Wilson

Timpani: Mike Organ

Oboes: Chris Golding, Rob Heathcote.

Bassoons: Jeanie Prince, David Miller

Trumpets: Andrew Stephen, Andrew Jackson

Next concerts of the Bristol Chamber Orchestra:

Friday 3rd April 2020

Friday 26th June 2020

Saturday 27th June 2020

St. Mary Magdalene Church, Stoke Bishop

St Bartholomew's Church, Lower Failand

Parish Church Frenchay