

BRISTOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Tim Harrison
Leader: Lisa Orton
Soloist: Rustom Battiwalla

CONCERT PROGRAMME

Saturday 27th November 2021 7:30pm
Trinity Henleaze
United Reformed Church

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Overture: “The Fair Melusine”

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Mendelssohn wrote this work in 1833 as a concert overture based on a European fairytale. Melusine is a water-sprite married to a mortal, but a magic spell forces her to return to the water one night every week. Her husband, a noble knight, has had to swear never to question her regular disappearances, but finally he cannot resist, and she immediately vanishes, doomed to return to the water as a mermaid for ever.

When asked for an interpretation of the music, Mendelssohn replied simply that it depicted the happiness and unhappiness of two people in an impossible relationship. He brilliantly conjures up the water’s gentle gurgling, followed by turbulence as the drama unfolds.

Piano Concerto no. 5 in E flat, Op.73, “Emperor” Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Allegro – Adagio un poco mosso – Rondo: Allegro

Beethoven – a brilliant pianist himself - wrote this, the last of his five piano concertos, in Vienna in 1809, and dedicated it to his generous and highly musical patron, Archduke Rudolph. The nickname “Emperor” was definitely not Beethoven’s choice. All three movements are in major keys, with not more than a few bars in the minor throughout.

At the time Vienna was under heavy bombardment from Napoleon’s occupying troops, and the noise of warfare was deafening and constant, causing the composer to take refuge in his brother’s basement to protect his failing hearing. That he could compose something so exuberant is nothing short of miraculous.

In a highly unconventional opening, the orchestra plays three separate long-held chords in the home key of E flat major, each followed by a pause during which the piano weaves dazzling flourishes and flights of fancy. The piano then waits silently as the orchestra presents the exposition, the piano then re-states the first theme, and the movement proceeds with a sparkling forward motion and several new thematic ideas.

In the serene slow movement, in the distantly related key of B major, the piano sings a gloriously sustained melody enhanced by extensive rippling runs. New melodies are heard as the movement proceeds. It ends on a long-held single B on the bassoons; this descends by a semitone on the horns to introduce a return to the home key of E flat major. The piano then quietly tries out the first arpeggio notes of the distinctive rondo theme, before suddenly romping ahead in a joyously dancing 6/8 rhythm. Right at the end, one more surprise is in store.

I n t e r v a l

Dance of the Furies from *Orfeo ed Euridice*

**Christoph Willibald Gluck
(1714-1787)**

Orpheus is familiar from classical mythology for his miraculous ability to charm every living thing with his music. In Gluck's opera, composed in 1774, Orpheus's wife Eurydice has died from a snake bite; desolate, he rages against the gods until Cupid promises him that he can descend into Hades and bring her back if he can appease the Furies, guardians of the underworld, by singing and playing his lute. This fast and furious dance accompanies their initial refusal.

Unlike the myth, Gluck's opera ends happily, with love and constancy rewarded.

Symphony no. 103 in E flat, "Drumroll"

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Adagio; Allegro con spirito - Andante - Menuetto – Finale: Allegro con spirito

Haydn spent 30 years of his life, until the age of 58, as Kapellmeister in the service of the music-loving Prince Esterházy, in an isolated castle deep in the Austrian countryside, charged with keeping up a flow of original compositions for his exacting employer. Haydn enjoyed an unusual degree of job security and was allowed to have his works published by various reputable firms, which meant that his fame as a truly outstanding composer spread throughout Europe and beyond. But he could never travel except as part of the prince's retinue, and the fact that he had to wear the Esterházy court livery was a constant reminder that he was and remained a servant.

In 1790 his employer died, and Haydn was free at last. He went straight to Vienna, where the English impresario J.P. Salomon immediately sought him out and carried him off to London. Thus began the first of Haydn's two prolonged London visits, his only obligation being to compose two sets of six symphonies; basking in the adulation and affection being showered upon him, he responded with works of unsurpassable brilliance and genial good humour. In between engagements he seized the chance to explore England: Oxford for the award of an honorary degree, Bristol to take the waters at the flourishing Hotwells spa, Ascot for the horse races.

Symphony no. 103, the "Drumroll", was written in 1795 during the second London visit. It is full of surprises from the very start. In the opening movement the stately slow introduction gives no hint of the fun and games to follow in the fast main section. The second movement is a set of increasingly complex variations on two Croatian folksong melodies, one minor, the other major; the folk-dance-like Menuetto has a contrasting trio section of charming simplicity. Haydn surpasses himself in the finale, a stream of delightful invention.

Haydn died in a Viennese suburb in 1809 during the French occupation that was so distressing to Beethoven. During his final illness Napoleon posted a guard of honour outside his house.

Rustom Battiwalla, born in London, began playing the piano around the age of five. Later he also took up the double bass, and was for several years a member of the London Schools Symphony Orchestra. After leaving school Rustom went to the Guildhall School of Music to study piano, jazz piano and double bass. He emerged with a First Class graduation as well as an Associate Diploma with honours from the Royal College of Music. At this time Rustom made the decision to remain an amateur musician, and since then he has given frequent solo, duet and chamber music recitals around the country. Rustom lives in Bristol with his wife and daughter, and when he is not playing the piano, fulfils his childhood ambition by working as a train driver.

Tim Harrison hails from Neath, South Wales and first came to Bristol to study music at the university, specialising in performance, composition and orchestration. He progressed to a masters degree in performance on the viola at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff and following this, continued as a post-graduate training conductor, gaining a PGDip with Distinction for his performances. 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.

1st Violins: Lisa Orton, Susan Burdock, Wendy Gillman, Jenny Heathcote, Morven Ringrose, Scarlett Sullivan.

2nd Violins: Bob Pinniger, Nan Akrill, Philippa Heather, Trevor Jennings, Ebony Love, Eloise Massett, Iona Ramsey, Rebecca Riley, Celia Skrine, Julia Smyth, Erica Wright.

Violas: Vanessa Pinniger, Edna Cause, Catharine Deam, David Jewell, Rebecca O'Brien.

Cellos: Anne Tyler, Alison Bell, Carolyn Little, Peter Soothill.

Double bass: Martin Sanders.

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

Flutes: Gareth Williams, Jane Foister. **Oboes:** Rob Heathcote, Chris Golding.

Clarinets: Robert Watson, Matt Tanner. **Bassoons:** Jeanie Worthington, Louise Tricklebank.

Horns: Mike Lea-Wilson, Sue Tyley. **Trumpets:** Andrew Stephen, Nerys Watts.

Timpani: Mike Organ.

Next concerts of the Bristol Chamber Orchestra:

Friday	9th	April 2022	St. Mary Magdalene Church, Stoke Bishop
Friday	1st	July 2022	St Bartholomew's Church, Lower Failand
Saturday	2nd	July 2022	Parish Church Frenchay