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MUSIC FROM DENMARK AND AUSTRIA

MOZART

Overture to 'The Marriage of Figaro'

NIELSEN

Clarinet Concerto

SOLOIST:

Joseph Shiner

Supported by the City Music Foundation

BEETHOVEN

from 'The Creatures of Prometheus'

SCHUBERT

Symphony No. 3

CONDUCTOR:

Howard Williams

Saturday 14th May 2022 7:30pm

Downing Place URC, Cambridge

Programme

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PROGRAMME

Overture: The Marriage of Figaro

MOZART

Clarinet Concerto

NIELSEN

— INTERVAL —
(20 minutes)

The Creatures of Prometheus (Ballet Music)

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 3 in D major

SCHUBERT

JOSEPH SHINER *Clarinet*

HOWARD WILLIAMS *Conductor*

NEW CAMBRIDGE SINFONIA

PAUL WARBURTON *Leader*

Overture: The Marriage of Figaro

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

The Marriage of Figaro marked Mozart's first operatic collaboration with the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte. They chose the Beaumarchais comedy as the basis of the new opera; a bold choice in the climate of theatre censorship which prevailed in the Vienna of Emperor Joseph II. As expected, the Emperor disapproved of this story, which so vigorously attacked the aristocracy and the existing social order, but he was eventually won over by Mozart's music (and after some of the most offensive passages of social criticism had been deleted). The first performance of the



opera, at the Burgtheater, on 1 May 1786, was a tremendous success, but in the bear-garden of Viennese musical life Mozart's enemies were able to drive it off the stage after only nine performances. Such a great work could not be stifled for ever, though, and after it was seen in Prague, later in the year, the people took it to their hearts and its success was assured.

Love and duty are the principal themes of the opera and the characters of Figaro and Count Almaviva reflect the conflicting forces of the times – the unswerving commitment of the aristocracy to the status quo, contrasted with the ordinary man who would soon grasp the reins of power through revolution. The inner feelings of the characters, especially of the Countess, are completely realized in Mozart's score.

It has been said that in writing the overture to the opera Mozart had in mind the play's alternative title *La Folle Journée* (*A Mad Day's Work*), and it is certainly a work of spontaneous gaiety from start to finish. It was originally sketched on conventional lines, with a slow middle section, but it seems that Mozart was unwilling to interrupt the flow of jollity, and so the andante was removed. It exhibits a profusion of thematic invention, with tunes falling over each other in their forward thrust, always in a single tempo and tonic-dominant based, but having no close relationship to the opera which follows.

Clarinet Concerto

Carl Nielsen (1865 – 1931)

Nielsen first entered the music profession as a regimental bugler at the age of 14, although from early childhood he had played the violin alongside his father for the villagers on his home island of Fünen. He went on to study composition and violin at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, and while his ambition was to compose, economic realities obliged him to earn a living as a performer. For six years he played second violin in the orchestra of the Royal Danish Opera, subsequently becoming its conductor.



It is as a symphonist that Nielsen is best known outside Denmark, and the six symphonies that he wrote between 1890 and 1925 demonstrate an extraordinary evolution from a more-or-less conventional late-nineteenth century style to a highly personal form of expression – still grounded in tonality, but sounding unlike anything else being written at that time. The clarinet concerto of 1928 was his last orchestral work and is the quintessence of late Nielsen. As Robert Layton wrote: "If ever there was music from another planet, this is surely it. Its sonorities are sparse and monochrome, its air rarefied and bracing".

In 1922, Nielsen composed a wind quintet for the Copenhagen Wind Quintet (a work which a century later still stands as one of the few truly great works for this combination of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon). Its success prompted Nielsen to promise a concerto for each of the players, but only two were written: this one, and the earlier flute concerto of 1926, much to the chagrin of players of the other three instruments.

The clarinet concerto was dedicated to Aage Oxenvad, and at the time it was written was the most difficult concerto ever written for that instrument (it is still one of the major peaks in the clarinet repertoire, demanding phenomenal technique). Nielsen conceived the concerto as a portrait of Oxenvad, both the artist and the human being, exploiting the full range of an instrument that, in Oxenvad's hands, "can be warmhearted or charged with extreme excitement, which can be mild as balm or can squeal like a train on poorly greased rails".

It is cast in three major sections, played as one continuous movement: *Allegro un poco*, *Poco Adagio*, and *Allegro non troppo*, and is scored for strings, plus two bassoons and two horns, together with a prominent part for snare drum. Nielsen had previously featured the snare drum as an antagonist, pitted against the rest of the orchestra, in his stupendous 5th Symphony of 1921-22, and the instrument plays a similarly disruptive role in this concerto. In conception, the concerto is very much in the romantic mould of heroic soloist versus the orchestra, but it sounds nothing like Tchaikovsky or Rachmaninov. Unusually for mature Nielsen, the concerto ends in the same key in which it begins (F major), but there are repeated takeover attempts by

E major, and this harmonic instability, and the resultant dissonances, gives the work a distinctly modernist edge.

By its fourth performance it was being unanimously acclaimed as a masterpiece by both public and critics and, in the 94 years that have since elapsed, it has remained central to the clarinet's concerto repertoire, second only to the Mozart.

The Creatures of Prometheus Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Act 1: Numbers 1 (Poco Adagio), 2 (Adagio – Allegro con brio), and 3 (Minuetto)

Act 2: Numbers 15 (Andantino – Adagio) and 16 (Finale)

In 1800 Beethoven was commissioned to write a ballet for the Vienna Court Theatre to honour Empress Maria Theresa. *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus*, literally the creatures, or creations of Prometheus, was the chosen subject, a choice which may have been influenced by the recent success of Haydn's *The Creation*. Although Beethoven was scathing about the court's ballet master Salvatore Viganò, his production of the ballet was a great success, receiving fourteen performances in 1801, and nine in 1802. For this story of the legendary figure, who stole fire from Zeus in order to create mankind from clay, Beethoven wrote an introduction and sixteen numbers, preceded by an overture. The latter is now a favourite concert piece, but tonight we shall play a selection from the subsequent ballet. Much of this music is a lot more easy-going than one might anticipate, given the composer.



Act 1 commences with an introduction (not heard tonight) that illustrates the fierce storm conjured up by Zeus in an ineffective attempt to prevent Prometheus from giving fire to lifeless humanity (represented by two statues). We join the action in number 1, which depicts the statues, a man and a woman, coming to life and dancing around in a carefree manner, much to Prometheus's annoyance. In number 2 Prometheus considers destroying humanity, but a divine intervention causes him to change his mind. Number 3 is a particularly charming movement, and shows Prometheus introducing the couple to flowers and fruit, after which he leads them off to Parnassus, to meet the god Apollo.

Act 2 is represented tonight by two of its numbers. 15 shows the man being presented to Apollo (this was a solo for Viganò in the original production). The subsequent finale depicts the wedding of the man and woman, and general rejoicing at Prometheus's success. This finale contains the famous *Prometheus* theme, which Beethoven used as the basis for great finale of the *Eroica* Symphony.

Symphony No. 3 in D major

Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828)

Adagio maestoso—Allegro con brio

Intermezzo: allegretto

Minuetto: vivace

Finale: presto vivace

In his first three symphonies (written between 1813 and 1815) the young Schubert took as his model the symphony as it had emerged in the mature works of Haydn and Mozart. They were usually in four movements, beginning with a slow introduction; the slow movement would come second, followed by a minuet and trio. The finale would often be in rondo form. Schubert followed these conventions quite closely whilst putting his particular stamp on them. He also chose keys (D major for Nos 1 and 3, B flat for No 2) which suited the valveless trumpets and horns of the day.



The *Third Symphony* is a work of great charm and humour, though somewhat lighter than the two earlier ones. Schubert (now aged 18) began it in May 1815 but set it aside after the composition of the *Adagio maestoso* introduction and the beginning of the first movement. He resumed work on it in July, and completed the symphony in a mere eight days.

The main *Allegro con brio* section of the first movement begins with a crisp, rhythmic theme full of Viennese gaiety. A second theme continues in a similar vein; already Schubert shows himself to be a master of modulation and the movement develops through a delightful sequence of key changes, with much orchestral ingenuity.

The second movement is a graceful *intermezzo*. The melody unfolds, without elaboration, with almost childlike innocence. The *Minuetto* is introduced by a short theme played in unison by the full orchestra, its *ländler*-like *Trio* is a melodic gem. The fast and lively finale reveals Schubert in particularly joyous mood.

Notes by:

Mozart - John Dalton; Nielsen - John Cook

Beethoven - John Dalton, adapted by John Cook

Schubert - Thomas Radice

JOSEPH SHINER

Clarinetist Joseph Shiner regularly appears at venues and festivals around the United Kingdom and internationally, with recent engagements at Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, Bridgwater Hall, Snape Maltings, Holywell Music Room and Barbican Centre, as well as the Oxford Lieder and St Magnus International festivals. His awards include the Hattori Foundation Senior Award, the Philip and Dorothy Green Award (for Young Concert Artists), and the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Prince's Prize. A selected artist for Making Music and the City Music Foundation, he has also appeared several times on BBC Radio 3's 'In Tune' programme, as well as in BBC Music Magazine's 'Rising Star' feature.



As a chamber musician Joseph has enjoyed collaborations with Maiastra, the Allegri and Endellion quartets, and with pianists Somi Kim, Keval Shah, James Baillieu, Christopher Glynn, Sholto Kynoch and Ashley Fripp. In 2019, Joseph released his first solo recording on Orchid Classics, surveying Brahms' works for clarinet with piano and 'cello with Somi Kim and Yoanna Prodanova. The disc was a Classic FM 'Album of the Week', and hailed by Gramophone for its 'stormy grandiloquence' and 'twilit poetry'.

Joseph is also a founding member of the award-winning 'Magnard Ensemble', active in recital, education and artist project work, as well as recording for the Orchid Classics and Toccata Classics labels, with music by Paul Patterson, Martin Butler, and Stephen Dodgson. Orchestral credits include performances with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, BBC Concert Orchestra, Aurora Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Joseph studied at Wells Cathedral School with Kevin Murphy, Timothy Orpen and David Campbell, before reading Music at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University, graduating with double First Class honours. He then studied with Angela Malsbury, Mark van de Wiel and Chi-Yu Mo at the Royal Academy of Music, where he graduated with Distinction and the DipRAM. He has also studied with Patrick Messina, Christopher Richards, and Andrew Marriner, and taken part in masterclasses with Howard Klug, Karl Leister, Julian Farrell and Robert Plane.

In August 2022, Joseph will commence the C.V. Starr Doctoral Fellowship at the Juilliard School in New York City, studying with Anthony McGill, principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic.

www.josephshiner.co.uk

HOWARD WILLIAMS

Musical Director of the Sinfonia of Cambridge/New Cambridge Sinfonia since 2013 and one of Britain's most experienced conductors on the international platform, Howard Williams has covered a formidable range of work both in the opera house and concert hall. In the UK, he has conducted the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and BBC Symphony, as well as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, Bournemouth Symphony and Sinfonietta, English Chamber Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, London Sinfonietta, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Concert Orchestra and the Ulster Orchestra. He has conducted at the BBC Proms and at the Edinburgh, Leeds, Bath and Brighton Festivals, as at festivals in Budapest, Hong Kong, and throughout France and Spain. He has appeared in the concert seasons of leading orchestras throughout Europe.



Howard studied at Oxford and Liverpool Universities and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London. Joining English National Opera as répétiteur and then Chorus Master he went on to conduct eleven productions for ENO. At the same time he conducted Opera Factory in its opening London seasons, firstly with Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* and then Tippett's *The Knot Garden*, both televised by Channel 4. Williams's operatic premières have also included his own completion for Radio France of Bizet's largest opera, *Ivan IV*, (to be performed in 2022 at the St. Petersburg Opera and in Meiningen), He conducted the UK première of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*.

With the Baroque Orchestra of English Bach Festival he has conducted productions at Covent Garden of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Purcell's *Fairy Queen* and *Dido and Aeneas* and Handel's *Oreste*. With them he also took to Madrid a production with historical instruments of Rossini's *Le siège de Corinthe*. Howard made many guest appearances with the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden, as well as with the Dutch National Ballet, Netherlands Dance Theatre and Hamburg Ballet.

Following his appointment in 1989 as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Pécs Symphony Orchestra (now the Pannon Philharmonic), Hungary, Howard worked with most of the leading orchestras in that country. He has been awarded an Artisjus award for his services to new Hungarian music, and the Bartók Medal for services to Hungarian music abroad.

On leaving Pécs in 2000, Howard Williams was appointed to the new post of Head of Conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, as well as becoming Artistic Director of the Oxford Orchestra da Camera and of the Choir of the 21st Century in London.

In the concert hall Williams has conducted world premières of works by Tippett, Ligeti, Holloway, Schurmann, Cowie, and Smalley amongst many others. Thus contemporary works are a normal and essential part of his programming, although his commitment to authentic performances of Baroque and Classical music is always in evidence. His lifelong passion for the choral and oratorio repertoire, too, remains as strong as ever. Later this year he will conduct the Berlioz Grande Messe des Morts in Budapest.

His six years in Cardiff enabled Howard to explore and develop his attitude to the teaching of conductors. He is now Professor of Conducting at the Royal College of Music in London, a regular guest tutor at the London Conducting Workshop and is much in demand as a trainer of conductors and orchestras in the Far East and Australia.

www.howardwilliams.com



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Dawn Walters
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Andrea Broadbent
John Mascal
Stuart Holder
Philip Hines

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Bob Ellis
Alun Williams
Edna Murphy
Mathew Lee

Cello

Sharon Beale
Stuart Clow
Chris Goodwin
Andrea Vinkler
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Jon Halton
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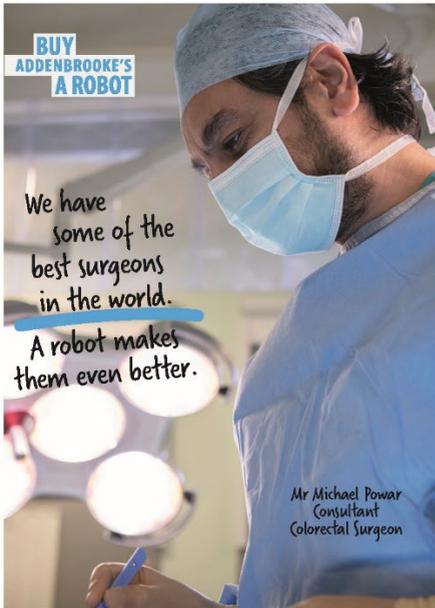
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It will comprise John Tavener's transcendental cello concerto
The Protecting Veil, with soloist Graham Walker,
and Mozart's divine 13-wind serenade K361 (*Gran Partita*).
Howard Williams will conduct, and Paul Warburton will lead.**

Please make a note in your diary now!