



THE NATIONAL TRUST

presents

OPERA SPECTACULAR

with the

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC OPERA ORCHESTRA

and the

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

Conductor: Neville Creed
Tenor: Edmund Barham

PETWORTH PARK
Sunday 30th June 1991



PROGRAMME

OVERTURE to WILLIAM TELL

Gioacchino Antonio Rossini (1792-1868)

Allegro vivace

William Tell was Rossini's last opera before he took early retirement from composition at the age of 38. It is based on the story by Schiller and unusually for Rossini the overture provides an introduction to the action of the opera. The rousing *allegro* finale is used in the opera to symbolize the triumph of the Swiss people over their oppressors.

CHORUS OF THE HEBREW SLAVES from NABUCCO

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Nabucco was the first of Verdi's operatic successes. The opera deals with the plight of the Jews following their defeat at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. In this chorus from Act III, the captive Jews recall their homeland. Among the Italian audiences the chorus soon became associated with their own patriotism and fight against Austrian domination. The melodic fervour of unison voices, bursting into harmony at the third verse helped to make this almost a second national anthem for Italians and one of the world's great hymns to liberty.

EXTRACTS from CARMEN

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

Aragonais Intermezzo Danse Bohème Flower Song Toreador Chorus

Carmen has become, as Tchaikovsky predicted, the most popular opera in the world, even though the French public were initially shocked by it and it was a failure at its first performance. In the opera, Don José is torn between two women; the gentle and devoted Micaela, and the promiscuous and alluring Carmen whom he loves with a passion he cannot control. When she deserts him for the bullfighter the struggle destroys him. The *Aragonaise* leads in to Act IV, suggesting the teeming activity in a square in Seville where the tragedy will reach its climax. The *Intermezzo* introduces the rustic tranquility of the smugglers' camp in the mountains at the start of Act III. *Danse Bohème* is an arrangement of the gypsy dance at the beginning of Act II in Lillas Pastias' Inn. Don José sings the Flower Song when he meets Carmen in Act II; while Carmen mocks his love he falls at her feet admitting his passion and shows her, as a sign of his love, the flower she had thrown at him when they last met. The Toreador Chorus is sung by the crowd gathered outside the bullring to see the procession of bullfight assistants and the Torero Escamillo with Carmen at his side.

RECONDITA ARMONIA from TOSCA

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1914)

In Act I of **Tosca** Cavaradossi is at work on a painting of Mary Magdalene. The painting bears an unmistakable resemblance to a beautiful young woman who has been visiting the chapel to prepare a hiding place for her brother who is an escaped prisoner. Cavaradossi compares her features with those of his beloved Tosca in the aria *Recondita armonia de bellezze* - 'mysterious harmony of contrasting beauties'.

GRAND MARCH from AIDA

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

The Grand March opens Act II, Scene 2 of **Aida** where, at the gates of Thebes, King and people await the arrival of the victorious Radames who has defeated the Ethiopians. The people salute their hero in song and dance. At the first performance in Cairo in 1871 this scene boasted all the exotic delights of Egypt - Arab trumpeters, native military band and hundreds of singers and dancers.

INTERVAL

(30 minutes)

OVERTURE to **THE BARBER OF SEVILLE** *Gioacchino Antonio Rossini (1792-1868)*

The Barber of Seville, Rossini's most celebrated opera, was written at a particularly busy time in his life and was completed in less than three weeks. In the chaos Rossini apparently lost the original overture which was said to be based on popular Spanish themes and he quickly touched up one he had written for *Aureliano in Palmira* some years earlier. After an imposing introduction to still a chattering audience the music proceeds with bouncing humour and dry wit.

E LUCEVAN LE STELLE from **TOSCA** *Giacomo Puccini (1858-1914)*

By Act III of **Tosca** Cavaradossi is awaiting his execution having been arrested by the jealous chief of police - Scarpia. He writes a farewell letter to Tosca and recalls his happy memories and dwells on his despair at separation in the aria *E lucevan le stelle ed olezzava la terra* - 'when the stars were brightly shining and faint perfumes pervaded the air'.

ANVIL CHORUS from **IL TROVATORE** *Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)*

Although the libretto of **Il Trovatore** is considered by some to be absurd, the opera itself has had worldwide popularity. The hero Maurico, the son of a count, is brought up as a gypsy and in this scene he is at the encampment with Azucena, the woman who abducted him in revenge for her mother's death. She has brought him up as her son always with the thought that through him she might wreak vengeance upon his kindred. The gypsy chorus greets the dawn accompanied by hammering on their anvils.

LA DONNA È MOBILE from **RIGOLETTO** *Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)*

Rigoletto is based on Victor Hugo's play *La Roi s'amuse*. The censors were not amused and changes had to be made. In particular, the wicked hero François I of France in the play became the Duke of Mantua in the opera. The story is as follows: the Duke has seduced Rigoletto's daughter and revenge is planned. Rigoletto hires an assassin to kill the Duke, who is lured to a tavern where he has been promised a night of pleasure. The Duke orders some wine and sings his famous aria *La donna è mobile* - 'women are fickle'. The assassin is persuaded not to kill the Duke but a stranger instead and the opera ends tragically as the stranger turns out to be Rigoletto's own daughter.

PRELUDE to ACT 3 of **LOHENGRIN** *Richard Wagner (1813-1883)*

The vigorous marching rhythms and brazen quality of Wagner's Prelude to Act III of **Lohengrin** provides a splendid backdrop for the bustling activity of wedding preparations. In the opera, the Prelude is followed by the famous Bridal Chorus which celebrates the union of Elsa and Lohengrin.

NESSUN DORMA from **TURANDOT** *Giacomo Puccini (1858-1914)*

Turandot is based on an ancient fairy tale about a cruel Princess who slays those who love her unless they can answer three riddles. One suitor, Calaf, manages to solve them but he says that he is prepared to die if she can discover his name. Turandot commands that no one shall sleep until the name is revealed. Calaf, confident that it will remain a secret and that he will win the hand of Turandot, sings the famous aria *Nessun dorma* - 'none shall sleep'. Turandot eventually learns the meaning of true love, and in jubilation the people cry out *O Sole! Vita! Eternita!* - 'O Sun! Life! Eternity!'

POLOVTSIAN DANCES from **PRINCE IGOR** *Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)*

Borodin began working on his opera **Prince Igor** in 1869 but it was left incomplete at his death in 1887 and Rimsky-Korsakov orchestrated it for its first performance. The Polovtsian Dances form the colourful and exhilarating finale to Act II which is set in the camp of Khan Konchak. The Khan has defeated Prince Igor who is held prisoner. Because of the Prince's bravery however, he is treated as an honoured guest rather than a captive, and entertained with the spectacular Polovtsian Dances. They are danced by Konchak's slaves and range from the sensually enticing to the barbarously savage.

THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC OPERA ORCHESTRA

The Royal Philharmonic Opera Orchestra was formed as a direct result of the growing demand for a high quality orchestra to perform opera and ballet music to an ever-increasing, appreciative audience. Shortly after its formation, the orchestra received invitations to participate in such prestigious events as the Nile Festival and the London International Opera Festival. Since then, there have been numerous appearances at major venues such as the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Festival Hall, in performances of 'Turandot', and the perennially popular 'Opera Spectacular'. Recent highlights have included concerts with José Carreras and Montserrat Caballe. Future plans include tours in Europe and the Far East.

THE GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

The Guildford Philharmonic Choir was formed in order to perform the major choral repertoire with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra. As well as performing well-known choral works, the choir specializes in 20th century British music and this has led to recordings of Gerald Finzi's 'Intimations of Immortality' with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra and Patrick Hadley's 'The Trees So High' with the Philharmonia Orchestra. The choir is conducted by some of the most eminent British Musicians including Sir Charles Groves (Principal Conductor), Vernon Handley and Sir David Willcocks. As well as giving frequent concerts in Guildford, the choir occasionally visits other British cities. In 1988 the Choir visited Paris and last year joined forces with the Freiburger Bach Choir in Freiburg Münster.

NEVILLE CREED - Conductor

Neville Creed began his conducting career whilst a choral scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge. He then became Director of Choral Music at Tiffin School in Kingston-upon-Thames, providing choirs for several highly acclaimed recordings on radio, television and disc. The Tiffin Boys' Choir recording of Mahler's 8th Symphony with The London Philharmonic under Klaus Tennstedt gained a nomination for a 'Grammy' award. In 1986 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Guildhall School of Music where he won the Ricordi Conducting Prize. Whilst at the Guildhall he conducted the second British staging of the opera 'Julietta' by Martinu. Since completing his studies he has founded the London Musici Singers, been appointed Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Guildhall Philharmonic Choir, as well as being invited to return to the Guildhall to conduct. In 1988 he won the second prize in the First International Choral Conducting Competition held in Italy. Last summer he conducted the European Community Chamber Orchestra in France and he regularly conducts in Denmark. He has given several concerts with the Royal Philharmonic Pops Orchestra in Petworth Park and at the Exeter Festival.

EDMUND BARHAM - Tenor

Edmund Barham studied at Trinity College of Music, London and the London Opera Centre. Beginning his professional singing career in Wuppertal, he sang the leading roles in the lyric tenor repertoire. Moving on to Munich he became a member of the company of the Theater am Gärtnerplatz. He has sung leading tenor roles in a number of major German Opera Houses and in 1985 sang Jenik in a new production of Smetana's 'The Bartered Bride' at the English National Opera. He returned to the English National Opera in 1986 to sing Turiddu in a new production of Mascagni's 'Cavalleria Rusticana' and since then he has taken an extremely wide range of parts for the company. Other recent engagements include Verdi's 'Il Trovatore' in Switzerland, the overseas premiere of Howard Blake's 'Benedictus' in Norway, the 'Gounod Grande Messe Solonelle' for BBC Television and a recording of the Rossini 'Petite Messe Solonelle' with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Future engagements include a new production of Verdi's 'Don Carlos' for English National Opera, Don Jose in Bizet's 'Carmen' for the Bregenz Festival and Pinkerton in Puccini's 'Madam Butterfly' for Welsh National Opera.

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