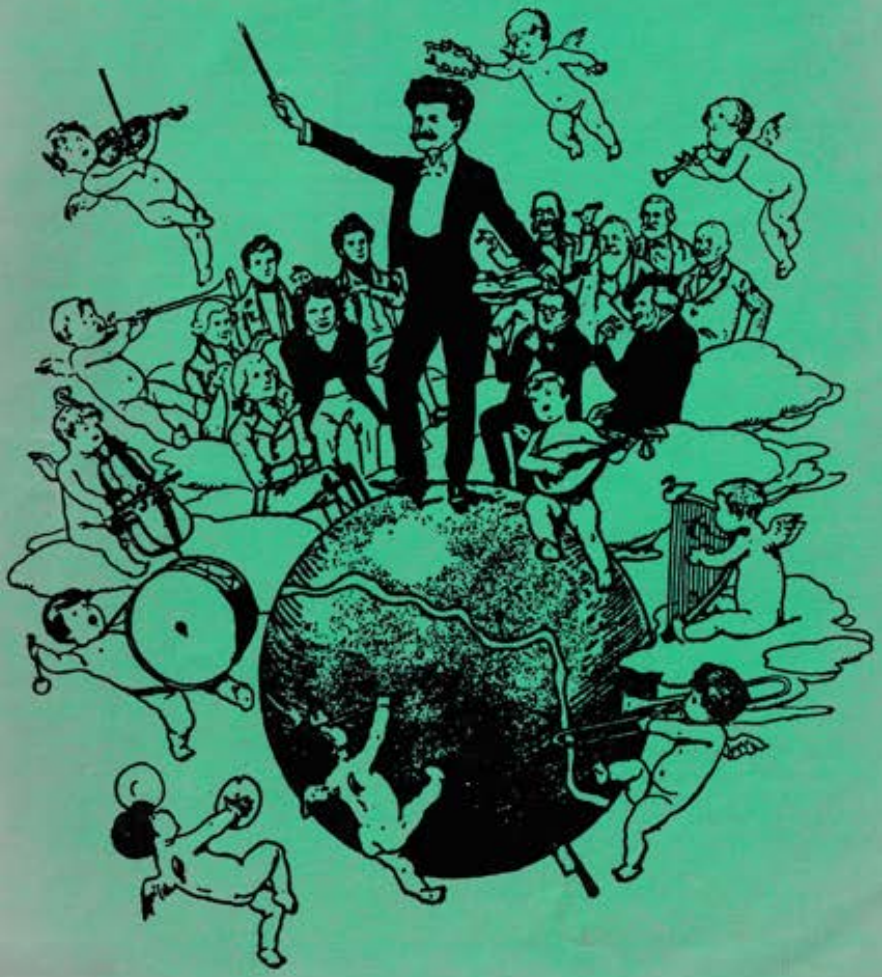
CBSO PROMS 1974

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Italian Festival

Saturday 13 July 1974 at 7.30 p.m., Town Hall Birmingham.



Louis Frémaux

Photo: Constantine

Cover: 'Strauss Concert in Heaven', by Theo Zasche. Johann Strauss II is in the centre. The front row of his celestial audience comprises Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Wagner. Behind are Haydn, Johann Strauss I, Lanner, Offenbach, Brahms, Verdi and Bruckner.

CBSO

Leader: Felix Kok

Conductor: LOUIS FRÉMAUX

Italian Festival

Overture, The Italian Girl in Algiers .. Rossini
Symphonic Poem, The Fountains of Rome Respighi
Symphony No. 4 in A, opus 90 (The Italian) .. .. Mendelssohn

INTERVAL

Refreshments available in the Basement Hall 6.45–10.0 p.m.
Licensed Bar
Light refreshments available in the Lower Gallery during the interval

*Overture, Benvenuto Cellini .. .. .. Berlioz
Roma: Carnival .. .. Bizet
Italian Caprice, opus 45 .. .. .. Tchaikovsky

Patrons are asked not to enter or leave the auditorium while the Orchestra is playing. It would be appreciated if patrons would refrain as far as possible from coughing during the performance

CBSO records and publications are available at the CBSO Information Desk in Box Office No. 2 during the interval and after the concert, where CBSO Society membership subscriptions may also be paid

Floral decorations provided by the Amenities and Recreation Department, City of Birmingham

Symphonic Sketches — An exhibition of musical cartoons is on view in the Basement Bar throughout the Proms. Hand-coloured copies of the cartoons are for sale. The cartoons are by the Orchestra's resident cartoonist — Jeremy

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra receives financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain, Birmingham District Council, the West Midlands Metropolitan County Council and the Midlands Authorities Orchestral Association

***This item is to be recorded shortly by the CBSO and Louis Frémaux, for EMI**

This concert is promoted by the CBSO as part of the Italian Festival arranged by the City in connection with the Lombard Paintings at the City Museum and Art Gallery.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Overture, The Italian Girl in Algiers
Rossini (1792-1868)

This opera, written in the composer's twenty-first year, did much to establish his name as a writer of comic opera. It followed close on the heels of *Tancredi*, a musical flexing of the muscles. A quote from Stendhal in his 'Life of Rossini', cannot be resisted, 'The overture is charming, but it is frivolous; and that indeed is a great fault.' It received its first performance at the Teatro San Benedetto, Venice on May 22nd, 1813. It achieved great popularity and soon received performances in Paris (the first Rossini opera to be produced there), Munich and Vienna. It reached His Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket in 1819. More recently Conchita Supervia scored a triumph in the work in Turin in 1925 and 1927. Richard Strauss saw the latter performance and, according to Vittorio Gui who conducted, was 'mad with enthusiasm'. Although it has a fairly regular place in the repertoire of European opera houses, it is still a comparative rarity here.

The story is as follows: Isabella has been sailing the seas searching for her lover, Lindoro, who is a slave of Mustapha, the Bey of Algiers. A storm drives her ashore in Algiers and she arrives at the court accompanied by an elderly admirer, Taddeo, whom she pretends is her uncle. The lovers are united but the Bey falls in love with Isabella. This leads to many complications but eventually the lovers manage to enrol Mustapha in the order of 'Pappatacci', whose main rule is to be silent and a model husband. Isabella and Lindoro sail for home and the Bey returns to his neglected wife, Elvira. Come to think of it, there seems to be a veritable ferry service across the Mediterranean, when one considers *Il Seraglio*, *Un Turco in Italia* and *L'Italiana*.

The opening *andante* with its hesitant *pizzicato* strings and sighing oboe could represent the unhappy searching Isabella. One does not want to read too much into this music for it is soon bubbling over in the *allegro* with that 'laughter that Rossini put into music.' The loud chord which comes every now and then in the first subject is a supreme example of this genial humour. The second subject is very coquettish and shows another aspect of the oboe's character. The *crescendo* ends the first section, whereupon both themes are repeated and there is an exciting coda.

The overture is 'charming' and 'frivolous', but Stendhal must have eaten some soggy pasta!

Harry Jones ©

Symphonic Poem, The Fountains of Rome
Respighi (1879-1936)

The Valle Giulia Fountain at Dawn
The Triton Fountain at Morn
The Fountain of Trevi at Noon
The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset

In this picturesque tone-poem Respighi, always a master of programme-music, set out to record his impressions in sound of four of the most famous fountains in the Eternal City. And with an eye and ear for effect he visited the fountains at different times of the day, thereby bringing to the music variations in light and shade that added immensely to its effectiveness. He was an extremely pictorial orchestrator; one who could clothe his ideas (however unoriginal) with colours making an instant appeal to the modern ear, nowhere better illustrated than in this tone-poem.

The music is continuous, but so well-defined and contrasted that it presents no difficulties in the matter of recognition. Here at the start Respighi gives us a tranquil picture of the *Valle Giulia* Fountain. Birds twitter with the coming

of light; a herd of cattle passes to the sound of shepherds' pipes and the tinkling of cowbells; the morning mist vanishes before the rising sun. The gentle splash of the water is illustrated by the up-and-down figuration given mostly to the strings. In the final bars we hear the call of a shepherd, first on the oboe, and then, dying away, on the clarinet, whose last note, mingling mysteriously with a roll on the cymbals, prepares the ear for a veritable gush of sounds — *The Triton Fountain at Morn*, with its upsurge of waters sparkling under the hot Italian sun in a scene of revelry wherein tritons and naiads join in a pagan dance dedicated to Poseidon. Here, with full orchestration (note particularly the piccolo, glockenspiel, harp and pianoforte effects) Respighi has created a thrilling picture capturing the imagination. At the end the music dies down; the water is turned off and on three muted trumpets we hear the ducks of the fountain quacking away in quiet enjoyment of their lot.

The music of the *Trevi Fountain* is more pompous in style. Woodwind and horns introduce a theme which is transferred *fff* to the heavier brass instruments. Neptune's chariot, drawn by sea-horses, passes before our eyes, followed by a train of sirens and tritons. The music is triumphant for a long time and then recedes in orchestration still rich in its texture to make way for *The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset*. Here the mood is quietly contemplative. The waters of the fountain fall lazily to the sound of harps and celesta; flute and cor anglais play a 'tired' theme. Then a solo violin is answered by a 'cello, while flutes, playing *staccato* reiterations, keep our attention fixed on the fountain. The music is developed to some extent while a vesper bell sounds from time to time. Near the close we hear two nightingales (flute and piccolo) calling to one another across the darkness; the waters of the fountain are stilled, and the Eternal City sinks to sleep to the final sound of the vesper bell.

Symphony No. 4 in A, opus 90 (The Italian)

Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

allegro vivace
andante
moderato con moto
finale: saltarello

The numeration of Mendelssohn's symphonies is always a matter of some doubt as not only was his first published symphony preceded by twelve unpublished ones, but his published symphonies are not numbered in order of composition. However, we should not be far out in describing this symphony as his fourteenth; and it was written when he was twenty-two — an age at which he still preserved the freshness of his genius, and had acquired an absolute mastery of musical development and progress.

The first movement, in its apparently easy-going way, is full of vigour as well as romance. Mendelssohn was steeped in the classics; and the vitality of his classical upbringing is indicated by the freedom with which he interprets their principles. In this movement, for example, the omission of the end of the second group of subjects at the repeat, and the flexibility of bar-accentuation in the fugue subject that appears in the development (to mention no other points), are touches of the subtlest and most original craftsmanship, which are only unnoticed because they are so absolutely right: and the way in which the first three notes of the opening tune become, later on, a distant beckoning call by the simple process of augmentation (lengthening of note-values) is a stroke of real romantic genius.

The slow movement suffers from being too well known, and also from an unnecessary and perhaps spurious association with a religious procession. It is much better to listen to it as pure music, and forget one has heard it before; and then the contrast between the plaintiveness of the opening and the comfortable affection of the second subject (so beautifully reflected in the scoring, the oboes giving place to clarinets in the latter) appears as something fresh and lovely in its own right.

The gentle suavity of the minuet gives a lighter contrast to the real though subdued intensity of the slow movement; but the persistent rhythmic-figure in the trio (which recurs in the coda) gives the minuet an undercurrent of seriousness as well. The concluding *saltarello* is an explosive and agile movement, entirely in the minor — an exceptional reversal of the fairly common procedure of having a major ending to a work which begins in the minor. It is one of the faults of Mendelssohn's later and less vital works that his sense of values sometimes went astray; he too often mistook healthy bad temper for high tragedy, and accordingly applied for the divine consolation through the medium of a chorale. But there is no such fault in this finale; its mood (except for one or two lighter passages) is one of sustained and intensely stimulating exasperation, which only dies down to rise again. One cannot imagine a better or more unexpected contrast to the urbanity of the earlier movement.

©

Overture, Benvenuto Cellini
Berlioz (1803-1869)

Benvenuto Cellini is Berlioz's first opera, that is if one allows the term 'opera' to be used for any of this composer's unique musical dramas performed on the stage. (In a letter to Legouvé the composer writes 'there are millions of wrong notes, wrong notes and especially wrong rhythms . . . the overture, by the way, I think you'll be pleased with'.) It occupied him from 1834-37 and was eventually produced in 1838 in Paris, but withdrawn after three performances. Berlioz did not live to see a successful production at Weimar in 1852, at the instigation of Liszt. Amongst academics this is considered the most perfect of all his overtures, but perfection does not always equal popularity and there is no doubt that *Carnival Romain* from the same work receives the greater number of performances.

Cellini is an historical character, remembered chiefly for his magnificent sculpture of Perseus, to be seen in Florence. The libretto is extremely weak and based on the slenderest thread of fact. Cellini loves Teresa, whose father prefers another suitor. Mixed in with this is his disgust at the paltry commission fee from the Pope for Perseus. The climax comes in the middle of the Carnival, when Cellini stabs his rival. Only the confusion and the later magnificence of his work of art saves him.

The overture opens with twenty-two headlong bars. Then the tempo changes to *larghetto* and *pizzicato* basses play the Cardinal's (i.e. Pope) aria from Act III. Woodwind superimpose Harlequin's theme from the carnival scene. Both these ideas are repeated leading into the main section, in sonata form. The first subject is the opening section rhythmically altered. The swing to D major heralds the second subject which, in the opera, is Teresa's main aria (notice the Berlioz hallmark of sliding chromaticism). All these melodic ideas are worked out in a brilliant development section, with a climax on brass of the Cardinal's theme. After a pause there is a short re-statement of the two ideas in the main section of the overture, and the work ends with a last presentation of the main *larghetto* theme.

Harry Jones ©

Roma: Carnival
Bizet (1838-1875)

Bizet is usually thought of as a composer for the theatre and the opera-house, and rightly so. After all, his score for *L'Arlésienne* is incidental music of the highest quality, and *Carmen* has a firmer place in the international repertory than any other French opera. In his earlier years, however, Bizet showed a lively interest in symphonic music. At 17 he wrote but suppressed, a remarkably accomplished Symphony in C, and five years later, at the end of his sojourn at the Villa Médicis as a winner of the Prix de Rome, he began composing *Roma*. That was in 1860, but this Italian symphony, as it was originally thought of, remained unfinished until 1868. In 1871 Bizet revised the work, which was not published until 1880, after the composer's death. It was then described, misleadingly, as his Third Concert Suite. (The First and Second Suites are the two from *L'Arlésienne*.)

The earliest mention of this project is in one of Bizet's letters to his mother (August 1860), from which we learn that the original intention was to associate each movement with a different Italian city: 'Venice will be my andante, Rome my first movement, Florence my scherzo and Naples my finale'. It is not known how far this scheme was carried out; all subsequent descriptive glosses, sub-titles, etc. are the work of people other than the composer and are best ignored. It is probable, however, that Bizet's experience in Rome came to dominate his imagination, and there are grounds for associating the finale with a Roman Carnival. It is decidedly *vivacissimo*, with a group of *giocoso* themes preceding the theme from the slow movement, the whole being organized on sonata lines, surely and with a spirited independence.

Hugh Ottaway ©

Italian Caprice, opus 45
Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

By the year 1880 Tchaikovsky was well established in Russia, though his music was making more slow headway elsewhere, and in Vienna had incurred the quite wrathful opposition of the influential Hanslick. The previous year *Eugene Onegin* had its first performance in Moscow, and works which today enjoy widespread popularity, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Francesca da Rimini*, *Swan Lake*, the *Violin Concerto*, the *Symphony No. 4*, and the first two piano concertos were all behind him. In sum, they represented the steady development and maturing control of a composer whose grasp of the orchestra was now assured.

And in 1880, Tchaikovsky added to these, three more works which are immensely popular today. The *Serenade for Strings* was written, and then, at the invitation of Nicholas Rubinstein, the overture *1812* was composed for the Moscow Exhibition. In the same spring, Tchaikovsky brought to Kamenka, the peaceful retreat in which he found that composition flowed so easily, the sketches of a work begun in Italy the previous winter. This was the *Italian Caprice*, which he now orchestrated and which had its first performance in Moscow on December 18 that year.

Tchaikovsky had spent the winter of 1879-80 in Rome. He was invigorated by Italy, not only by the beauty of the landscape, the wealth of history, and the artistic tradition, but by the gaiety of the people and the allure of their folk music. It was the atmosphere of the latter that he recaptured in the *Italian Caprice*, which derives mostly from the impressions he received as an onlooker at a carnival in Rome.

Tchaikovsky shrewdly forecast the verdicts of future commentators. Writing to a friend in Moscow shortly after the work's completion, he said 'I am not sure what value there is in this piece, but I am certain it will sound well, as the orchestra is treated brilliantly and effectively.'

Exactly. There have been writers who have found the *Italian Caprice* deficient in musical worth, unable apparently to recognise the craftsmanship with which it is brought about, but even they are unable to deny its splendid effect. It is an example of masterly writing for orchestra in which Tchaikovsky's judgment of how and when to make an exciting point is faultless. And there is, too, the skill with which it is put together, the ease with which Tchaikovsky slips from incident, keeping up an impression of invention which elevates the *Italian Caprice* from the level of a popular fantasia to that of a cleverly welded orchestral showpiece.

Tchaikovsky probably based the stirring opening trumpet motif on the bugle calls he would have heard from the barracks of the Royal Cuirassiers opposite the Hotel Constanzi where he stayed in Rome. The grave tune which answers it, the lilting theme first heard in flute and oboe and then treated by full orchestra, the Neapolitan song which has a bolero rhythm, the tarantella which arrives almost as a surprise, add up to a pattern of mounting excitement which has as its climax a return to the theme heard in oboe and flute, and a quickening of pace into an exuberant coda.

Kenneth Loveland ©

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Principal Conductor and Musical Director: Louis Frémaux

Season 1974-75

The ANNUAL PROSPECTUS will be published shortly and will be available from Birmingham Town Hall Box Office, Birmingham B3 3DQ, price 25p, plus 7p postage. It will be sent FREE to CBSO Society and Junior CBSO members who have renewed their membership.

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11 SATURDAY CONCERTS January—June 1975
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City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Forthcoming Proms

Tuesday 16 July

HAROLD GRAY

Nights at the Ballet

Suite, The Sleeping Beauty .. .. .. Tchaikovsky
Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune .. .. Debussy
Faust: Ballet Music .. .. Gounod
Suite, Horoscope .. .. Lambert
Firebird Suite (1919) .. .. Stravinsky

Wednesday 17 July

LOUIS FRÉMAUX
PATRICIA GREIG
ALEXANDER YOUNG
RAIMUND HERINCX
CBSO CHORUS

The Creation .. .. Haydn

This performance, which will be sung in English, is expected to finish at approximately 9.45 p.m.

Thursday 18 July

MAURICE HANDFORD

A Night in Vienna

Overture, The Gipsy Baron .. .. Johann Strauss II
Unfinished Symphony .. .. .. Schubert
Waltz, Voices of Spring .. .. Johann Strauss II
Overture, Poet and Peasant .. .. Suppé
Waltz, The Blue Danube .. .. Johann Strauss II
Champagne Polka .. .. .. Johann Strauss II
Pizzicato Polka .. .. Johann & Josef Strauss
Thunder and Lightning Polka .. Johann Strauss II
Suite, Der Rosenkavalier .. .. Richard Strauss

ALL TICKETS SOLD.

Friday 19 July

LOUIS FRÉMAUX
ELEANOR BRON

Family Prom III

Russian Music

Capriccio Espagnol .. .. .. Rimsky-Korsakov
Peter and the Wolf .. .. .. Prokofiev
Nutcracker Suite .. .. .. Tchaikovsky

This programme is designed to end at approximately 9.00 p.m.

All concerts begin 7.30 p.m., Birmingham Town Hall

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CBSO

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HAROLD GRAY, O.B.E., Associate Conductor
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Deputy Leader: BARRIE MOORE

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Philip Head
Richard Howarth
Enid Beaumont
*Cyril Read
Andrew Szirtes
Gisela Hess
John Sutton
Paul Smith
Sheila Clarke
Stuart Ford
Diana Levitas
Isobel Burns

2nd Violins
Jeremy Ballard
David Wood
Henry Birch
Michael Buckley
David Hiscox
James Hunter
David Parsons
Paul White
Anne Ashcroft
Louise Dayman
Thelma Maden
Pauline Lowberry

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John Brearley
Gwyn Williams
Peter Cole
Carol Millward
Diana Drewer
Margaret Artus
William Danks
Jean Cartmell
Richard Pugh
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Christopher Vanderspar
Dietrich Bethge
Jean Gubbins
Cecily Hake
Colin Humphreys
Alison Harper
Edward Bosher
Elspeth Cox
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George Greer
Christopher Staunton
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*Kenneth Burston
Jiří Zicha
Robert Mitchell
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Colin Lilley

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Russell Parry

Oboes
Richard Weigall
Antony Miller

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Peter Walden

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Colin Parr
Martyn Davies

Bass Clarinet
Frank Allen

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Andrew Barnell
John Schroder
Maurice Turlington

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Toddy Harman

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David Lee
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Philip Box
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Allan Mead

Trumpets
Alan Whitehead
Trevor Jones

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Roy Curran
Peter Goy

Trombones
David Evans
Brian Altham

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Arthur Doyle

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Programme 10p