

Overture "The Thieving Magpie"

Rossini

Early nineteenth century Italian opera gained much of its popularity from the use of shapely melodies built on simple harmonic patterns. Perhaps the most lyrical composer of that time was Giachino Rossini (1792-1868), who gained much of his melodic skill from a study of Mozart.

"The Thieving Magpie", one of Rossini's comic operas, was written in 1817. The overture opens with a grand march theme which leads to the main material of the movement. There is, of course, much use of the famous "Rossini crescendo".

Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major K467 (Slow movement)

Mozart

Soloist: Jane Gow

Completed in March 1785, Mozart's Piano Concerto in C Major K467 forms a considerable contrast to the tragic D Minor Concerto K466. Although the outer movements of K467 are of a festive nature, there is a sense of unease underlying the lyricism of the Andante. The flowing melody soon introduces wide leaps over its pulsating triplet accompaniment, and sudden vacillations between major and minor harmonies disturb the elegance with an unexpected depth of thought. Here the soloist and orchestra of muted strings, flutes, oboes, bassoons and horns are as one, combined in pure musical expression.

Concertstuck for Four Horns

Schumann

Soloists: Ron Harris, Nicholas Korth, Stuart Korth, Graham Hills

The Schumann Concertstuck for Four Horns and orchestra is performed in a specially prepared edition by Anthony Randall. Having appeared in several performances as one of the horn soloists, Mr. Randall became aware of problems of balance between the horn quartet and the orchestra, and the balance within the orchestra itself. A considerable proportion of the music for the solo horns is doubled within the orchestra, perhaps because there were very few players who could have coped with the extremely difficult writing in Schumann's time. Certain sections have been re-orchestrated, a great deal of the doubling of solo parts removed, and certain inaccuracies and inconsistencies corrected. The result sounds little different from the original but is a great deal clearer in texture.

Anthony Randall's edition received its first broadcast performance with the For James Horn Quartet and the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir John Pritchard.

Rhapsody in Blue

Soloist: John York Clarinet: Bill Haley

In 1924 the career of George Gershwin took an unexpected turn, when, somewhat surprisingly, Gershwin found himself yielding to pressure from Paul Whiteman to write a Jazz Concerto. Since 1916 he had enjoyed considerable success as a songwriter in Tin Pan Alley; "Swanee", forever immortalised by Al Jolson, was written in 1918 when Gershwin was 20. "Rhapsody in Blue" was completed in less than six weeks and rapidly orchestrated from a two piano score by Ferde Grofe, Whiteman's arranger. Though the critics were divided, the work received a tremendous reception from the audience at Whiteman's concert in the Aeolian Hall, New York.

Combining the free melody and rhythm of Jazz with a formal Classicism, "Rhapsody in Blue" has enjoyed more success than many academically worthy compositions. It has an evocative appeal that is instant perhaps, best summed up in Gershwin's own words: "I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America — of our vast melting-pot of our incomparable national pep, our blues, our metropolitan madness."

Overture "1812"

with Eastbourne Silver Band

Tchaikovsky

It is generally believed that Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write this overture for the 1880 All-Russian Exhibition of Arts and Crafts in Moscow. Although Tchaikovsky's letters bear this out, his friend Kashkin claimed that the piece was intended for the consecration ceremony of the Cathedral of the Redeemer in the Kremlin in 1881, where it was to be performed by a vast orchestra, brass band, cannon and church bells. However, the mystery remains, as no record survives of either performance.

The overture depicts Russia's victory over Napoleon's Grande Armee, from the Battle of Borodino to Napoleon's disastrous retreat from the burning city of Moscow. Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Madame von Meck, refers to it as being "very noisy", "patriotic" and of "no great artistic value". However, despite this, the public's imagination was soon captured.



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