ROSSINI
*The Silken Ladder* Overture

FAURÉ
Suite from *Masques et Bergamasques*

MOZART
Symphony No. 40 in G minor

RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra
David Young conductor
Presented by Paul Herriott, RTÉ lyric fm

FRIDAY 2 OCTOBER 2020, 7pm
NATIONAL CONCERT HALL
Rossini’s opera *La scala di seta* (The Silken Ladder) is a one-act “farsa comica” or “opera buffa” – a comic farce, first performed in Venice in 1812. The young composer in fact wrote four such pieces between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, the last of which, *Il Signor Bruschino*, was performed at the Wexford Opera Festival in 2008. Intimate operas, with a cast of as few as five singers, were very popular in Venice at that time. With these early successes, Rossini went on to compose a total of twenty operas before the age of forty, retiring on his reputation in 1829. Some works, such as his *Barber of Seville*, achieved huge success while others remain in the musical memory only for some individual feature – in the case of *William Tell*, for example, because of its overture. *La scala di seta* had to wait more than a century for a second performance.

This, however, is not true of the overture to *La scala di seta*, which has remained in the repertoire on its own account, due principally to its sparkling, speedy, effervescence sustained over its short duration but punctuated by a wistful, elegant, solo on the oboe.

The silken ladder of the title refers to an amorous strategy by which the lover climbs up to the bedroom of his beloved, but is apprehended by the girl’s cousin one evening. This leads to a flurry of exchanges between oboes, flutes and clarinets, heading towards the conclusion. Rossini was famous for the technique through which he built a crescendo – the gradual but unstoppable way that he creates a climax by adding one instrument after another. Rossini’s dramatic skill encompasses all the opera’s action in this frothy, animated curtain-raiser.

*Note by Richard Pine © RTÉ*
Gabriel Fauré
1845-1924

Masques et Bergamasques Op. 112

i. Overture – allegro molto vivo
ii. Minuet – tempo di menuetto – allegro moderato
iii. Gavotte – allegro vivo
iv. Pastorale – andantino tranquillo

Fauré originally wrote the Masques et Bergamasques as incidental music to a play designed to entertain Albert I, Prince of Monaco, in 1919. The work was so successful that it transferred to Paris in 1920 for an extended run. The commission, from the Monte Carlo Opera House, was suggested by Fauré’s friend and teacher Camille Saint-Saëns. Fauré undertook it even though, at the age of seventy-four and in his role as director of the Paris Conservatoire, he had limited time for composition – but we have to assume that the commission was sufficiently prestigious to take him away from his other duties. It consisted of eight sections, of which we are to hear four tonight.

The suite was inspired by a poem of Paul Verlaine, Clair de lune (which remains famous today for the piano solo by Debussy), which Fauré had set to music as early as 1887:

Your soul is like a landscape fantasy
Where masks and bergamasks, in charming style,
Strum lutes and dance, a little bit sad to be
Hidden beneath their fanciful finery.

A bergamask was a folk dance taking its name from the town of Bergamo, but Verlaine had clearly used a pun to suggest that the disguised people in his landscape are masquerading and dancing in the spirit of the commedia dell’arte.
The programme for the first performance announced: “The characters Harlequin, Gilles and Colombine, who are usually the entertainers, take their turn as spectators at a fête galante and derive their own amusement at the coquettish behaviour of the lords and ladies.” They are a sort of “candid camera” disclosing a hidden pathos beneath the polished veneer of the sparkling melodies.

The Overture was in fact rescued from a symphony which Fauré had abandoned fifty years earlier, as is the second movement, the Minuet. Fauré recalled that the song composer Reynaldo Hahn said the Overture “sounded like Mozart imitating Fauré” – a remark we should interpret as a compliment, since it confirms Fauré’s intention to create a piece in the “classical” style with a subtle twist. The light and elegant Overture is succeeded by the mock-antique character of the two central dance sections.

The brief Gavotte is followed by the concluding Pastorale – the only movement which Fauré composed entirely from scratch, and the most successful of the suite. It was also Fauré’s “farewell” to the orchestra, as he would not write anything more.

Note by Richard Pine © RTÉ
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
1756-1791

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550

i. Molto allegro
ii. Andante
iii. Menuetto – allegretto – Trio
iv. Finale – allegro assai

This symphony, possibly the most ethereal of Mozart’s output, was composed in 1788, at a time – quite usual for Mozart – of intense activity when he also composed the 39th and the 41st symphonies. It is possible that he conceived the three works as a unit. It has even been suggested – for example by the musicologist Alfred Einstein – that Mozart may not have intended for them to be performed, but more as an “appeal to eternity”. But that is to deny the natural desire of any creative artist to present his work to the public – and, in Mozart’s impecunious case, to earn some money thereby.

There is some doubt as to where and when the symphony was actually performed, although it is certain that Mozart did hear it in 1789, and that he revised the score, incorporating one of his favourite instruments, the clarinet, which had not featured in the original version.

Schumann recognised the work’s “Grecian lightness and grace”; Beethoven studied it when writing his own fifth symphony and it also finds an echo in Schubert’s fifth. Many critics have noted the tragic, elegiac tone and intense emotion. It is a commonplace that in his later years (he would die three years later) Mozart was preoccupied with themes of death and obliteration, and craved for lightness and clarity. The fact that these were Mozart’s last symphonies tends to emphasise this interpretation of his intentions.
Whatever was in his mind, there can be no doubting the intensity of the way Mozart juxtaposes the gracefulness of his melodies with violent invasive assaults on their calm and tranquillity. In music history, the symphony is distinguished by the fact that Mozart employs a minor key (G minor), which suggests an overall tone of sadness and possibly dark tragedy, but makes unconventional use of it, also evoking harmony and sunshine.

The use of a small orchestra – very appropriate to this evening’s performance by a necessarily reduced group of players – suggests the character of chamber music, rather than large-scale composition, with the intimacy of each movement oscillating between light and dark, but never relinquishing the intensity of his vision. It is only in the explosive Finale that Mozart gives us an unambiguous positive, emphatic statement that the violent differences within the previous movements have been resolved.

Note by Richard Pine © RTÉ
This evening’s performance marks David Young’s professional orchestral debut. Chorus Master of the RTÉ Philharmonic Choir since September 2019, David now divides his time between Dublin and the UK where he is Musical Director of Cardiff Polyphonic Choir and Reading Bach Choir, and Co-Director of professional vocal ensemble Reverie.

David is a versatile conductor with broad tastes and enthusiasms, ranging from the largest of choral/orchestral works to complex contemporary a cappella music, and running the whole gamut from early music through to Classical symphonies into brand new orchestral repertoire. In recent years, he has led acclaimed performances of Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*, Mozart *Requiem* and *Mass in C Minor*, Monteverdi *Vespers*, Beethoven *Mass in C*, Haydn *The Creation*, Finzi *Requiem da Camera*, Handel *Messiah* and Mendelssohn *Elijah*, as well as orchestral works by Debussy, Elgar and Holst. His a cappella and chamber choir repertoire is equally broad, including a deep passion for the music of Byrd, Tallis and Schütz, alongside elegant secular works by Brahms, Haydn and Beethoven, and a wide range of 20th century and contemporary choral music, from rarely-heard works by great composers such as Mahler, Shostakovich and Szymanowski, through to the most popular modern-day repertoire by the likes of Eric Whitacre and James MacMillan, and challenging contemporary works by Maija Einfelde, Roxanna Panufnik and Peteris Vasks.
As well as his work as a conductor, David is an experienced and inspirational chorus master, having worked with symphonic choruses his whole career. In his role with the RTÉ Philharmonic Choir he has prepared choirs for RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra Chief Conductor Jaime Martín (Mahler Symphony No. 3), Kenneth Montgomery (Elgar The Dream of Gerontius) and Patrik Ringborg (Dvořák Requiem), and was preparing for Ravel Daphnis et Chlôe and Stanford Requiem when Covid-19 forced a performance break on the choir. From 2016-2017 he held the post of Sir Alexander Gibson Fellow with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra Chorus, with whom he maintains a strong relationship, and where he worked with the chorus on Brahms Nänie, Verdi Requiem and an RSNO/RTÉ co-commission by Gerald Barry.

David studied at the University of Manchester and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. His recent guest work has included Huddersfield Choral Society and New London Chamber Choir, and like most choral conductors he is currently working on various means of digital learning and performance for amateur choirs, including editing virtual choirs and running live sessions online – an area in which he has found an outlet for his longstanding passion for music technology and production. He has broadcast several times on BBC Radio with Cardiff Polyphonic Choir, and during his time in Manchester prepared the University Chamber Choir for work with BBC Television, and a role alongside the Hallé Choir and Orchestra in Wagner Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg under the baton of Sir Mark Elder. He has also prepared choirs for Michael Sanderling/Dresden Philharmonic (Beethoven Symphony No. 9), Eric Whitacre/RPO (Whitacre Deep Field, Five Hebrew Love Songs), Justin Doyle/Manchester University (Brahms Requiem), and James Burton/Manchester University (Walton Belshazzar’s Feast), and in 2019 masterminded an ambitious tour of combined choirs from Cardiff performing Mendelssohn Elijah with Sinfonie Orchester Schöneberg and Raphaël Haeger, which took place in St David’s Cathedral, Cardiff’s Hoddinott Hall and The Berliner Philharmonie.
RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra
Patron: Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland
Chief Conductor: Jaime Martín

The RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra has been at the centre of Ireland’s cultural life since 1948 when the Raidió Éireann Symphony Orchestra, as it was originally called, was founded.

Today it is a formidable creative force, its presence felt throughout the country in live, year-round performances that celebrate the traditional orchestral, vocal and operatic repertoire and champions the commissioning of new music alongside crossover projects that embrace the best of stage and screen, popular music and traditional music.

In October 2019 it entered an exciting new era when Jaime Martín made his debut in concert as the orchestra’s new Chief Conductor.

In recent years, the RTÉ NSO has reached new audiences through its live screenings in concert of cinema blockbusters such as Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Jurassic Park, Ghostbusters and Casino Royale and with its lavish concert tributes to Hollywood icons Gene Kelly, John Williams and Elliot Goldenthal, songwriter extraordinaire Cole Porter and the genius of Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin.
With a long-established international reputation, the RTÉ NSO has worked with successive generations of world-famous composers from Igor Stravinsky and Karlheinz Stockhausen to Steve Reich and Arvo Pärt.

Among the legendary conductors, soloists and singers with whom it has performed are Wilhelm Kempff, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Josef Szigeti, Martha Argerich, Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, José Carreras, Mstislav Rostropovich and our own Bernadette Greevy.

More recent luminaries include Kiri Te Kanawa, Bryn Terfel, Angela Gheorghiu, Angela Hewitt, Nikolai Demidenko, Maxim Vengerov, Daniel Hope, Tasmin Little and Leonard Slatkin.

Reading like a Who’s Who of Irish music, its collaborations with Irish artists include, among so many others, Sir James Galway, Mary Black, Lisa Hannigan, Liam O’Flynn, The Riptide Movement, Barry Douglas, John O’Conor, Patricia Bardon, Tara Erraught, Celine Byrne and Ailish Tynan.

Countless world premieres by Irish composers have included Elaine Agnew, Gerald Barry, Ed Bennett, Linda Buckley, Ann Cleare, Rhona Clarke, Siobhán Cleary, Shaun Davey, David Fennessy, Marian Ingoldsby, Brian Irvine, Karen Power, Jennifer Walshe, James Wilson and Bill Whelan.

The RTÉ NSO’s acclaimed catalogue of recordings – on the RTÉ lyric fm, Naxos, BIS, Toccata Classics labels and others – include the complete symphonies of Malcolm Arnold, Rachmaninov, Mendelssohn and Nielsen, and Composers of Ireland, a landmark series co-funded by RTÉ and The Arts Council. To date, it has recorded works by established names – Gerald Barry, Seóirse Bodley, Raymond Deane, Aloys Fleischmann, John Kinsella, Seán Ó Riada – and a new generation of remarkable voices, including Donnacha Dennehy, Deirdre Gribbin, Kevin Volans and Ian Wilson.

Other major recordings include Robert O’Dwyer’s Irish language opera Eithne (in partnership with Irish National Opera), José Serebrier’s Symphonic BACH Variations and Mary Black Orchestrated. Film and television scores include composer-conductor Michael Giacchino’s Lost in Concert and directors John Boorman’s Queen and Country and Lenny Abrahamson’s The Little Stranger.
The RTÉ NSO’s work in the world of opera includes the world premiere of Gerald Barry’s *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (co-commissioned by RTÉ and English National Opera) and collaborations with Wide Open Opera: the Irish premieres of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* and John Adams’ *Nixon in China*, and a concert presentation of Raymond Deane’s *The Alma Fetish* in association with the National Concert Hall.

The orchestra’s extensive educational work includes its Music in the Classroom programme for primary and second level students, and a young musicians’ mentoring scheme.

Broadcasting regularly on RTÉ, it reaches vast international audiences through the European Broadcasting Union.

In 2017, the RTÉ NSO performed, by invitation, in China’s prestigious National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing with conductor José Serebrier. In 2018, with then Principal Guest Conductor Nathalie Stutzmann and violinist Ray Chen, it gave the closing concert of the International Festival of Radio Orchestras in Bucharest.

Find out more at [www.rte.ie/nso](http://www.rte.ie/nso)
RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra

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Elaine Clark (Co-Leader)
Sebastian Liebeg †
Ting Zhong Deng
Molly O’Shea
David McElroy
Karl Sweeney
Catherine McCarthy

2nd Violin
Elizabeth McLaren ‡
Larissa O’Grady °
Rosalind Brown
Magda Kowalska
Jenny Burns Duffy
Paul Fanning

Viola
Francis Harte °
Ruth Bebb
Cliona O’Riordan
Neil Martin

Cello
Martin Johnson ·
Polly Ballard ‡
Úna Ní Chanainn
Ailbhe McDonagh

Double Bass
Aisling Reilly °
Jenni Meade

Flute
Catriona Ryan ·
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Graham Hastings ·
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FRIDAY 9 OCTOBER, 7pm

Ravel  *Le tombeau de Couperin*

Beethoven  Symphony No. 7

Jaime Martín  conductor

Paul Herriott  RTÉ lyric fm, presenter

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